

INSIDE

# HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



## WORKING OVERTIME PAYS OFF

Detrick Bonner (8), Jack Tyler and the Hokies rallied from a 10-point, fourth-quarter deficit to knock off Rutgers in overtime in the Russell Athletic Bowl

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

Members of last year's recruiting football class anxious for start of spring practice

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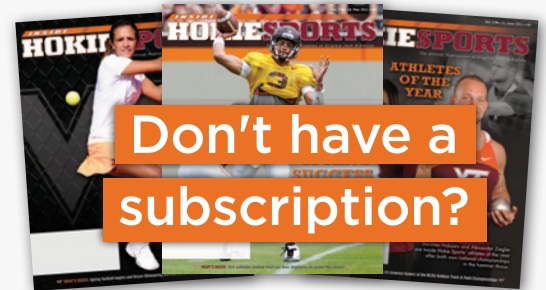
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## MAKING HISTORY

Virginia Tech's new tradition of going around Cassell Coliseum after games and acknowledging its fans took on a special meaning following the Hokies' 81-71 upset of No. 15 Oklahoma State on Dec. 1. The win marked the Hokies' first over a ranked nonconference opponent in 17 years.





## THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"The four years I have spent at Virginia Tech have been the best of my life. I have made lifelong friends and have memories I will never forget. I will always be proud to say I am a Hokie."

**ERICK GREEN**

Senior | Men's Basketball

"My teammates and I cannot thank the Hokie Club enough for all of their enthusiasm and support! Being a member of our women's basketball team has been an incredible experience, and I look forward to following the Hokies for many years to come! Go Hokies!"

**PORSCHIA HADLEY**

Junior | Women's Basketball





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## JASON TANNER

**HOKIE CLUB LEVEL:**

GOLDEN HOKIE

**HOKIE CLUB MEMBER SINCE:**

2000

**WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE?**

1996

**FAMILY:**

WIFE - JESSICA, SONS - CADEN & EASTON, DAUGHTER - DELANEY



## Q&A

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

**A:** It's a part of who we are. I get to spend Saturdays in the stands with my boys, watch my little girl sing the Hokie Pokie and bounce with over 67,000 friends. Win or lose, I am in the stands until the last minute ticks off the clock. We have to get milkshakes at the basketball games, and in our house, a load of laundry always has a Hokie shirt in it.

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

**A:** When I was about 10 years old, my neighbors - Johnny and Jackie Arthur, lifelong Hokie Club Members and Tech fans - took me and my brother to our first Virginia Tech football game. We loaded up in their custom maroon van and headed up to Blacksburg. I

remember trying to catch the field-goal attempts and all of the excitement of the day. That was the start and now I love sharing the excitement of game day with my family and friends.

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

**A:** No real "traditions," but there is no better way to spend a beautiful fall Saturday than in Blacksburg with family and friends.

**Q: You are involved with the Lynchburg Hokie Club as a Hokie Rep. How & why did you get involved and has it been a good experience for you?**

**A:** I got involved with the Lynchburg Hokie Club as a rep to be more active with supporting Tech in my local community. I enjoy spending time with other Hokies, making friends and generating support for Tech. Being a Hokie Club Rep has been a great experience. As Virginia Tech expands its

athletics facilities, it has been rewarding to be part of supporting that growth.

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

**A:** The 2009 Miami game. The players gave everything they had during the game while the rain poured down in the freezing cold against a ranked Miami team. With not an empty seat in the stadium, the electricity of the Hokie Nation embodied why Tech is important to me - great friends, memories and school pride.

**Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech football player is \_\_\_\_\_.**

**A:** Bryan Randall (former Tech quarterback). Watching his leadership during his senior season in 2004 really demonstrated the work ethic that I think Tech football is built upon.

A photograph of a large, modern university building with a distinctive architectural style, set against a backdrop of rolling hills and trees with vibrant autumn foliage. Two flags, the American flag and the Virginia Tech flag, are visible on tall poles in front of the building. The text "THANK you!" is overlaid in a large, white, handwritten-style font across the lower portion of the image.

THANK you!

The Hokie Club staff would like to thank the Hokie Club membership for their wonderful support of Virginia Tech athletics in 2012. We are committed to providing our student-athletes the finest possible support by paying for student-athlete scholarships, assisting in raising money to build first-class athletic facilities, and offering program support to our 21 varsity sports. During the year, we

welcomed new Hokie Club members and saw many existing members upgrade their giving levels. In addition, we received pledged gifts and major gifts that will be used to directly impact Virginia Tech athletics for years to come, both with capital projects and endowed scholarships. Thank you again for your support and we look forward to a very successful 2013.



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## Former World Series champions headline “Baseball Night in Blacksburg”

Former Tech baseball standouts and former Major League Baseball World Series champions Franklin Stubbs and Brad Clontz will be the guests of honor for the Virginia Tech baseball program’s “Baseball Night in Blacksburg” on Feb. 8 in the West Side Stadium Club of Lane Stadium.

The event, which is sponsored by Bull and Bones Brewhaus and Grill, will be held from 6-9 p.m. Tickets cost \$75 per person (\$35 for kids 13 and under) and can be purchased by calling the Virginia Tech baseball office at (540) 231-3671. For those interested in a more intimate experience, a private, open-bar reception with Stubbs, Clontz and other notable figures will be held from 5-6 p.m. prior to the public portion of the evening. Access to the private reception

can be gained by purchasing a ticket for \$200. A Home Run Package of eight tickets can be purchased for \$1,500.

In addition to a Q&A session with Stubbs and Clontz, the event will include a dinner catered by Bull and Bones, silent and live auctions for various professional sports and Virginia Tech items, and a chance to meet the entire Tech baseball team a week before the Hokies open their 2013 season in Wilmington, N.C.

Stubbs set nine school records while at Tech – two of which still stand – and became the Hokies’ first All-American with his selection as a sophomore in 1981. He was the first Tech player drafted in the first round of the spring draft – the 19th pick by the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1982 – and became the first Hokie to win a World

Series ring, winning one with the Dodgers in 1988 when they defeated Oakland, four games to one.

Clontz also left his mark in the Hokie record books, setting a school record with 12 wins on the mound in 130 innings pitched – both records still stand – in 1992. He parlayed that success into a 10th round selection in the draft by the Atlanta Braves that June. He’s one of three former Tech players to appear in at least two World Series (Johnny Oates, 3; Joe Saunders, 2) and became the second Hokie to win a World Series ring, helping the Braves to the 1995 title over Cleveland, four games to two.

All proceeds from the event will go to the Tech baseball program and the Hokies’ efforts to improve various aspects of their program.

## Tech and ODU agree to football series

Virginia Tech and Old Dominion have agreed to a three-game football series, starting in 2016 with a game in Blacksburg. This will be the first meeting between the two schools, as ODU only started fielding a team in 2009.

The Monarchs, who will be a full member of Conference USA for the 2015 season, will play in Blacksburg in 2016 and 2019. The Hokies will travel to Norfolk, Va., for a game with ODU in 2018.

The series continues the Hokies’ recent tradition of scheduling in-state programs. Tech has played Football Championship Subdivision foes James Madison (1999, 2003 and 2010) and William & Mary (2007) of late and has games scheduled with FCS foes Liberty (2016), William & Mary (2014 and 2018) and now ODU.

### Tech’s Future Nonconference Schedules

**2013** – Alabama (in Atlanta), Western Carolina, at ECU, and Marshall

**2014** – William & Mary, ECU, at Ohio State, Western Michigan

**2015** – Furman, at ECU, Ohio State, TBD

**2016** – Wisconsin, ECU, Liberty, ODU

**2017** – at Wisconsin, at ECU, TBD, TBD

**2018** – William & Mary, ECU, at ODU, TBD

**2019** – Charlotte, at ECU, ODU, TBD

## McKinnon headlines scout-team testing


Virginia Tech’s freshmen who redshirted this past season and other scout-team members underwent strength and conditioning testing a few weeks before the bowl game, and Dahman McKinnon and Justus Hoffmann earned Super Iron Hokie honors, while Justin Taylor earned Iron Hokie honors.

McKinnon, a whip linebacker from Hope Mills, N.C., headlined the group. The 6-foot-1, 206-pound freshman recorded a 385-pound

bench press, a 390-pound front squat and a 37-inch vertical jump. Hoffman, a 6-1, 284-pound redshirt freshman fullback from Raleigh, N.C., recorded a 420-pound bench press and a 405-pound front squat. Taylor, a 6-2, 257-pound redshirt freshman defensive end, recorded a 390-pound bench press and a 405-pound front squat.

McKinnon’s vertical jump was the best among those tested, and only Nick Acree’s 505-pound

bench press was better than Hoffmann’s. Acree only tested in the bench press, as he continued to rehab from a torn ACL suffered in August.

Taylor, Hoffmann, freshman offensive linemen Adam Taraschke and Augie Conte and McKinnon recorded the top results in the front squat. Taraschke had a 400-pound front squat, while Conte recorded a 395-pound front squat. Conte also had a 370-pound bench press, while Taraschke registered a 360-pound bench press. 



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A photograph of a family of four (two adults and two children) sitting on a motorboat on a body of water, all wearing life jackets.



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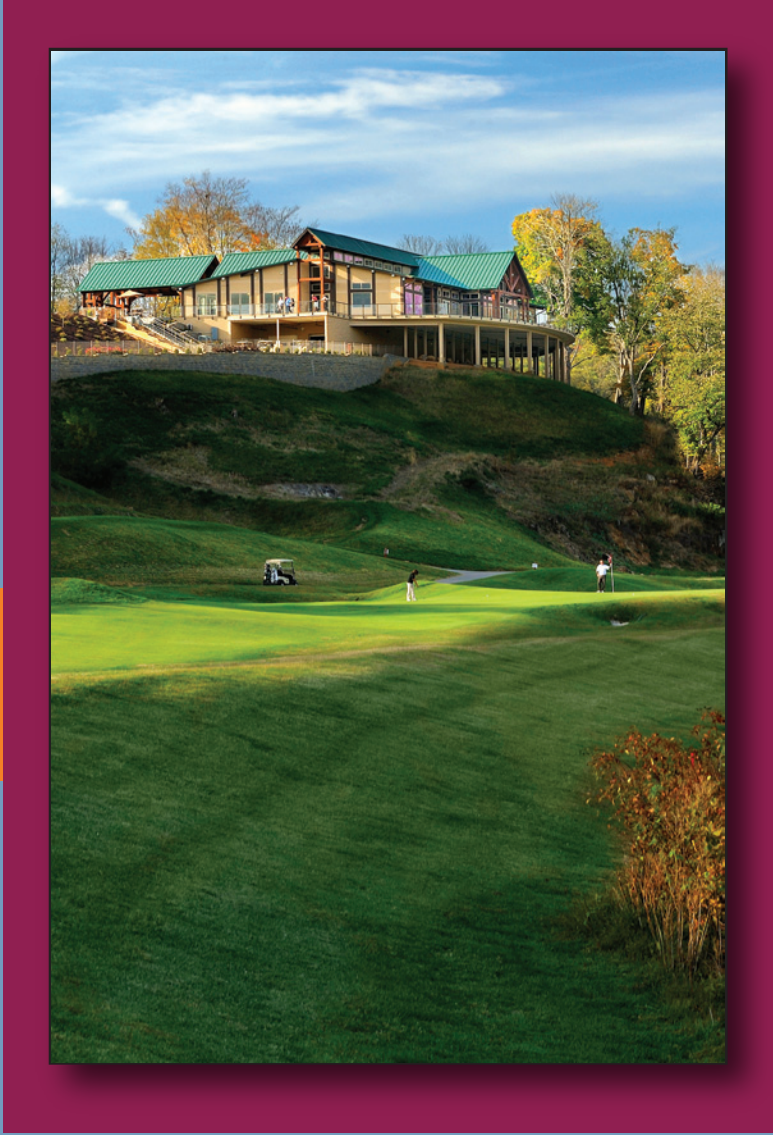
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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

# Tech's defense saves best for last with dominating performance against Rutgers

Several days after Tech's 13-10 overtime victory over Rutgers in the Russell Athletic Bowl, as most were rushing to purchase champagne to ring in the New Year, a friend submitted an email somewhat stating the obvious.

"Other than dropping those interceptions, did Bud's defense do ANYTHING wrong?" he wrote, referring to the bowl game.

"Bud," of course, being Bud Foster, the architect of the Hokies' defense. The short, simple, sweet and resounding answer to my friend's question is "No."

Tech's defense held Rutgers to just 196 yards of offense and three measly points, and basically carried the Hokies overall on a night in which the offense struggled mightily to put together consistent drives. The defense came up with the play of the game when Antone Exum's interception and return set up the Hokies' only touchdown, one that tied things up after Tech trailed 10-0 in the fourth quarter and ultimately sent the game into overtime.

All told, the Hokies held the Scarlet Knights to 67 yards rushing, sacked Rutgers quarterback Gary Nova three times, forced a couple of turnovers and held Rutgers to 3-of-21 on third-down conversions. The Scarlet Knights had just one first down in the fourth quarter and overtime.

"I think we had a good game plan going in," Tech mike linebacker Jack Tyler said. "I think Coach Foster did a good job with this game plan. He put us in spots to make plays and we executed well and made those plays when we needed to."

"I can't commend the defense more," Tech quarterback Logan Thomas agreed. "That's kind of how it's been all season."

The performance arguably served as the Tech defense's best performance this season. After all, the 196 yards marked the fewest gained by a Tech opponent in 2012.

It also served as a climax to a great run by that unit to end the 2012 campaign. In fact, most of Hokie Nation was blinded by the offense's inconsistencies, losing sight of an outstanding second half of the season by the defense.

In the final seven games, including the bowl game, Tech's defense allowed an average of 284.4 yards per game, including just 80.4 yards rushing. Tech's seven opponents in that span converted on just 22 percent of their third-down situations.

Some high-powered attacks struggled against the Hokies. Clemson finished with a season-low 295 yards against Tech. Florida State amassed just 311 yards – its second-worst output this season.

That's not to hide poor performances against Pittsburgh and North Carolina, two games in which Tech's defense struggled, or the last-drive letdown against Cincinnati. But once players settled into roles, particularly in the secondary, the Hokies got much better as the season went along. In Tech's three-game winning streak to end the season, the defense did not allow any of the three teams more than 300 yards.

"We've had those few let-ups. We go a whole game and play lights out, but four or five plays, we just lose it," Tech backer Bruce Taylor said,


referring to the defense's play in the second half of the season. "That didn't happen against Rutgers."

Tech and Rutgers were the only two bowl teams to hold their opponents to less than 200 yards – both offenses finished with 196 yards. But the Hokies did this last year, too, holding Michigan to 184 total yards. Only Alabama, Tech and Texas held their bowl opponents to less than 200 yards a year ago.

The Hokies now head into what figures to be an interesting offseason. Tech finished with a winning season for the 20th straight year, but also suffered through its worst season in 20 years. Multiple changes could be in the works.

Tech's defense, though, should be the constant. Foster, who guided Tech's defense to a top-20 finish in total defense for the 12th time, isn't going anywhere, and the Hokies return 10 starters, pending the decisions of a couple of juniors who may bolt early for the NFL. Taylor, the leader, stands as the only one departing for sure, and he's already offered his advice to the ones he leaves behind.

"They (the players) saw what was wrong with our team," he said. "We've had multiple talks about what we need to do and how to do it and how it was hard to get that done this year at certain points. I told them to start early, start the leadership early, so that guys will know what to expect coming in this spring and this summer."

It's the time of year to ring out the old and bring in the new. Hopefully, Tech's defense will stay the same. 



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# After slow start, Foster and Tech defense come up big in second half of 2012



Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster's group got off to a slow start in 2012, but the Hokies managed to finish in the top 20 in total defense by the end of the season.

As he exited Kenan Stadium in Chapel Hill, N.C., in October, Virginia Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster knew something was amiss with his 2012 Hokies' defense. Tech had just been gashed for 533 total yards by the Tar Heels, including 262 yards rushing by tailback Giovanni Bernard, in a 48-34 Tar Heel win.

"Pathetic" is how Foster described the defensive performance in the postgame interview. "Our tackling was atrocious," he said. "No excuses. That's not who we are, and that's not who we've been."

No sir.

The first six games of 2012 looked nothing

like the type of defense Foster and the Hokies had grown accustomed to seeing in orange and maroon. Traditionally, Foster's defenses are among the best in the nation. However, six games into the 2012 season, the Hokies were allowing 390 yards per game, nearly 200 yards rushing per game, and Tech had allowed 34 of 97 third-down conversions (35 percent.) At the time, those numbers ranked in the middle, at best, in the ACC and barely in the top 100 in the NCAA rankings.

But over the next seven games, things changed dramatically. Tech's defense found itself. It became the stingy, aggressive, nasty unit that Foster and many had projected. And by the end

of season, Foster and the Tech defense were back in a familiar position—among the top defensive teams in college football.

For the 2012 season, the Hokies finished 18th in total defense (333.15 yards per game), tied for ninth in tackles for loss (7.62 per game), fifth in third-down conversions (28.2 percent), and tied for 19th in sacks (2.69 per game). This season marked the eighth time in nine seasons as a member of the ACC that Tech's defense was ranked in the top-20.

How did Foster and Tech's defense turn it around in midstream, and almost instantaneously, during 2012? I had the chance to visit with Bud to discuss this season and look ahead a bit towards 2013. Here is the interview:


**BR: Bud, thanks for taking the time to visit. The numbers show the Hokies had another top-20 defense in 2012. How did you guys turn it around this year?**

**BF:** "Well, early in the season, we were playing a lot of guys in new positions in the back end of our defense. We had some inexperienced guys like (Detrick) Bonner and (Michael) Cole who we were playing at nickel (as a fifth defensive back). That's a position that Kyle (Fuller) had played the year before. So we had some inexperience in the back end, and we were playing all those spread offenses. Our tackling, particularly on the perimeter wasn't good, and we were giving up some huge plays, just some big-yardage plays."

**BR: During the second half of the season, you switched back to a more conventional**


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**defense in a lot of ways. Can you walk us through that?**

**BF:** “Yeah, after the Carolina game, what we did was we went back to (Ronnie) Vandyke and (Alonzo) Tweedy and played them more at whip and let them develop at that position. Earlier in the season, we got away from our blitzes and pressure packages. But with Tweedy, we brought a lot of pressure and played to his strengths, and that helped. It really prevented the big plays on the perimeter in the run game that we were allowing earlier. We didn’t make those plays early, especially against UNC and Pitt.”

**BR: Tweedy made a big difference, didn’t he?**

**BF:** “Yeah he did. And we played more ‘match-up football.’ We had him in there for the run, or against a tight end or a man in space, and he did well.”

**BR: Statistically, the difference between the first six games, and the final seven is remarkable. What was the key to the individual and collective improvement down the stretch?**

**BF:** “Our linebacker play was solid. Bruce (Taylor) got better. He is better suited to be a mike linebacker (where Jack Tyler played again in 2012), but he was an outstanding leader for us down the stretch. Also, we got push with a four-man pass rush. The spread offenses early slowed down our ends. We need to be able to defend running quarterbacks in that, and down the stretch, we played more pro-style teams, and that fit more into the strength of our ends.”

**BR: The spread offenses though, particularly when you have a mobile quarterback, are so incredibly difficult to defend it appears. Why is that?**

**BF:** “Well, they get you in an 11-on-11 game.

So your free safety is absolutely huge in the run game, and good offenses put you in one-on-ones with a dynamic quarterback and that can be hard. Early on (in 2012), we didn’t pressure as much as we’d like to.”

**BR: But you did pressure Clemson and held the Tigers to a season-low 294 yards. You look at what that team, with Tajh Boyd, Andre Ellington and DeAndre Hopkins, did offensively against LSU and other teams this year, and Tech’s defensive performance at Clemson is even more remarkable. In the Florida State game, Tech had five sacks and a 12 total tackles for loss. Those two games, even though Tech lost, were tremendous from a defensive standpoint.**

**BF:** “I thought we were able to pressure teams. Stop the run and pressure teams. And that’s kind of what we do, and it showed what we can do even against dynamic quarterbacks and elite skill people.”

**BR: In the bowl game, that was the key?**

**BF:** “I thought we had him (Rutgers quarterback Gary Nova) looking at the rush. Again, we had some hurries and hits and knockdowns and were able to get off the field (Rutgers was 3 for 21 on third downs). We played on their side of the line of scrimmage, which I thought was key.”

**BR: One of the best bowl performances ever, and it caps off one of the great seasons ever, considering where you were in mid-October, no?**

**BF:** “I’m really proud of our kids, and my hat is off to them. When things didn’t look the brightest for us during the course of this season, our kids hung in there. It says something about them and our staff. I’m really proud of how they fought down the stretch. This team could’ve folded the

tent, you know? When we were 4-6, our seniors hung in there, and our team hung in there.”

**BR: Let’s look a little toward spring ball and next year. Who should we watch?**

**BF:** “I’m really anxious to see how we look at linebacker and especially Tariq Edwards, who I think can be really dynamic for us in coverage and with pressure. I look for him to be ‘full go’ for the spring. He was really improved the last six weeks for us this season, and he can be a real difference maker for us there.”

**BR: Who will you be watching among the younger guys this spring?**

**BF:** “Well, both Devin Vandyke and Deon Clarke have a chance to be really good at linebacker, and we’ll get them out there this spring and turn them loose. Davion Tookes is a guy who redshirted and we’re looking for big things from him, and also from Der’Woun Greene in the secondary, too. Our front is going to be good, but I think a guy like Nigel Williams has a chance to step in there and help us in our front four. Overall, I think we still need to work on things on the back end and on the perimeter, but I’m really excited about the players we have back.”

**2012 VIRGINIA TECH DEFENSIVE STATISTICS**

Category	First six games	Final seven games
Yards allowed	2,340	1,991
Yards per game	390	284
Rushing yards per game	196.7	80.4
Opposing 3rd-down conversions	34 of 97	23 of 105
Sacks	8	27
Tackles for loss	40	59

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## Keeping up *with* Compliance

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

**Q:** I saw an article recently that stated that Ohio State's compliance office recently started requiring each assistant football coach to make sure each of his players has a checking account and a personal budget. Otherwise, the players can't suit up for games. The coaches are required to monitor the players' spending habits to make sure they don't get into financial trouble. Do we do this at Virginia Tech? Your thoughts? Thanks, John in Blacksburg.

**TP:** "I saw this article as well, and no, we do not require our student-athletes to have a checking account or personal budget here at Virginia Tech.

"My first thought is that the idea is extreme. However, based on what the Buckeyes have been through in recent years, perhaps it does have some merit. It gives athletics administrators the ability to assess the financial status of student-athletes, and it's definitely better for the athletics department to know about any issues before a booster does.

"Also, the banking and budgeting advice would be beneficial to the student-athletes . . . as it would be to any college student. Maybe it could even help them avoid some of the financial problems that many professional athletes seem to experience.

"It strikes me as a sizeable additional responsibility for the assistant coaches. But the idea is definitely unique. I'll be interested in

talking to my colleagues in Columbus to find out whether they feel the program has value, and how long it's continued."

**Q:** How come the coach rarely gets punished when a school gets in trouble with the NCAA? I mean, John Calipari has had two Final Fours vacated because of NCAA shenanigans, and he never got punished. Wouldn't a suspension of some sorts curb some of this illicit behavior? Just wondering. Thanks, Jean Ann in Pearisburg.


**TP:** "Actually, many in the NCAA agree with your line of thinking. Last October, the NCAA Basketball Focus Group endorsed and strongly encouraged the use of suspensions from regular season and/or tournament games for head and assistant men's basketball coaches found guilty of violating NCAA regulations. These suspensions could be handed out by the NCAA Enforcement Staff or the NCAA Committee on Infractions, and could result from a major infraction or a combination of secondary violations. So I think the new rules will hold coaches more responsible for NCAA violations in the future.

"Now, in fairness to Calipari, he wasn't directly named by the NCAA Committee on Infractions as a result of the investigations in the two cases you were referring to – one at UMass and one at Memphis. As they say, a lot of smoke but no fire. Calipari was not found to be culpable."

**Q:** It doesn't seem fair to me that schools are self-imposing bowl bans when they don't even know what the penalties may end up being. Look at Miami. They chose not to go to a meaningless bowl game in return for lighter future sanctions from the NCAA. That's almost getting to pick your penalty. How is that fair? How much does the NCAA take into account self-imposed penalties? Thanks, Danny in Blacksburg.

**TP:** "First, I'd challenge your assumption that they were going to a 'meaningless' bowl game. They would have actually won the Coastal Division (because of North Carolina's situation) and played for an ACC title this year, with the chance to go to the Orange Bowl. So the decision to self-impose cost them an opportunity at a major bowl.

"However, I understand your point. There are quite a few folks in the compliance profession – and throughout intercollegiate athletics – who would like to see the NCAA's Committee on Infractions not even consider self-imposed bowl bans when delivering its sanctions. Many believe that would make for a fairer process.

"However, the NCAA also has to consider the impact of its punishment on the current student-athletes – and, keep in mind, none of them did anything wrong. At Miami, two classes have been denied a postseason opportunity. Would the NCAA deny a third class an opportunity? That's part of the dilemma." 


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# Tech picks off bowl victory

Antone Exum's interception caps a great week for him and sets up a touchdown that enables the Hokies to rally past Rutgers for an overtime win in the Russell Athletic Bowl

by **Jimmy Robertson**

Last-minute Christmas shopping for the Virginia Tech football team consisted of a Christmas Eve jaunt to a Best Buy in Orlando with a \$470 gift card in their pockets.

This was their "paycheck" for making the Russell Athletic Bowl and giving up Christmas with their families, so most understandably rewarded themselves, buying up all sorts of electronic equipment and gadgets.

But Antone Exum exhibited the spirit of the season, giving back to those less fortunate and using all of his gift card to buy all sorts of goodies for three random young boys from the Bahamas who just happened to be in the store at the time.

A few days later, he then gave the Hokies'

17 seniors a parting present – a victory over Rutgers in their last collegiate game.

Exum made arguably the biggest play of the season when his late fourth-quarter interception set up a game-tying touchdown and ultimately enabled the Hokies to pull out a 13-10 overtime victory over the Scarlet Knights in the Russell Athletic Bowl played at Florida Citrus Bowl Stadium on Dec. 28.

Tech rallied from a 10-0 deficit in the fourth quarter, and then the Hokies snapped a two-game bowl losing streak in overtime on kicker Cody Journell's third game-winning field goal of the season, a 22-yarder on the first possession of overtime. Rutgers kicker Nick Borgese missed

a 42-yarder on the Scarlet Knights' possession, sending the Hokies celebrating as they concluded a rather trying season that saw them finish with a 7-6 mark.

"I give Rutgers a lot of credit ... I've got a lot of respect for that program," said Tech coach Frank Beamer, who improved to 9-11 in bowl games at Tech. "But I'm proud of our guys, too. It's kind of like nothing comes easy for us. It's work. But we've got a bunch of guys who will hang around, and we're not always pretty, but we hang on and keep working at it.

"I think that says a lot. Rather than getting down ... a couple of times this year we could have shut it down, but these guys never did. We've



always hung together and kept playing. To me, that's what this game is all about, and it's what life's all about."

Certainly Tech had reasons to shut it down in this game, as nothing went right in the first three quarters of the game. The offense amassed a total of 79 yards in the first 45 minutes, and a botched snap on the game's second play – Tech center Caleb Farris tried to catch Rutgers offside and snapped it to quarterback Logan Thomas, who wasn't looking – led to the Scarlet Knights' Khaseem Greene recovering the loose ball in the end zone for a touchdown. And while Tech's defense played great, it dropped several interceptions that could have changed the momentum.

But in the fourth quarter, Tech's offense cobbled together a couple of big plays, as Thomas completed a 32-yard pass to Dyrrell Roberts and followed that with a 25-yard completion to Corey Fuller. Those two plays set up a 25-yard field goal from Journell that cut the Rutgers lead to 10-3 with 12:14 left in the game.

A little more than a minute later, Exum delivered the momentum changer.

The redshirt junior from Richmond intercepted a pass by Rutgers quarterback Gary Nova right in front of the Scarlet Knights' sideline and returned it 32 yards to the Rutgers 21, putting the Hokies in perfect field position with 11:11 remaining.

Tech capitalized. On third-and-10 from the 21, Thomas threw a perfect pass to Fuller toward the corner of the end zone, and Fuller hauled it in for the game's lone offensive touchdown. Journell's extra point tied things at 10 with 10:56 remaining.

"He's been doing that down the stretch," Tech mike linebacker Jack Tyler said of Exum. "He made that big play against UVa (an interception that set up Journell's game-winning field goal against the Cavaliers). That's what Antone does for us. He makes big plays when you need them.

"When your offense is struggling like that, sometimes the defense needs to jump start things. I think the offense will be happy that Antone got that pick because it switched the momentum of the game."

In the overtime period, Rutgers won the toss and elected to play defense first. On second down, Thomas fired a 19-yard strike to Marcus Davis to get the Hokies inside the Rutgers 5. The drive stalled, and Tech settled for the 22-yarder by Journell.

Rutgers (9-4) then got the ball. But Tech's

Derrick Hopkins sacked Nova for a 6-yard loss and two completions by Nova netted just six yards, forcing Rutgers to send out Borgese for the 42-yard attempt. He missed it wide right to end the game.

Offensively, Tech finished with 196 yards, as the Hokies struggled to muster much against a good Rutgers defense. Thomas completed 15 of 39 for 193 yards, with the touchdown and two interceptions. J.C. Coleman led all receivers with five catches for 39 yards, while Davis caught four for 62 and Fuller hauled in two for 46.

But Rutgers finished with just 196 yards itself against Tech's stout defense, which sacked Nova three times and amassed 12 tackles for a loss. The Hokies' defense was particularly good in the fourth quarter and overtime, as that unit gave up just one first down in that span.

The Scarlet Knights stayed in the game because they did not turn the ball over – until Exum's interception in the fourth quarter. The interception marked the fifth of the season for the second-team All-ACC cornerback, who was named MVP of the game.

But he – and teammates Tariq Edwards and Davis, who chipped in a portion of their gift cards as well to purchase the goodies for the three Bahamians – received more for the good deeds off the field just days earlier.

"I think God works in mysterious ways," Exum said. "It's a blessing to get that MVP award, and more importantly, to get that win.


"As far as the gift giving goes, that was probably the highlight of my trip, just being able to see the smiles on those kids' faces. It definitely means a lot."

The win marked Tech's third straight to finish the season, as the Hokies recorded their 20th straight winning season – a streak that dates back to 1992.

Perhaps more importantly, the 17 seniors go out with a win. They finished their careers with a 39-15 overall mark.

None, though, more gratifying than this one – one that left them thanking an underclassman for playing such a big role in it happening.

"Those guys have been great examples and great leaders," Exum said. "We've learned a lot from those seniors. To send them out on a winning note was everything to us.

"We haven't had a losing record in I don't know how long. We win around here. It's just great to be that team that didn't end with a losing season and hopefully we can do bigger and better things next year." 

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JOEY PHILLIPS

# WALKING *on to* SUCCESS

A humble attitude, a great work ethic and an undeniable determination were just a few of the traits that former walk-ons and running backs Joey Phillips and Martin Scales shared in their Tech careers

by Jimmy Robertson



MARTIN SCALES



Joey Phillips and Martin Scales share many commonalities. They practically share the same age (Scales is seven months older), they share the same Southwest Virginia roots, they shared, at times, the same position in Tech's backfield, and thus, they shared the same meeting room for the past three years. They even shared the same football field at times this past season.

They share a deep friendship, a mutual respect not just of the physical skills that each brings to the football field, but also of the values that each represents. They share a love for being one of those blue-collar grunt workers who are absolutely critical to a team's success. They share an admiration for each being willing to accept that role—and thrive in it.

Platitudes aside, there is one obstacle that their friendship hasn't been able to overcome, a mountain simply too tall to ascend.

"You know he ended my high school career, right?" Phillips said. "Oh yeah. Beat us in the playoffs my senior year."

Investigative research, as expected, confirmed Phillips' statement. His Blacksburg High team finished the 2007 regular season with a 7-3 record and a Group AA playoff berth. The Bruins traveled to Bassett, Va., for a first-round game against Scales' undefeated Bassett High team, and on the frosty Bermuda turf of the Bengals' home field, they lost 27-15, ending their season—and Phillips' career.

Scales had a lot to do with that. He rushed for a whopping 179 yards and two touchdowns in the Bassett victory, and according to Phillips, he caused a lot of headaches as a free safety.

"I think he's still a little salty about that," Scales said.

The two remember each other from that November night. Phillips, who played outside linebacker, remembers the Scales runs, but also swears to this day that Scales could have been a great rover at Tech. Scales remembers watching film and noticing Phillips and all the plays he made.

Now, here it is more than five years later, and both their careers have just ended. They never would have predicted back then that they would take nearly identical paths to becoming contributors at Virginia Tech.

Joey Phillips seemed destined for a baseball career in college and perhaps beyond. Yes, he played other sports growing up. He started playing football in the fifth grade and he later got into wrestling. But baseball was in his DNA.

After all, his father, Jay, played baseball at Tech—and he played it well, too. In 1980, he hit .358 and stole 24 bases on his way to earning first-team All-Metro honors. He later got into coaching



Joey Phillips, seen here with his family, including parents Jay and Kathy Phillips (left), went from being a walk-on to a two-year starter for the Hokies as a fullback.

and served as Chuck Hartman's top lieutenant for years.

"Baseball was my first love," Joey admitted. "My first word was 'ball.' Obviously, I was always around it with my dad being a coach. When he started coaching here in 1991 or 1992, I used to go on one trip a year and got to go on the bus with the players. This was before English Field was a stadium, like it is now. They had that big hill over there, and I used to tumble down that hill and chase foul balls."

Joey Phillips became a very good baseball player. He went on to set school records in doubles and RBI over the course of a four-year career at Blacksburg High. He earned first-team All-Group AA honors his senior season.

For whatever reason, few recruiters took notice. Maybe some assumed he planned on playing football because of his skill in that sport. Maybe others projected him as a wrestler, another sport in which he excelled.

But by the end of his senior season, he planned on going to Tech and becoming an average Joey.

Occasionally, though, fate gets in the way of the best-laid plans. One Sunday evening, Jay and Kathy Phillips made a Walmart run. While there, they ran into John Ballein, Tech's associate AD for football operations. Ballein and Jay Phillips know each other well going back to Jay's days as assistant under Hartman, and Ballein asked about Joey's plans.

"Where's Joey going?" Ballein asked. "Is he going to play baseball?"

"No, it's weird," Jay said. "He's not being recruited. He's just going to go to Tech as a student."

The next day, Tech running backs coach Billy Hite called Joey and invited him to the spring game. He offered him an opportunity to walk on to the football team.

Joey Phillips was stunned.

"I had never thought of that," he said. "I thought I was a good football player. I came to the game with Bo Gentry (another former walk-on) and walked through the tunnel, and the crowd was going crazy. I knew then it was something I had to give a shot."

Not long after that, he got some calls from some Division III coaches, both for football and baseball. But he had made up his mind.

"I had made my commitment," he said. "I already had bought into being a Tech football player."

Scales' route to Virginia Tech was just as random as his comrade's, perhaps even more so.

For starters, he wasn't allowed to be inside his house.

"I had four sisters," he said with a smile. "So I wasn't allowed to stay in the house."

Scales grew up on the same country road—Flat Rock Road—in Henry County, Va., that his cousins, former Tech players Orion and Cam Martin, lived on, so he often walked down the hill to their house. The three of them spent most of their spare time playing football in the family fields with other cousins who lived in the area (his mom and Orion's and Cam's father are siblings). Kathryn Martin, their grandmother, has 17 grandchildren.

Of course, football only came about when Bobby Martin, their uncle and a former Tech



Martin Scales, seen here with his four sisters and parents Oscar and Gracie Scales (right), started the final two games this season and played a key role in the Hokies' season-ending three-game winning streak.

player (1986-89), let them play. Often, the three boys helped Bobby with his logging business, or whatever other task he wanted them to perform. They became country strong and cast-iron tough.

"I always had some form of work to do, whether it was cutting grass or whatever," Scales said. "I always made sure the equipment had gas and oil and hydraulic fluid. When we were cutting wood, I usually pulled the cables to pull the wood off the skidder. I had the smaller jobs, but I was out there, too."

That work ethic, and those football battles with the cousins, served him well at Bassett High, where he became a top-notch player. He earned first-team all-district and all-region honors his

senior season, earning co-Region IV defensive player of the year honors as well. On offense, he rushed for 1,553 yards and 21 touchdowns from his tailback spot.

He got some offers coming out of high school, but he dreamed of playing for Virginia Tech, as his uncle and two cousins did. He arrived in Blacksburg in 2008, all set for workouts and practices.

But he received some crushing news right before fall camp opened. Ballein informed him of an NCAA Clearinghouse issue that would make him ineligible. Crestfallen, he packed up his stuff and rode back to Martinsville, Va. He enrolled at nearby Patrick Henry Community College,

wondering where his life was going.

"The Clearinghouse didn't receive all the paperwork from my guidance counselors in high school, so I either had to go to Division II and transfer back, or get an associate degree," he said. "It was easier on my family to get an associate degree. So I went to Patrick Henry right down the road."

Patrick Henry did not have a football team, but Scales kept himself in shape in hopes of getting another call from the Tech staff. For two years, he worked out and took classes – and wondered if the call would come.

"I was even thinking about joining the military," he said. "I didn't want to stay in Martinsville."

In the spring of 2008, his final semester at Patrick Henry, he received a call from Hite.

"Do you want to play some fullback for me?" Hite asked. "Can you hit linebackers the way you hit running backs as a safety?"

"I can do that," Scales told him.

He came to Blacksburg right after his semester ended, enrolling at Tech for the first summer school session.

"I had my mind set," he said. "That's where my uncle went and that's where my cousins went. I've enjoyed Tech football since I was young, and I wanted to do it."

Once they got into Tech's program, Phillips and Scales did whatever it took to get on the field. The path began when they committed themselves to Mike Gentry's strength and conditioning program, getting bigger and stronger. They also watched extra film. They took being on the scout team seriously. They volunteered for any and all special teams.

Special teams originally got both of them on

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the field, and both their devotion and work ethic there caught the eye of head coach Frank Beamer. Fittingly, in August of last year, he called both of them into his office at the same time – and offered both of them scholarships.

The reaction was predictable, but no less heartwarming.

“I didn’t know what to say,” Phillips said. “I didn’t want to say too much. Coach Beamer was in a hurry, and we were between meetings. He’s got football on his mind. He doesn’t care if you’re a first-year walk-on or a fifth-year senior. He wants football to be happening. I just thanked him and told him he wouldn’t regret it. Then I sent out a group text to my mom, my dad and my sister.”

Scales expressed similar thoughts. Relief overwhelmed him, as he knew what a scholarship meant for his parents. His father had been laid off a couple of times, and with Scales’ newfound aid, his parents wouldn’t have to pay his tuition.

“It was more just a relief financially for me,” he said. “I didn’t have to burden my parents. I was happy, obviously, but it was more just a relief financially.”

“Then, I thought, ‘I must be valuable for something.’ That’s the first time I thought, ‘I guess I’m all right.’”

Both played substantial roles this past season. Phillips, who started five games as a junior at the fullback spot, started four games this season. His teammates thought so much of his contributions that they voted him one of four permanent team captains for the 2012 season.

Scales, who was moved to tailback for this season, started two games – on Senior Day against Virginia and in the Russell Athletic Bowl – but served an important role as a short-yardage back.

In fact, Scales arguably saved the Hokies’ season. In the game at BC, he made an impressive run on third-and-1 from the BC 16, gaining 3 yards on a play that appeared destined to be a loser. Two plays later, Logan Thomas threw a touchdown pass that was the game winner.

“It sort of hit me after the game,” Scales said. “I was just happy for the opportunity. My parents had told me earlier in the season, ‘Don’t be mad. Don’t be pouting. Just be ready because eventually you’ll get the opportunity. If you’re not ready, then there’s no point.’”

“I still think we would have won the game. But it’s cool to have the opportunity to do that.”


With the season over, Scales and Phillips plan on getting ready for the next phase of their lives. Phillips, who graduated with a degree in human

development and also got his master’s degree in instructional design and technology, wants to do something in medical device sales. Scales graduated with a degree in history, and while he wants to give pro football a shot – even if it means going to Canada and playing – he sees law enforcement or becoming a history teacher as two more realistic options.

Their professions may not be as exciting as college football – not many things are – but they represent the next challenge in their lives, one they will welcome and attack with the same devotion and work ethic that made them successful as student-athletes at Virginia Tech.

“I was telling my mom the other day that I wished I was better at football,” Phillips said. “I could be training for Pro Day (in late February or March) instead of just spinning my tires. It’s bittersweet, but I’ll be all right.”

“I don’t see entering the real world as a bad thing. I’ve been to college for five years, and I’ll walk away with a masters. I’ve had a great time, made great memories. I have awesome friends. Everything will work out.”

Knowing these two, it’ll work out great. And it would be just one more thing that the two of these young men with similar stories share. 



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# Season-Ending Depth Chart

Here is a look at the depth chart for the entire season. The number before the slash indicates plays from scrimmage, while the number after the slash indicates plays on special teams. The number of plays, the grades and the tackles came from the coaching staff. **Note: This does not include the number of plays from the Russell Athletic Bowl.**

by Jimmy Robertson

## OFFENSE

### QUARTERBACKS

- 3 Logan Thomas (6-6, 260, r-Jr.)** - 868/0. Started all 13 games. Completed 220 of 429 passes for 2,976 yards, with 18 touchdowns and 16 interceptions. Also led the Hokies in rushing with 524 yards on 174 carries and nine touchdowns. Became the first Tech quarterback since 1965 to lead the team in rushing (Bobby Owens).
- 6 Mark Leal (6-1, 213, r-Soph.)** - 24/0. Played in two games, completing 4 of 6 passes for 26 yards.
- 12 Trey Gresh (6-1, 212, r-Soph.)** - 0/64. Played in all 13 games, serving as the holder for extra points and field-goal attempts.

### TAILBACKS

- 4 J.C. Coleman (5-8, 192, Fr.)** - 361/69. Started six games and played in all 13. Finished as the team's second-leading rusher with 492 yards on 109 carries. Scored two touchdowns. Also caught 21 passes for 132 yards and a touchdown. Returned 19 kicks for an average of 21.6 yards per return.
- 25 Martin Scales (5-11, 222, r-Sr.)** - 124/225. Started two games and played in all 13. Rushed for 187 yards on 52 carries and scored two touchdowns. Also caught three passes for 9 yards.
- 22 Tony Gregory (6-0, 185, r-Jr.)** - 197/64. Started two games and played in 11. Rushed for 299 yards on 64 carries and scored a touchdown. Also caught seven passes for 60 yards.
- 20 Michael Holmes (6-0, 208, r-Fr.)** - 234/54. Started five games and played in 11. Rushed for 280 yards on 70 carries and scored four touchdowns. Also caught five passes for 23 yards, and he returned 14 punts for an average of 7.4 yards per return.
- 39 Daniel Dyer (5-9, 196, r-Soph.)** - 4/10. Played in six games.

### FULLBACKS

- 45 Joey Phillips (5-11, 234, r-Sr.)** - 187/35. Started four games and played in all 13. Caught five passes for 18 yards.

- 32 Riley Beiro (5-9, 228, r-Soph.)** - 21/23. Played in six games before injuring his shoulder and missing the rest of the season. Caught one pass for 3 yards.
- 47 Greg Gadell (5-10, 195, r-Soph.)** - 6/11.
- 46 Griffin Hite (5-11, 226, r-Fr.)** - 0/2. Played in the Austin Peay game.

### SPLIT ENDS

- 11 Dyrell Roberts (6-2, 195, r-Sr.)** - 589/7. Played in all 13 games, starting 10. Caught 33 passes for 398 yards and a touchdown. Also ran the ball nine times for 74 yards.
- 83 Corey Fuller (6-2, 196, r-Sr.)** - 655/0. Played in all 13 games, starting eight. Caught 43 passes for 815 yards and a team-leading six touchdowns.
- 44 Christian Reeves (6-3, 209, r-Fr.)** - 8/36. Played in 10 games. Caught one pass for 6 yards.
- 5 Josh Stanford (6-1, 188, Fr.)** - 11/0. Played in the Austin Peay game, catching a pass for 9 yards before being shut down for the season with an injury. Will apply for a medical hardship waiver.
- 18 D.J. Coles (6-4, 226, Sr.)** - 13/0. Played in just one game (Georgia Tech) before going down for the season with a knee injury. May apply for a medical hardship waiver to play next season.

### FLANKERS

- 7 Marcus Davis (6-4, 232, r-Sr.)** - 653/3. Played in all 13 games, starting 10. Hauled in a team-leading 51 passes for 953 yards and five touchdowns. Finished just 9 yards short of tying the single-season record for receiving yardage (Andre Davis, 962 in 1999). Also ran the ball five times for 72 yards.
- 80 Demitri Knowles (6-1, 177, r-Fr.)** - 333/59. Played in all 13 games, starting three. Caught 19 passes for 240 yards and a touchdown. Also ran the ball seven times for 24 yards, and led Tech in kick returns, bringing back 21 for an average of 28.3, with a touchdown.
- 19 Kevin Asante (5-11, 181, r-Fr.)** - 43/46. Played in 10 games, starting one. Caught two passes for 18 yards.
- 82 Willie Byrn (5-11, 177, r-Soph.)** - 12/8. Played in six games.

### LEFT TACKLES

- 54 Nick Becton (6-6, 317, r-Sr.)** - 867/59. Started all 13 games. Graded out at 90 percent for the regular season, with a team-leading 36 knockdowns.
- 69 Mark Shuman (6-7, 307, r-Soph.)** - 25/0. Played in three games.

### LEFT GUARDS

- 76 David Wang (6-2, 288, r-Jr.)** - 459/0. Played in 10 of 13 games, starting all 10.
- 64 Matt Arkema (6-3, 287, r-Soph.)** - 132/0. Played in five games, making two starts.
- 77 Tyler Barfield (6-1, 320, Sr.)** - 9/0. Played in two games.

### CENTERS

- 79 Caleb Farris (6-3, 309, Soph.)** - 428/0. Played in nine games, starting five of them.
- 74 Andrew Miller (6-4, 304, r-Jr.)** - 369/0. Started the first seven games before breaking his ankle against Duke and undergoing surgery that cost him the rest of the season.

### RIGHT GUARDS

- 67 Michael Via (6-7, 304, r-Sr.)** - 700/0. Played in all 13 games, starting nine of them.
- 55 Brent Benedict (6-5, 304, r-Soph.)** - 566/58. Played in all 13 games, starting six of them.

### RIGHT TACKLES

- 71 Winston Painter (6-6, 309, r-Sr.)** - 867/58. Started all 13 games.
- 63 Laurence Gibson (6-6, 303, r-Soph.)** - 22/58. Played in 12 games.

### TIGHT ENDS

- 88 Ryan Malleck (6-4, 244, Soph.)** - 425/131. Played in all 13 games, starting seven. Caught 17 passes for 174 yards.
- 9 Randall Dunn (6-2, 240, r-Sr.)** - 251/60. Played in 12 games, starting three. Hauled in 12 passes for 128 yards and three touchdowns.
- 86 Eric Martin (6-2, 258, Sr.)** - 215/49. Played in 12 games, starting four. Hauled in three passes for 16 yards and a touchdown.
- 48 George George (6-4, 268, r-Sr.)** - 13/144. Played in all 13 games.

- 81 Duan Perez-Means (6-4, 237, r-Soph.)** - 12/93. Played in 13 games.
- 33 Darius Redman (6-4, 259, r-Fr.)** - 6/19. Played in five games.

## DEFENSE

### STUD ENDS

- 99 James Gayle (6-4, 269, r-Jr.)** - 557/44. A second-team All-ACC selection. Started 11 of 13 games. Finished with 43 tackles (27 solo), including 11 for a loss, and five sacks. Finished second on the team in sacks and tackles for a loss. Led the team with 27 hurries.
- 90 Dadi Nicolas (6-2, 223, r-Fr.)** - 113/9. Played in 10 games. Had 17 tackles (11 solo), including 3.5 for a loss, and two sacks.

### ENDS

- 96 Corey Marshall (6-1, 267, Soph.)** - 353/57. Played in all 13 games, starting four. Recorded 26 tackles (10 solo), including three for a loss, and 1.5 sacks.
- 66 Tyrel Wilson (6-1, 228, r-Jr.)** - 294/64. Played in all 13 games, starting three. Had 27 tackles (20 solo), including seven for a loss, and 4.5 sacks.
- 91 Matt Roth (6-2, 241, r-Fr.)** - 26/133. Played in all 13 games, seeing time mostly on special teams. Had seven tackles (three solo), including one for a loss, and a sack.

### NOSE TACKLES

- 98 Derrick Hopkins (6-0, 306, Jr.)** - 547/131. An honorable mention All-ACC selection. Started all 13 games. Registered 51 tackles (16 solo), including 10 for a loss, and 3.5 sacks. Was fourth on the team in tackles for a loss.
- 42 J.R. Collins (6-2, 261, r-Jr.)** - 439/51. Played in all 13 games, starting eight. Most of those starts came at defensive end before being moved to tackle. Had 31 tackles (nine solo), including six for a loss, and 1.5 sacks.
- 95 Zack McCray (6-5, 256, r-Soph.)** - 35/143. Played in all 13 games. Had three tackles (two solo) before being moved to tight end late in the season.

### TACKLES

- 92 Luther Maddy (6-1, 288, Soph.)** - 431/3. Played in all 13 games, starting nine. Tallied 35 tackles (15 solo), including 6.5 for a loss, and four sacks.
- 56 Antoine Hopkins (6-1, 313, r-Sr.)** - 364/2. An honorable mention All-ACC selection. Played in all 13 games, starting four. Had 13 tackles (seven solo), including 3.5 for a loss.
- 97 Kris Harley (6-1, 282, r-Fr.)** - 187/1. Played in 10 games. Had six tackles (three solo).

- 87 Justin Taylor (6-2, 246, r-Fr.)** - 9/0. Played in the Austin Peay game.

### MIKE LINEBACKERS

- 58 Jack Tyler (6-1, 236, r-Jr.)** - 819/54. A second-team All-ACC selection. Started all 13 games and led the Hokies in tackles. Finished with 119 tackles (55 solo), including a team-high 13 for a loss, and 2.5 sacks.
- 36 Chase Williams (6-2, 235, r-Soph.)** - 83/210. Played in all 13 games, starting one. Had seven tackles (two solo), including one for a loss.
- 40 Deon Clarke (6-2, 214, Fr.)** - 9/14. Played in three games. Had an assist.

### BACKERS

- 51 Bruce Taylor (6-2, 244, r-Sr.)** - 761/28. An honorable mention All-ACC selection. Played in 12 games, starting 11. Recorded 76 tackles (46 solo), including 10.5 for a loss, and a team-high 5.5 sacks. Finished third on the team in tackles and tackles for a loss.
- 24 Tariq Edwards (6-2, 237, r-Jr.)** - 23/14. Played in seven games, starting one, after missing half the season with a knee/leg problem. Had four assists.
- 49 Josh Trimble (5-11, 200, r-Fr.)** - 2/165. Played in 11 games and had 13 tackles (11 solo).
- 41 Derek DiNardo (6-0, 210, r-Soph.)** - 0/74. Played in all 13 games and had a solo tackle.

### WHIP LINEBACKERS

- 28 Alonzo Tweedy (6-2, 193, r-Sr.)** - 175/220. Played in all 13 games, starting three of them. Registered 38 tackles (24 solo), including six for a loss, and three sacks.
- 37 Ronny Vandyke (6-3, 215, r-Fr.)** - 139/234. Played in all 13 games, starting two of them. Had 21 tackles (17 solo), including two for a loss.

### ROVERS

- 34 Kyshoen Jarrett (5-11, 195, Soph.)** - 826/55. Started all 13 games. Tallied 83 tackles (58 solo), including 4.5 for a loss. Was second on the team in tackles behind Tyler. Averaged 13.9 yards per punt return on 18 returns, bringing back one 94 yards for a touchdown.
- 43 Jeron Gouveia-Winslow (6-2, 210, r-Sr.)** - 202/207. Played in 12 games, starting four of them. Was moved to rover from whip after Michael Cole's injury. Had 28 tackles (12 solo), including 1.5 for a loss.
- 2 Michael Cole (6-1, 199, r-Fr.)** - 443/72. Played in 10 games, starting four, before going down for the season with a neck injury suffered in the FSU game. Worked

mostly in Tech's nickel package. Had 43 tackles (22 solo), including one for a loss, and two interceptions.

### FREE SAFETIES

- 8 Detrick Bonner (6-0, 198, r-Soph.)** - 830/56. Started all 13 games. Finished fourth on the team in tackles with 60 (41 solo), including three for a loss, and a sack. Also had an interception.
- 26 Desmond Frye (6-2, 181, Fr.)** - 36/108. Played in all 13 games. Had five tackles (three solo).

### BOUNDARY CORNERBACKS

- 1 Antone Exum (6-1, 224, r-Jr.)** - 835/72. A second-team All-ACC selection. Started all 13 games. Recorded 48 tackles (35 solo), including 1.5 for a loss, and a team-leading five interceptions. Also forced a team-leading two fumbles.
- 31 Donovan Riley (5-11, 200, Fr.)** - 22/87. Played in 12 games. Had four tackles (two solo).

### FIELD CORNERBACKS

- 17 Kyle Fuller (6-0, 193, Jr.)** - 749/77. Started all 13 games. Registered 52 tackles (44 solo), including three for a loss, and two interceptions.
- 30 Donaldven Manning (5-9, 155, Fr.)** - 88/31. Played in eight games. Had four solo tackles and an interception.
- 35 Carl Jackson (5-9, 174, r-Soph.)** - 0/1. Played in the Austin Peay game.

## SPECIAL TEAMS

### KICKERS

- 89 Cody Journell (6-0, 195, r-Jr.)** - 0/61. Connected on 20 of 25 field-goal attempts, hitting three game winners. Also hit 34 of 36 extra-point attempts. Led the team with 94 total points. Kicked the ball off six times, with one going for a touchback.
- 21 Brooks Abbott (6-2, 182, Fr.)** - 0/39. Kicked off 39 times, with nine going for touchbacks.
- 38 Michael Branthover (5-9, 184, Soph.)** - 0/20. Kicked off 20 times, with eight going for touchbacks.

### PUNTERS

- 27 A.J. Hughes (6-1, 190, Fr.)** - 0/79. Averaged 40.6 yards per punt on 79 punts, placing 22 inside the 20.

### SNAPPERS

- 65 Joe St. Germain (6-0, 212, r-Soph.)** - 0/130. Played in all 13 games.



# Redshirt year ends for Tech freshmen

Members of the 2012 recruiting class who redshirted this past fall are anxious to put their talents on display during spring practice in March

by Jimmy Robertson

In the weeks leading up to the Russell Athletic Bowl held in Orlando, most of Virginia Tech's football players expressed excitement over spending a week in a city with so much to offer in the way of entertainment.

Most, but not all.

"Nah, nah, not even thinking about it," freshman Dahman McKinnon said. "I mean, it's definitely fun. I'm a part of it, but I'm not going to be contributing. I need to be worrying about what I'm going to be contributing to (in the future)."

McKinnon's businesslike manner reflected the attitude of many of the freshmen who redshirted this past fall. In other words, get through it, and then get on to spring practice.

Tech's 2012 recruiting class included 28 signees

— the second-largest class ever under coach Frank Beamer. Only six of those 28 played this past season, and two of those six, Joshua Stanford and Deon Clarke, are probably applying for medical hardship waivers after missing most of the season. Five others never arrived, though may enroll later. That left the remaining 17 to go through a redshirt season at Tech.

"I do," said Trey Edmunds, one of those 17, when asked if he thought redshirting was the best move for him. "I believe any high school player that comes straight to college ... they just want to play. That's all I knew back then. But the coaches made the right decision. I did it, and I'm happy with it. I'm getting ready for next year, and all this (redshirting) has been a benefit."

Edmunds and McKinnon are a part of a freshman class whose development, perhaps more than any other class under Beamer, is critical for any future Tech success, both in the short term and the long term.

This rings true particularly on the offensive side of the ball, where the Hokies lost three receivers (Marcus Davis, Dyrrell Roberts and Corey Fuller), two tight ends (Randall Dunn and Eric Martin), three offensive linemen (Vinston Painter, Nick Becton and Michael Via), fullback Joey Phillips and reserve tailback Martin Scales. Not to mention, quarterback Logan Thomas hadn't made up his mind at press time on leaving school early and making himself available for the NFL Draft.

So in all, Tech loses 10 contributors on offense,





Dahman McKinnon

not including Thomas. The Hokies' offense struggled with consistency during the 2012 campaign, so with the loss of so many players and a tougher schedule on the horizon in 2013 (Alabama in Atlanta and at East Carolina), it's little wonder that Beamer and his staff spent a lot of time working in younger players in pre-bowl practices.

"You start looking at those younger guys and start seeing where they're going to project for next year," Beamer admitted.

The spotlight figures to shine brightly both on Edmunds and Chris Mangus, a 5-foot-11, 190-pounder, during spring practice this March. Tech's staff almost played Edmunds this past season, but he, like most young running backs, struggled in pass protection and with the playbook. Additional repetitions in spring practice will give him an opportunity to showcase the player who rushed for nearly 2,600 yards and 33 touchdowns his senior season at Dan River (Va.) High School.

Mangus is noted for his speed, while the 6-foot-1 Edmunds now weighs 215 pounds and would give the Hokies a power back whom they need with Scales departing. But Edmunds also excelled on defense in high school, and some wonder if he wouldn't be a better linebacker at the collegiate level.

"Right now, I'm still working at tailback. I haven't heard anything else," Edmunds said. "So each day, I go out there and try to learn new things and get better. I'm working on protecting the ball, holding it high and tight, and working on my footwork and working on reading the defenses – just the little things that make you better.

"I think all of us running backs bring something different to the table. I think my size is an advantage to me, and hopefully, that will help me get on the field faster."

Of course, how Tech's offensive line develops really holds the key to any improved rushing attack. The Hokies appear solid at the guard spots and at center, but the tackles remain an unknown at this point, with rising redshirt juniors Mark Shuman and Laurence Gibson needing to improve.

Tech's staff anticipates Augie Conte being in the mix. Conte, a 6-5, 275-pounder, is a little farther along than fellow freshmen linemen Jack Willenbrock (6-3, 250) and Adam Taraschke (6-5, 300), and he benched an impressive 370 pounds in scout-team testing back in November, raising some eyebrows among the Tech staff.

"I'm a competitive person," Conte said. "I hate losing. I almost hate losing more than I like winning. Pretty much everything I do, I look at it as a competition. I'll be looking to make my spot during the spring. We'll see how it goes.

"The biggest thing for me is learning all the plays and learning all the different formations, and just learning our offense. Of course, I need to develop more physically. I'd like to be 290, 295, by the time the season starts. But for me, the big thing is learning the game of football. I've only played four years – this is my fifth."

At receiver, the Hokies have an interesting collection of young talent, led by highly touted Joel Caleb and Stanford, the August superstar. Caleb, a 6-2, 205-pounder, needed to redshirt as he adjusted from being a high school quarterback to a college receiver, while Stanford wowed everyone in August scrimmages. He played in the Austin Peay game, but a knee injury shelved him for the remainder of the season, and Tech's staff plans on applying for a medical hardship waiver on his behalf.

The remaining four players on offense who redshirted were quarterback Brenden Motley (6-2, 215), tight end Dakota Jackson (6-2, 257), and Mark Irick (6-3, 196). Jackson is probably the most ready to play out of those four. Like Conte, he recorded a 370-pound bench press in scout-team testing.

On the other side of the ball, the staff played three of four defensive backs out of the 2012 recruiting class this season – Donovan Riley, Desmond Frye and Donaldven Manning. Only Davion Tookes (5-10, 166) and Der'Woun Greene (5-10, 179) redshirted, though Tookes may have gotten some time this season if not for a nagging hamstring injury suffered last August.

The freshmen on defense who redshirted this past fall will really have to distinguish themselves in spring practice to get on the field next fall. After all, Tech's defense loses just four players off its first- and second-team units – backer Bruce Taylor, whip linebacker Alonzo Tweedy, rover Jeron Gouveia-Winslow and defensive tackle



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Antoine Hopkins. The Hokies feature a lot of depth on that side of that ball.

That's not to say, though, a few freshmen couldn't surprise. The group certainly possesses that type of talent and potential.

On the defensive front, Alston Smith (6-1, 273), Nigel Williams (6-2, 278), Jarontay Jones (6-2, 238) and Ken Ekanem (6-2, 236) bring size, strength and speed, with Smith and Williams looking like tackles of the future and Jones and Ekanem looking like future ends. Smith, the son of former Tech star Bruce Smith, may be the strongest freshman on the team. He recorded a 395-pound bench press and a 385-pound front squat in scout-team testing.

Ekanem was one of the class' most decorated recruits. The state's defensive player of the year as a senior, he recorded 18 sacks his senior season at Centreville (Va.) High, but he tore his ACL in the Group AAA championship game. He used the redshirt year to rehab his injury, while also developing as a player.

"The knee's a lot better," Ekanem said. "I feel a lot better now. When I came in here in July, I was close to 260 and now I'm down to 235, trying to put on good weight and get to 240. I didn't want to be that heavy, but I couldn't do anything because of my knee, so I had to work it (the weight) off.

"Redshirting was a good thing for me just because of my injury. I thought I'd be redshirted anyway regardless of where I went, but it was good to rehab and get back to top speed, and also to develop different aspects of my game."

At the linebacker spots, McKinnon (6-1, 206), Clarke (6-3, 221) and Devin Vandyke (5-11, 214) round out the group. Clarke played sparingly in the first few games before going down with an undisclosed injury, and he plans on applying for a medical hardship waiver. Vandyke injured a knee and spent most of the fall recovering from it, but he certainly possesses the potential to be a good one.

McKinnon, though, stood out. The Hope Mills, N.C., native earned Super Iron Hokie honors in the strength and conditioning program after recording a 385-pound bench press, a 390-pound front squat and a 36.5-inch vertical jump. The staff worked him some at rover early on, but he fits in perfectly at that whip linebacker spot, a position that takes advantage of players who can play in space.

"I think it's a good position for me," McKinnon said. "I need to put on weight, and then go out there and do what I need to do. It's (the whip position) a lot like what I did in high school. I like to fly around the field and be a factor."

Most of these players admitted that they came

in expecting to play right away. Then in August, reality struck, as they found themselves facing players who weighed more, possessed more strength and speed, and had, in some cases, four more years of experience on them.

That only takes into account the physical and experience aspects. Nearly all of them struggled with the terminology and the complexity of the Hokies' schemes.

"It was very difficult," McKinnon said of his transition from high school to college. "The defense was difficult to learn. That was the hardest part for me, just knowing what to do, when to do it and how to do it. You have to recognize formations and then call the defenses based off that. It's a lot to process.

"Redshirting was definitely a good move for me. I'm glad it happened."

The group spent the fall adjusting to college football and got a good start on that process – without the pressure of needing to perform each Saturday. They also enjoyed their week in Orlando for the Russell Athletic Bowl.

But for them, more fun comes from being on the field and playing in front of thousands. The redshirt year is now over, and the road to that playing time begins this spring.

For sure, these freshmen can't wait. 



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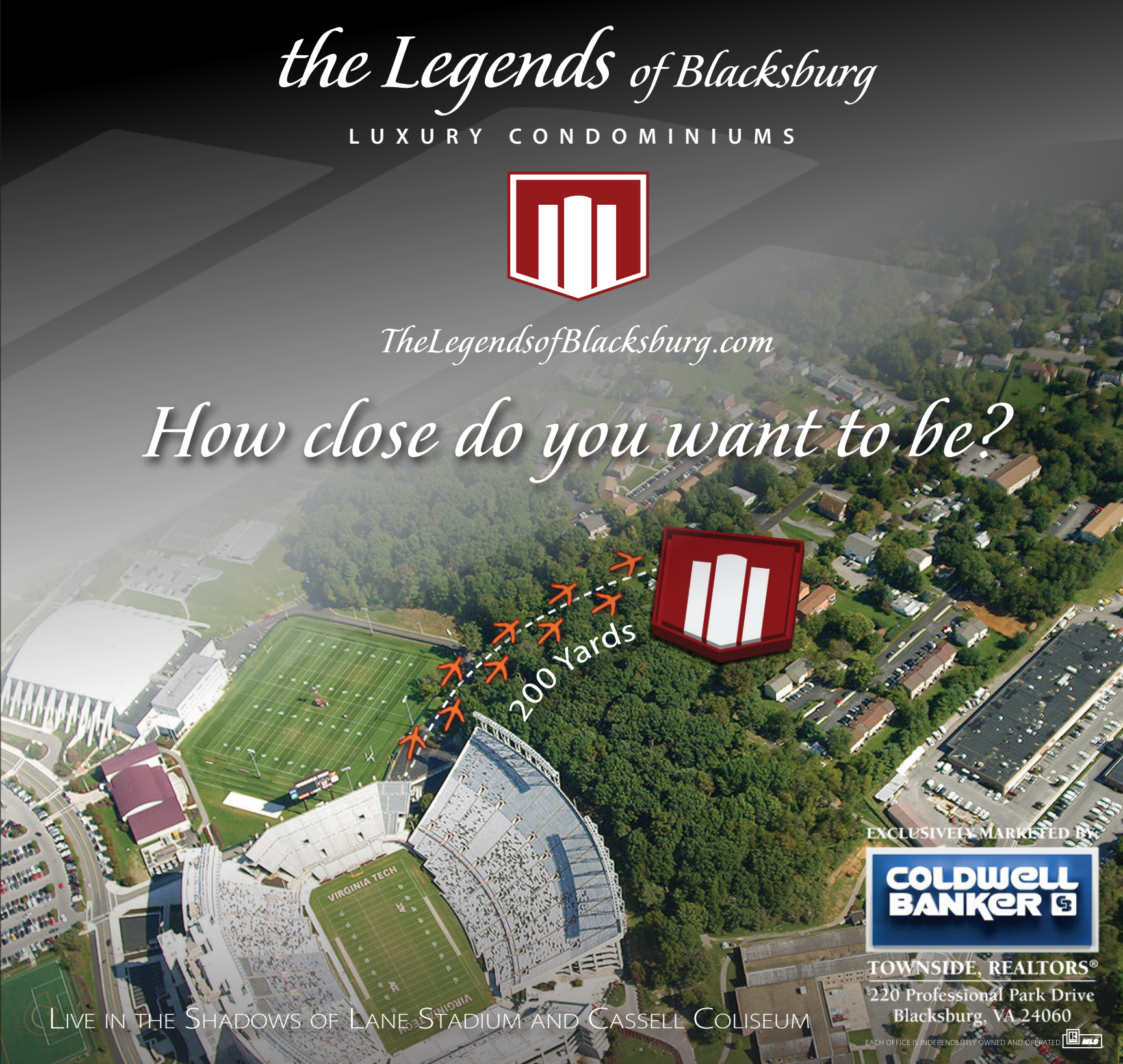
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# Wilson flipped out verses the Saints

The former Tech tailback accomplished something never done before in the NFL – and celebrated by doing backflips

by Jimmy Robertson

David Wilson has long been known for his ability to do backflips, once doing eight in a row at a Virginia Tech football media day.

After watching his performance on Dec. 9, football fans throughout the nation were the ones flipping out.

Wilson, a former Virginia Tech tailback who decided to forgo his final season of college eligibility and enter the NFL Draft last spring, became a part of NFL history following his performance against the New Orleans Saints. He became the first player in the world's best football league to record at least 200 kick return yards and 100 yards rushing in the same game.

Playing mostly because of an injury to starter Ahmad Bradshaw, Wilson, a native of Danville, Va., returned four kickoffs for 227 yards and a touchdown, and he carried the ball 13 times for 100 yards and two scores in the New York Giants' 52-27 victory over the Saints. Elias Sports Bureau, widely considered the world's foremost sports statisticians and historians, confirmed the rookie's record via Twitter on Dec. 12.

"It (his performance) was an eye opener to me and to other people around me," Wilson said in a phone interview four days after the game. "My teammates and coaches were proud of me.

"I expected success in the future. I knew I could come in and have some success on special teams, and I knew I could be productive on offense if given the opportunity. But to set records ... that's a lot to take in."

Wilson, who was the Giants' primary kickoff returner all season, returned a kickoff 97 yards for a touchdown in the second quarter against the Saints. He also returned kicks for 58, 52 and 20 yards. On the ground, he scored on runs of 6 yards and 52 yards – his season long.

He finished the game with a franchise-record 327 total yards. He also became the first Giants player since 1948 to have a kickoff return for a touchdown and a rushing touchdown in the same game.

The game marked a stark contrast to his NFL debut when he fumbled on his second carry in a primetime game against the Dallas Cowboys. He did not carry the ball more than seven times in any game leading up to the New Orleans game, as he had to win back the trust of the Giants coaching staff, and in particular, Giants coach Tom Coughlin. Coughlin, instead, relied on two more experienced backs in Bradshaw and journeyman Andre Brown.

"That was real tough," Wilson said of the reduced workload. "I didn't want my role as an offensive player tarnished after one play. But I kept working hard, and I knew my opportunity would come. It might have been the next game or the next year, but I knew it would come."

Coughlin's decision not to play Wilson extensively for a good chunk of the season after the fumble only served to motivate Wilson. In fact, Wilson spoke highly of his coach and probably for one big reason – it's hard to be critical of a two-time Super Bowl winning head coach.

Coughlin guided the Giants to Super Bowl wins in

2007 and then last season. Following that season, he and other Giants personnel officials agreed to take Wilson in the first round of the NFL Draft, even though the team had a very good running back in Bradshaw.

"I like him," Wilson said of Coughlin. "He's a professional coach. He's understanding, but he's got a set way that he wants things done. He's taken teams to Super Bowls, and you can't ignore that. The players trust what he's doing, and they should."

Wilson attracted national attention not just for his exploits on the field, but also for his celebratory antics. Following each of his touchdowns, he performed a backflip – something of relative ease for him.

But the backflips created a mini-firestorm of sorts, as several of his teammates encouraged him to find a more grounded way to celebrate. Media outlets ran with it, and his backflips became somewhat of a national story. Wilson agreed to discontinue his aerial antics - though he did one after scoring against Baltimore on Dec. 23.

"I don't want to ruffle feathers," he said. "I'm surprised that it became such a big story. For me, it's just a regular thing. I've been doing backflips since I was 3. It's easier for me to do a backflip than to dance."

According to Wilson, his teammates helped

him with the transition to professional football and to playing under Coughlin, keeping him positive even though he was the third-team guy for much of the first part of the season. He picked up a few more carries when Brown went down with a broken leg suffered in week 12, and then he saw more action because of Bradshaw's knee injury.

His teammates also helped him adjust to life off the field, where New York City presents many temptations for a young man with lots of money. He signed a four-year deal worth \$6.684 million shortly after being drafted by the Giants, with a signing bonus of \$3.3 million.

"A lot of the veterans have helped me," Wilson said. "Guys like Ahmad (Bradshaw), Hakeem Nicks, Corey Webster, Antrel Rolle ... I have a good support system in place."

He has enjoyed his time in the New York City metropolitan area. He possesses the type of magnetic personality that attracts media attention and fans' idolatry, and he's always enjoyed the bright lights and the big stage. Many of his best games at Tech came in the Hokies' biggest games.

But he also grew up in Danville, a relatively small town, and he spent his college days in Blacksburg. So he knows quite a bit about that type of lifestyle as well, one that he liked.

"I've enjoyed it here," Wilson said of New York. "There's always something to do. But sometimes, I miss the quiet."


That said, he has no regrets. Sure, he misses his former Tech teammates and coaches. But he finds himself keeping in contact with a bunch of them. Of course, most of them called him after his record-setting game.

"I'm really glad a lot of them reached out," he said. "It's good to hear from people who have watched me and supported me for a long time."

"I miss it there a little bit. But I'm living my dream. This is what I've dreamed about since I was 8 years old. You've got to move on at some point, and I did that and got drafted by a Super Bowl team. Now I'm getting an opportunity to play quite a bit. So I think I've made all the right decisions."

Wilson got the start in the Giants' game at Atlanta on Dec. 16 – the first start of his career. He finished with 55 yards rushing on 13 carries, though the Giants got shut out. He rushed for 358 yards and four touchdowns on the season.

Tech fans know well of Wilson's limitless potential. So they believe that start won't be the last of Wilson's career.

They also know of Wilson's engaging personality – and they believe those backflips won't be the last of his career either. 

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# Injury to Wood creates opportunity for walk-on

by Jimmy Robertson

Around this time a year ago, Christian Beyer spent his free time playing in pick-up basketball games at McComas Hall.

This year, though, he plays basketball across the parking lot from McComas Hall – in Cassell Coliseum.

The 6-foot-7 forward from New Bern, N.C., has been a bright spot in a recent down spell for the Virginia Tech basketball team, filling in quite capably for injured freshman Marshall Wood. Wood, arguably the Hokies' top reserve who was averaging 5.8 points and 4.5 rebounds per game, fractured his left foot in Tech's loss to Georgia Southern on Dec. 15 and had missed four games heading into Tech's ACC home opener against BC on Jan. 9.

Tech lost three of those four games, but not because of Beyer. In fact, the sophomore received more than 20 minutes of playing time per game in that span because of his production.

"I'm surprised," Beyer said. "Marshall went down, and we had some problems with some other guys. There I was playing 20 minutes a game, but I feel like I've stepped up and did my job."

In the overtime win over Bradley on Dec. 22, he scored three points and grabbed nine rebounds. He grabbed four rebounds in the loss to Colorado State on Dec. 24, and then in the loss to BYU, he scored nine points and grabbed 11 rebounds in 23 minutes. In that game, he hit 4 of 6 from the floor and 1 of 2 from the free-throw line.

Beyer's biggest play came in Tech's overtime win over Bradley. In the overtime session, he and Marquis Rankin teamed to force a turnover by Bradley's Walt Lemon, Jr., with 21 seconds left and the Hokies trailing by a point. Rankin then threw the ball to Erick Green, whose layup gave the Hokies a 66-65 lead. Lemon, Jr., then missed two free throws and a jumper in the final seconds, enabling the Hokies to escape with a quality win.

"He's been working hard all year, and I've told those guys (the walk-ons) that they're going to have to help us at some point win a game," Tech coach James Johnson said of Beyer. "He helped us in the Bradley game and played well in the

BYU game. Hopefully, he can continue to give us some minutes."

"Just going to the offensive glass, really," Beyer said, explaining his success. "I'm not an offensive threat outside of the lane, but every time a shot goes up, I go to the offensive glass. I'm getting trash goals, I guess you could say. I'm getting the junk and putting it back up."

He's traveled quite the road, considering he came to Tech as a "normal" student. He played at New Bern High School and once came to a camp at Tech during his junior year. Tech's staff liked him, but felt he wasn't quite good enough for a scholarship.

But Johnson and his staff needed bodies coming into this season, as attrition and the defection of recruit Montrezl Harrell left the roster a little thin. So the coaches offered Beyer an opportunity to come in and help them in practices, and he readily accepted.

"I just saw myself as a practice guy, helping out and filling in spots where they needed me," Beyer said. "Making sure the five starting guys were pushed to their potential so that they could see what they're going to experience in a game. I try to do that to the best of my abilities."

Now, he's become more than a practice player – much more. It's a role that may continue, too, as Wood may be out until the end of January.

## HOKIES FALL IN ACC OPENER

Tech never led in falling 94-71 to Maryland in the Hokies' ACC opener on Jan. 5 in College Park, Md. Seth Allen paced four Terrapin players in double figures with 21 points, while Jake Layman added 20.

Tech, which shot just 37.3 percent, got 28 points from Green. Robert Brown scored 11 points, while Joey van Zegeren finished with 10, tying his career high (Iowa earlier this season). Van Zegeren, who added five rebounds, made his first start of the season, as Johnson decided to bench sophomore C.J. Barksdale because of a lack of effort.

Tech fell to 2-7 in ACC openers since joining the league. The Hokies last won an ACC opener

Christian Beyer expected to be a player who only helped out in practices, but he has played more than 20 minutes per game since Marshall Wood went down with a foot injury.



in 2006 when they beat Wake Forest 63-60 on Dec. 17 of that year. They fell to 1-8 in ACC road openers, with their lone win coming against Duke in that same 2006-07 season.

## HOKIES LOOKING TO TIGHTEN UP DEFENSE

As the Hokies headed into that ACC home opener against BC, they had lost three straight games, and the biggest problem centered on their defense. Tech gave up 94 points to Maryland and 97 to BYU in back-to-back losses, while also giving up 88 in a loss to Colorado State. Here is a look at the shooting percentages of Tech's opponents in the Hokies' losses heading into the BC game:

Opponent	FG	3-point FG
Maryland	51.7	43.5
BYU	46.5	36.8
Colorado State	47.6	45.8
Georgia Southern	43.9	42.3
West Virginia	35.3	41.7

Johnson said that his team needed to quit letting its offense affect it on the defensive end.

“Our defense has been predicated on our offense,” Johnson said. “We’re a better defensive team when our offense is clicking, and we can’t be that way. We can’t let the offensive end of the floor affect us on the defensive end.

“When we’re getting stops and rebounding, we get out and run. We’ve got to do a better job of not letting our offense, when our shots aren’t going down, affect us on defense. We’ve got to get stops and get out and get some easy baskets.”

**GREEN EQUALS SCHOOL MARK**

Green scored 20 or more points in the Hokies’ first 12 games this season, tying the mark held by former player and Tech Hall of Famer Bob Ayersman, who scored 20 or more in the first 12 games of the 1958-59 season. Not only do those two hold the record for the most 20-point games to start a season, but also the most 20-point

games at any point during a season.

**20-POINT SCORING STREAKS**

Player	Year	Consecutive games
Bob Ayersman	1958-59	12
Erick Green	2012-13	12
Wally Lancaster	1987-88	11
Howard Pardue	1961-62	11
Bimbo Coles	1989-90	9

Green’s run at the record came to an end in Tech’s loss to BYU. He scored just 12 points in that game, hitting only 4 of 17 from the floor and missing all five of his free-throw attempts. He did dish out a team-high six assists.

“It was a great run at it,” Green said. “But my main thing is winning. It sucks that it (the scoring streak) had to end, but I knew it was going to end sooner or later. I’m glad I got it out of the way.”

Green rebounded with a 28-point game against Maryland.

**RANKIN REGISTERS CAREER HIGH**

Rankin, the backup point guard, got off to a slow start this season, missing the first two games because of two deaths in his family within the same week – his great grandmother and his great uncle. Then he scored just seven points combined

in the next six games, shooting 3 of 11 from the floor in that span.


But Rankin, a sophomore from Charlotte, N.C., scored a career-high 10 points in the Hokies’ victory over Mississippi Valley State on Dec. 10. He played 13 minutes, hitting 3 of 4 from the floor, including a 3-pointer, and all three of his free-throw attempts.

“I had a tough time before the season started,” Rankin said. “But everyone on the team and the coaches were behind me and pulled me through everything.

“The first couple of games, I just had to get the flow of my game back. But I feel like I’m back now and I’m ready to contribute to my team.”

Rankin’s game coincided with a meeting with Johnson the day before the game. Johnson told him that he wanted to see Rankin play the way he was capable, and 24 hours later, Rankin delivered.

“I had a big talk with him,” Johnson said. “I told him he needed to step up and the team needed him. He responded, and that’s huge for our team and big for Marquis and his confidence. He played like the Marquis that I know.”

Rankin’s previous career high of eight points occurred on three separate occasions, most recently versus Virginia last February. 



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# CONNECTING *with the* PAST

A men's basketball reunion recently brought together former Tech players from past eras

by **Jimmy Robertson**

More than 50 former Virginia Tech basketball players returned to Blacksburg on Dec. 14-15 for a men's basketball reunion, a much-needed and well-received event, as the Tech athletics department reconnected with the former hoops greats of yesteryear.

The group of attendees featured some of the most prominent names in Virginia Tech basketball history, including all-time leading scorer Bimbo Coles, all-time leading rebounder Chris Smith, Howard Pardue, Glen Combs, Ace Custis, Les Henson, Damon Watlington, Sean Good, Perry Young, Keith Colbert and many, many others.

"It's great," said Coles, who scored 2,484 points in his career (1986-90) and is also Tech's all-time assists leader with 547. "It's awesome to be around those guys.

"I was worried I was going to be one of the older guys, and I ended up being right in the middle, which is pretty good. Just to be around Tech tradition ... I think this is something we should have done a long time ago. But they've gotten it started, and I think it'll probably continue every year. It's good to see everybody."

The event started on Dec. 14 with a reception

at the Courtyard Marriott in Blacksburg. Then on the morning of the 15th – before the Hokies' game against Georgia Southern – the group gathered at the Hahn Hurst Practice Facility to tour the facility and meet with members of The Roundball Club, a group of Tech fans devoted to promoting and helping the basketball program.

The former players, whose careers spanned seven decades, were introduced at halftime of the game, and then after the game, attended a reception and dinner at the Hahn Hurst Practice Facility. The dinner featured a highlight video of some of the great games throughout the past 50 years.

"I always look forward to coming back to Blacksburg," said Custis, who has been playing basketball professionally in Japan. "But to come back this weekend and see some of the names I used to read about ... I used to follow Chris Smith and looked at his rebounding stats, and to get to meet him amongst others who have paved the way, it's always good."

The group of attendees also featured three players who played in the 1940s – Daniel Frederick (1945), Joe Ruddall (1946) and Ted


Bacalis (1949). These players, along with those who played in the 1950s and early 1960s, played their games at War Memorial Gym, which was built in 1926.

"We had a gymnasium, and we had locker rooms," Ruddall said. "The visiting teams stayed in bunk beds. It's a lot different today. I'd like to be coddled the way they are today."

The 89-year-old Ruddall, the captain of the 1946-47 squad, flew in from Houston, where he retired after working for 42 years as an electrical engineer with General Electric. He was quite popular among the current squad of Hokies, who also attended the event.

"I was complementing them on what fine, young gentlemen they are," Ruddall said. "My son graduated from the Air Force Academy, and I was impressed with the quality of people they had out there.

"But I think the people I met here on this basketball team are as equally fine a group of people as you find at the Air Force Academy."

The reunion may become an annual ritual, and judging from the reactions of the former players at this year's event, that would be a great thing. 



# New additions make instant impact of Tech women's basketball team

by Marc Mullen

Much like most kids in December – who just can't wait to open their presents on Christmas Day – Tech women's basketball coach Dennis Wolff had to be patient and wait for the unveiling of a pair of his gifts, two newcomers who were not available at the start of the season.

Both junior transfer Uju Ugoka and freshman Hannah Young were not able to play for the Hokies in their first nine games for various reasons. The pair, who also had to be patient and wait for their time to get on the court, each made their debut on Dec. 22 against Wake Forest, with Ugoka making an impressive first appearance and Young playing 10 minutes.

"We really weren't sure what we were going to expect with Uju being out for nine games, and this is about as good as you can expect for someone's first game back," Wolff said of Ugoka's effort against the Demon Deacons.

"With Hannah, we were just trying to keep it simple. I wanted her to get her feet wet before Christmas. I'm actually surprised she took the two shots she did because she was very nervous and only had one day of practice with us and she's thrown into a game."

Ugoka's debut did not disappoint, as the 6-foot-1 forward turned in a 28-point, eight-rebound performance against Wake Forest in a 73-52 Tech win, which led to her being named the ACC's Player of the Week for her effort. The 28 points were the most ever by a Hokie in an ACC home game and her 13 made field goals were one shy of tying the Cassell Coliseum record for made baskets in a single game.

The Lagos, Nigerian native and Gulf Coast State transfer followed that effort with her first double-double, grabbing a team-season high 12 rebounds to go along with 10 points in just 23 minutes of action in a 58-39 win over North Carolina A&T. And then in her next two ACC games, she went for 16 points and six rebounds at Virginia and 15 and five at North Carolina.

"I've been waiting for this day because I've sat out for nine games, and I couldn't wait for this game," Ugoka said after the Wake Forest contest.



Uju Ugoka scored 28 points and grabbed eight rebounds in her Tech debut, and the coaching staff expects more games like that from her in the future.

"I was mentally prepared, and my teammates were encouraging me. This was my first ACC game, and I needed to take my time and just play my game, so that's what I did.

"I was just feeling it. I was just so excited and the crowd was cheering for me, and I could just feel the presence of everyone around me and that motivated me to keep playing hard."

Unlike Ugoka, Young, a 6-1 forward from Newcastle, Australia, was not able to practice with the team while missing her nine games and is still learning Wolff's system. However, she has been

getting consistent playing time since her debut and even made a start – against Hampton, when she scored her first collegiate basket, had four steals and grabbed three boards in a season-high 21 minutes played.

## HOKIES WIN ACC OPENER – AGAIN

Thanks in part to Ugoka's effort, combined with junior guard Monet Tellier's 23-point, eight-rebound, two-steal and two-assist afternoon against Wake Forest, the Hokies won their first ACC home game since Tellier joined the team.

"I just mentioned that to the team. It feels good, but there should be more to come," Tellier said of the first ACC home win in her career. "We are excited that we won this game, but it's just one game, and we have to keep looking toward the next game."

Tech won its ACC season opener for the second straight year – a first since the team joined the conference. The last time the team won back-to-back conference openers came when the Hokies were in the BIG EAST and won three in a row from 2002-04. The victory improved the team to 4-5 in ACC season openers.

"I am encouraged," Wolff said of the team's effort in the ACC opener. "I'm not going to be jumping around here and acting like we are going to win the national championship. We beat an ACC team for the first time, a team that had beaten us six straight times. I thought we played well to do it. This was probably as good a game as we played since I've been the coach here."

In that game, Tellier finished a basket shy of giving Tech its first pair of players to reach 25 points or more in more than 25 years. Joyce Waddy (31) and Susan Walvius (29) were the last Hokie teammates to score at least 25 points in the same game, doing so in a game versus Mercer on Feb. 22, 1986.

### TECH STAYS DEFENSIVE AS IT ENTERS ACC PLAY

So far this season, the Hokies have allowed teams to score at least 60 points just four times, and two of those teams rank in the top 25 nationally in points per game as of press time (Appalachian State, 16th, and Penn State, 25th). Also, Tech has played one of the toughest schedules in the country – ranked in the top 10 by three separate websites.

So it may be a bit of a surprise that, through games played Jan. 3, 2013, the Hokies were 30th in the latest NCAA national statistics in scoring defense at 52.5 points allowed per game. Those numbers did not include holding No. 15 North Carolina to its lowest output all year at 48 points in a three-point loss in Chapel Hill on Jan. 7. That did, however, help the team lower its ACC-only scoring defense to 50.7 points a game, which




Hannah Young

leads the league through three games.

"I'm proud of the team's effort, but as we are all aware, this is about winning and losing," Wolff said after the Florida Gulf Coast loss in which the team surrendered 63 points.

After the 60-41 Penn State loss, he said, "I thought the team did a terrific job with trying to stay with what our game plan was defensively. It's really too bad. I think it is very difficult for this team, with how hard they are working on defense, if we can't get some shots to go, because then it just seems you're on defense the whole time."

That tide should turn a bit now with the additions of Ugoka and Young, who give Wolff a full 15-person roster heading into the rest of the ACC slate. 



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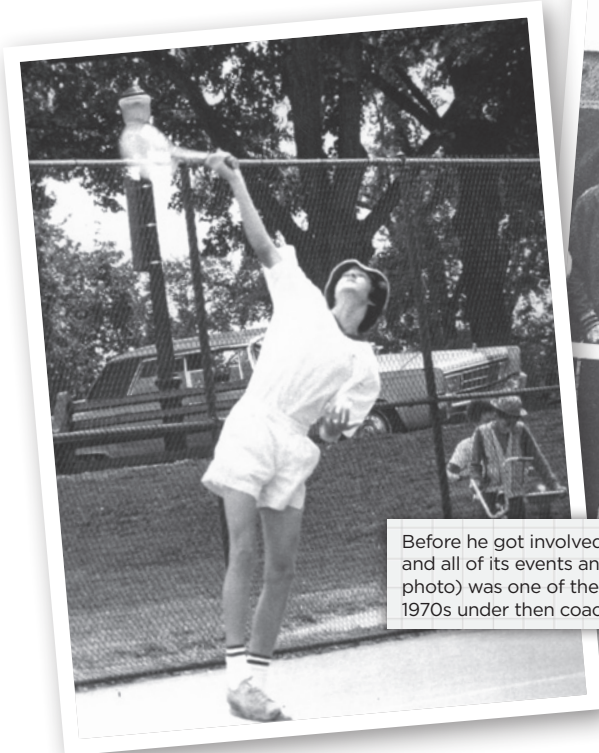
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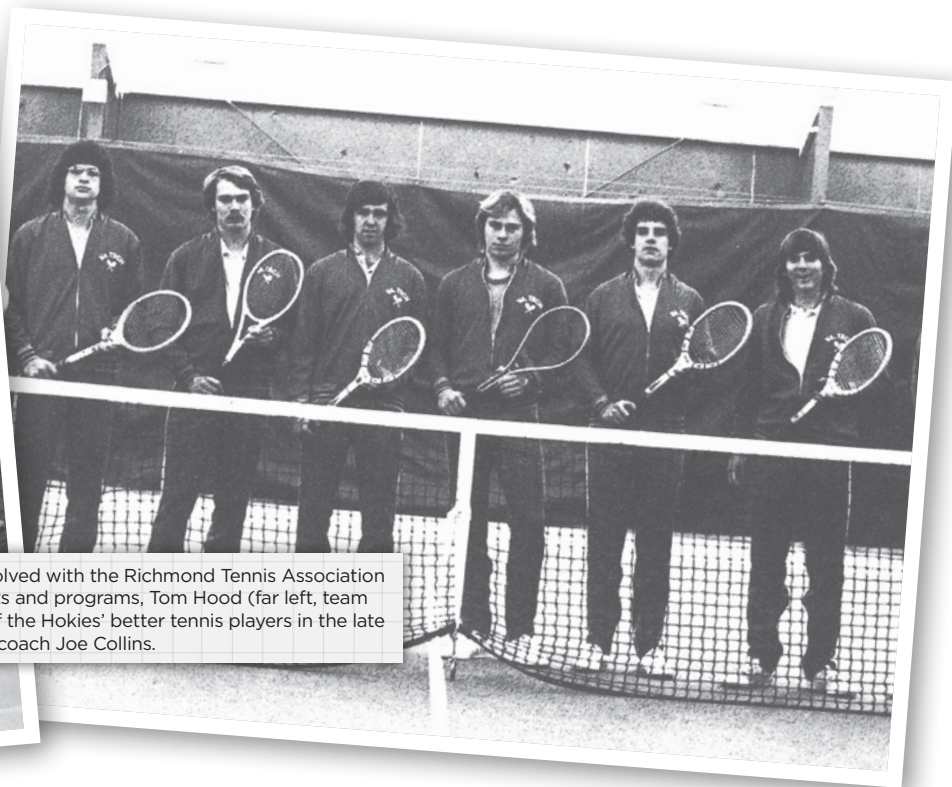


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Before he got involved with the Richmond Tennis Association and all of its events and programs, Tom Hood (far left, team photo) was one of the Hokies' better tennis players in the late 1970s under then coach Joe Collins.



## LOVING *his* SPORT

Former Tech tennis player Tom Hood co-authored a book about Richmond's rich tennis history and is doing his best to promote the sport he loves

by Jimmy Robertson

Tom Hood has performed many challenging tasks over the course of his lifetime. He graduated with a degree from Virginia Tech, no small feat by any means. He also played tennis for the Hokies, which brought forth its own set of physical pains and time management issues.

After graduation, he played on a satellite circuit for a few years, trying to keep pace with players of professional skill. He later got into real estate and survived the constant ebbs and flows of that profession. Then he morphed into a builder and developer, other demanding trades.

But none of that compared to becoming a co-author of a book. It's a theoretically simple task of putting words on a blank page, but one that paralyzes many.

"That's one of the hardest things I've ever done," he said. "I've heard people say that before, but it really is. My wife (Teresa) says, 'Tom, you've got the ideas. You just need to figure out how to put them on paper.'

"We would have deadlines, and I'd go through my mind with ideas of whatever I was writing about at that time. But for me to sit down and

physically do the writing, that's just a challenge for me."

Hood, who played tennis at Tech from 1975-78 under then coach Joe Collins, got the job done, though, helping write a book entitled, "Richmond – One of America's Best Tennis Towns." He teamed with Eric Perkins, an attorney who has served as the president of the Richmond Tennis Association, and John Packett, a former Richmond Times-Dispatch sports writer, to pen a book about the legacy of tennis excellence in the Richmond area dating back many years, including to when Arthur Ashe was winning Grand Slam titles. The book took a year to write and Dementi Milestone Publishing, owned by Wayne Dementi, published it this past May.

The idea for the book came about in 2010 after the Richmond Tennis Association entered a contest sponsored by the United States Tennis Association, which was looking for the "Best Tennis Towns" in America. Richmond finished in the top three among the 85 cities entered.

"After that, Eric suggested we do a book," Hood said. "We do have a rich history of tennis here in

the Richmond area, so the four of us got together (Hood, Packett, Perkins and Dementi). We'd meet and discuss how the book was to be laid out, and it became clear where each of us had our own particular area of knowledge. I wrote several chapters, and my wife is an English teacher, so she helped me out.

"We all ended up writing it, and we came up with a great look for the cover. John McEnroe wrote the foreword for us, and Dementi published it this year. It was being sold at the U.S. Open bookstore during the U.S. Open, and we've had sales from California to New York. So we're kind of proud of it."

The book sells for \$29.95, and can be ordered through Dementi's website. All the proceeds go to the Richmond Tennis Association, an organization that promotes, organizes and operates a variety of tennis programs and events throughout the year for tennis players of all ages and abilities.

That Hood wants to promote tennis in the Richmond area comes as no surprise. He started playing when he was 8, and he got serious about

the sport as a teenager at Midlothian High School. Following high school, he went to the University of Richmond to go to college and to play tennis, but after a year, he decided to transfer to Tech.

"I was living at home, and while I liked Richmond, it was like another year of high school," he said. "I thought the best thing for me was to get away from home and get away from the city. I thought that would be good for me. I think I grew up a little bit once I did."

Hood redshirted his first season at Tech and started in 1975. He served as the team captain all three of his years, playing mostly at the No. 2 spot. He and Jim Milley, who would later go on to become an All-American, teamed up in doubles and actually got some world ranking points as a result of their successes.

Hood graduated in 1978 with a degree in marketing, but decided to pursue a professional career in tennis first, and he played on a satellite circuit for three years. To compare, a satellite circuit is similar to Double-A or Triple-A in professional baseball. He also played in a couple of Grand Prix events, which is akin to being on the professional circuit. His best win came against Onny Parun, who was among the top five in the world at one time and twice made it to the quarterfinals at Wimbledon.

"There comes a time when you have to make

a decision," Hood said. "Do you keep plugging along or do you go and do other things? With me, I decided to slow down and do some teaching and put some money together.

"But I eventually realized that it wasn't going to happen for me at the big-time level. I was fortunate, though. I got to travel around and play tennis, and I beat some very good players. I have memories that I will carry around for the rest of my life."

In the early 1980s, he gave tennis lessons for a while, but eventually decided to get into the real estate business, and he's been working in real estate for more than 30 years, buying, selling, building and developing. He became involved with the Richmond Tennis Association five or six years ago as a way to continue being involved in a sport he loves.

"Tennis has given me a lot," he said. "I've had a chance to do a fair amount of traveling. We played in Europe for two or three months, and I've traveled up and down the East Coast and played. I've had the chance to meet a bunch of great people. It's (tennis) just offered a whole lot of opportunities.


"We've been fortunate in the real estate business and with some different things, and it's nice to give back a little bit and take on some programs and watch them flourish and do well.

It's nice to see how it influences other people as well – just watching these young kids as they take an interest in tennis, or whether you've worked with some kids who have developed their games to the point where they're competitive and enjoying that part of it."

He has seen several players from the RTA's junior programs end up in Blacksburg, including Kate Harrington, Bridget Bruner, Jay Bruner and Hunter Koontz, a member of this year's squad. Also, current Tech coach Jim Thompson participated in the RTA's junior program years ago before playing at Davidson and then later getting into coaching.

"Jim was actually a student of mine," Hood said. "We had a winter program here, and he was one of the top players. We're fortunate to have him at Virginia Tech. He's doing a great job. He keeps us in the top 50 (nationally)."

Hood, who has been married for 31 years and has two children, will be playing a more prominent role on the tennis scene in the future. After serving as the first vice president of the Virginia Tennis Association, he recently accepted the job of president for a two-year term.

It's just the latest challenge for him and certainly will provide its share of demanding tasks. However, he'll be up for it. After all, it doesn't compare to helping write a book. 

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diving spotlight | *logan kline*



# TAKING THE PLUNGE

*by* Marc Mullen



## After spending two years at Indiana, where she didn't find diving a lot of fun, Logan Kline made a life-altering decision to transfer to Virginia Tech, where a top-notch facility and a terrific coach have helped earn two All-America honors

Voted as the American Film Institute's 39th most memorable American movie quotation of all time, the line "If you build it, he will come" was first whispered to farmer Ray Kinsella as he was walking through his cornfield early in the first scene of *Field of Dreams*. What followed was an inspiring story that ultimately earned three Academy Award nominations, including "Best Picture."

Now, for the Virginia Tech diving program and its leader, coach Ron Piemonte, there wasn't a moment exactly like what took place in the film, but that thought probably went through the mind of Piemonte following the plans for the building of the Christiansburg Aquatic Center. With all the upgrades from their former home, the swimming and diving coaches could recruit higher-caliber divers, and the results are being seen.

Prior to the opening of the CAC, just one Tech diver – Mikey McDonald – had earned All-America honors, as McDonald racked up four honorable mention nods during his career. Yet last season alone, five Tech divers earned nine

All-America honors, including two by current senior Logan Kline, who didn't initially sign with the Hokies out of high school.

"Ron was actually maybe the second person to call me on the day that you could call (and start recruiting)," Kline said. "However, I wanted to go somewhere with a phenomenal facility. So I kind of told him that's what I wanted, and Tech didn't have that and so that was it.

"But since then, Tech built this facility, and when I was thinking about leaving Indiana, I thought about the fact that he was one of the first people to call me. We've always been close, and it just seemed like it (going to Tech and diving) would be good."

"That's very true," Piemonte said. "When I was recruiting a few years back, the CAC wasn't finished, and that definitely affected my recruiting diving wise because to recruit a very high-level diver, you need to have a good facility.

"War's (War Memorial Gym) okay, but it's not the Christiansburg Aquatic Center. The thing is, when you're trying to get an athlete of (Kline's)

potential or her level, they're not going to go to a place unless they have a facility like the CAC. Since the CAC's been done, you've seen the diving program here go like this (arm extended up at 45 degree angle), and a lot of that has to do with the facility."

Kline grew up near Kansas City and was involved in gymnastics until the fifth grade before pursuing diving. She quickly moved from a small club team in her hometown to diving at the University of Kansas, which was about 40 miles from her house.

She sported quite an accomplished career during her high school days, which included numerous All-America honors and state and AAU national titles. She then took her talents to Bloomington, Ind., where she learned new dives and came up with a 10-meter platform list, but she never lived up to her potential.

"It was really great at Indiana for two years, but I really wasn't enjoying the sport as much anymore," she said. "So I contacted Ron, and we've known each other for a while and it just kind

of seemed like a good place. I talked to Logan Shinholser, and I was like, ‘I think this would be better for me.’”

In her first year at Tech, she couldn’t have asked for a better outcome.

Kline set a pool record in the 1-meter event in her first meet with the Hokies, later set both the 1-meter and 3-meter school records in a meet against Virginia and capped off her first ACC Championships with two silver medals in the 3-meter and platform events, respectively.

But her worst fears came to fruition at the NCAA Zone Diving Championships in March.

“Last year was the most amazing year that I could have ever asked for,” Kline said. “I never made NAAs before. Something always happened at Zones. I probably should have made the NCAA Championships both my freshman and sophomore years, but fluke things always happened.

“And then last year, 1-meter was the first day, and if you qualify in one, you get to go in all three (events). So in the 1-meter, I messed up, and I thought ‘Maybe I’m just destined to never make it.’

“Then in the 3-meter, my first list was great. I had to get in the top two, and I hit the board on my second list and I was like ‘Great. I really am destined not to make it.’ But then I fought back and made it. Then to make the NAAs (NCAA Championships) and to final in my first NAAs was amazing.”

Kline finished seventh in the 1-meter event at the NCAA Championships, the highest finish ever for a Tech female diver, and then she added a 16th-place finish in the 3-meter event to earn honorable mention honors, thus becoming Tech’s first two-time All-American diver. (Kaylea Arnett would join her as a two-timer as well).

Kline credited her current coach for much of her success last year.

“Ron’s approach to diving is so fun,” she said. “I never feel like I have to do it for him. At Indiana, I kind of felt like I had to dive well and perform well for my coach, and I always felt like I was letting him down a bit if I didn’t. And that was hard for me because I always want to have other people be proud of me.

“Here, if I mess up on a dive, it’s just me being mad at myself. I don’t have the coach being mad at me, too, and that helps a ton. I’ve been able to have so much more fun diving now that the pressure is off, and I’m just doing it for me now and it’s just all Ron. He’s great.”

It also doesn’t hurt that the Hokies have been able to bring to Blacksburg many high-caliber divers – both men and women – which brings high-level competition to practice.

“I couldn’t put together a better team than



Logan Kline set the school record at Tech in the 1-meter and 3-meter diving events and hopes to earn All-America honors again in her final season in Blacksburg.

what we have here,” Kline said. “Everyone works hard. No one has a bad attitude. It’s really great. We should get at least six athletes to NAAs out of 10, which is amazing.

“I think about that all the time – how lucky I was to transfer here and have two other girls that are pushing me every day (Arnett and Kelli Stockton). They’re sophomores, but they’re pushing me so much. It’s really fun having that and definitely helpful. There are a lot of times when I am not as motivated going into practice, but they’re doing stuff, and I’m like ‘I gotta do it!’ It’s awesome, and it’s pretty special.”

Though she appreciates the help from her teammates and her coach in practices, she understands that diving is an individual event, and success usually hinges on one’s mentality, as all eyes are on just the single diver on the board or the platform. Kline’s upbringing, in which she grew up as the oldest of seven kids (spanning 14 years), could hold a key to her success.

Why? Just listen to her answer two totally different questions.


On growing up? “It was fun,” she said. “It’s nice to have people around, and it was never boring. It kind of helped me learn to focus well and tune out things when I needed to study and stuff. So it had its benefits.”

On her approach during a meet? “If you look at the history of my meets, I tend to finish better when I zone out the competition and just focus on myself,” she said.

Taking it a step forward, though, Kline described one of her best feelings ever when she focused on ... well, nothing. Going back to her qualifying for NAAs, she explained how she needed to hit her last dive and how she pulled it off.

“After a dive that I do really well, usually I will come out and ask ‘What was I thinking?’” she said. “Usually, there was nothing. My body was just doing it, which is just the coolest feeling ever.

“Like, last year at NCAA Zones on the 3-meter, I had to hit my last dive – a full out – for 7.5-8’s (scores). I knew that I could do it, but I didn’t think about anything. My body just did it, and I did it for 8s. It’s weird. When you do a good dive, most of the time, you just aren’t thinking. It’s odd, but it’s just a really cool feeling to have that happen, and it doesn’t happen every day.”

For sure, it’s been cool having Logan Kline in Blacksburg. It took a building to help convince her, but Tech and the town of Christiansburg teamed to build it and now the best are coming to this university. She’s been one of the first of hopefully many. 



## GETTING TO KNOW LOGAN KLINE

**Q: What is your favorite event?**

**LK:** “I would say I am most consistent on the 1-meter, for sure, but I do like to compete in the 10-meter. I just feel less pressure up there, and there’s no board movement, which I get nervous about in the meets.”

**Q: Do you have any pre-meet rituals?**

**LK:** “I always repaint my toenails before a meet, just so I can look down when I’m waiting to go. So they look pretty. It’s usually pink, a hot pink color. It might be weird, but I tend to do that.”

**Q: Do you eat anything special before a meet?**

**LK:** “Yeah, I used to really like bananas, but I couldn’t tell you the last time I ate a banana. But I do like to have peanut butter, take a bite here or there. I don’t like to eat full meals before a competition, so it’s just

nice to have something to give me a little bit of energy before a meet.”

**Q: Do you enjoy any other sports?**

**LK:** “I played tennis for a little bit, just because my mom did that. Actually, if I hadn’t been a diver, I feel like I would have been a tennis player. I’m not sure if I am tall enough, but I would have liked to have played that.”

**Q: What’s your plan after this season?**

**LK:** “I’m doing a fifth semester because want to go to med school to be a dermatologist. I wasn’t really ready to apply and start next fall. So I will apply this summer, and I think I’m going to apply early decision to Kansas. The med school is actually in Kansas City, so it’s right where I live.”




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# GEARING UP FOR THE TRIPLE CROWN

The Tech men's track team won the ACC outdoor championship last spring and won the cross country title in the fall, and now is heading into the 2013 track season looking for its third straight conference crown

by **Marc Mullen**

More than 20 years ago, the Clemson men's track and field team accomplished a rare feat that had last been done by an ACC school in the mid-1970s. The Tigers won the ACC men's cross country championship in 1988 and followed that up with the 1989 titles at both the ACC indoor and outdoor championships.

That tri-title feat has not been done in the same academic year since then, though Florida State has come close many times. The Seminoles have won 18 ACC titles over the past 10 years (two of which were later vacated), and when they claimed the ACC cross country title in 2010, not only did it give them three straight titles – winning the track titles earlier in the year

– but it also gave them a chance at matching the Tigers' feat.

However, the Virginia Tech men's track team scored a surprising win at the 2011 indoor championships, thwarting the Seminoles' chances, and the Hokies have matched the Seminoles title for title ever since. Of the past seven ACC championship meets, Florida State and Tech have won three each, and with a win at this year's indoor meet, the Hokies can stake their own three-in-a-row title feat after winning the 2012 ACC outdoor crown and then claiming the ACC cross country title this past fall on their home course.

"The important thing is to take each season

separately, and to have the student-athletes and the coaches focus on the season that they are in and not necessary talk about how we've won outdoors and cross (country) and now if we win indoors, that will be three in a row," Tech director of track and field and cross country Dave Cianelli said. "The last two that we've won, they are now in the books. There is nothing that we can change about that.

"I think the guys are pretty motivated to try to go into this track season and try to win another title. It certainly won't be easy – it never is. But I think we have a chance, as long as we keep everyone healthy. I think we have at least a chance to be in a position to possibly win an indoor or an outdoor title."

The men in Tallahassee will probably have something to say about that, as Tech has certainly put a bulls-eye on its back with its recent success. Cianelli, though, has a couple cards up his sleeve, especially when it comes to the indoor season.

As the Hokies did for the cross country season – using redshirts to set up the perfect storm of a lineup to maximize an ACC title possibility – they worked the system again. Their two workhorses, Will Mulherin and Michael Hammond, along with Alexander Ziegler, have just indoor eligibility remaining and will certainly look to end their Tech careers with another team title.

"With our men, we have a chance at a title, and that's all you can really ask for," Cianelli said. "Just like in cross country, I felt like we had a chance to win that, but everything would have to really come together, which it did. I think we beat a couple teams that, maybe on paper going in, were stronger than we were. Indoors (during the indoor season), it'll be sort of the same thing.

"Again, it's early, but I would say that, as it has been in the past, Florida State is going to be very, very good again. So in the last couple of years, it's sort of been us and them going head to head. I don't see that necessarily changing on the men's side. I think they'll be the team again to beat in track, and it will take a really, really great effort on our part to win, whether it's indoors or outdoors.

"We have a few people that we are going to have indoors that we aren't going to have outdoors. We'll have Will Mulherin and Michael Hammond, indoors only, and the same with Alex Ziegler. Those are three very, very important individuals that have contributed so much to our program at the conference and the national level."

On the women's side, a young team with just

four seniors is expected to be better than last year. Injuries hurt the team a season ago, but coming out of the break, everyone seems to be healthy. The projection for this team is not just finishing in the top half, but the top four at the ACC meet.

"I'd like to see our women be in the top four both indoor and outdoor at the conference meet, and at the national meet, we have enough quality that we can be a top-20 team," Cianelli said. "I'm really focusing more on the conference meet. We're kind of building back to where we can be a top-three team again.

"We are a fairly young team, but I think we are going to be better than we were a year ago. We had so many injuries last year on the women's side. We just lost a lot of people. It was just one of those odd years.

"We had several out, either indoors or outdoors or both, that we lost for the year. But right now, everyone seems to be healthy, and they seem to be excited to get track started."

What follows is a breakdown of the main areas of both track programs, starting with the men:



## MEN'S SPRINTS/HURDLES/JUMPS

A deep, talented group returns in this area, led by All-American Darrell Wesh in the 100, along with two other men who ran with him in the 4x100 relay in Jeff Artis-Gray and Jonathan McCants. That relay team set the school record in the event and finished 13th at the NCAA Championships.

Artis-Gray was also an All-American in the long jump (outdoor), and Ronnie Black, who was a two-time All-American in the high jump (both indoor and outdoor) returns as well.

"Our men's sprints group will be very formidable," Cianelli said. "And then we have a

freshman from Georgia, Tadashi Pinder, who I think is going to be an outstanding sprinter. This will be his first year with us, and there is always that learning curve, but he's extremely talented.

"Where we won't be as strong is the horizontal jumps because Hasheem Halim graduated. He was a multiple All-American in the triple jump, but he was also a scorer in the long jump at the conference level. Jeff has done some triple jumping, so we might use him there a little bit to try and score some points. But overall, collectively, I think it's going to be a very, very good group again. So each group will have to perform well for us to have a shot at a conference title."



## MEN'S DISTANCE

As stated, Mulherin and Hammond have just indoor eligibility, along with Jason Cusack. They led a deep distance group to the ACC cross country title, and those men will find their niche on the track.

"Tommy Curtin, who had an outstanding cross (country) season, is going to be a factor in the distance races," Cianelli said. "Grant Pollock, who really had an outstanding outdoor season last year, he's going to be more of a middle distance (runner) in indoors, like a miler.

"Then we have the Degfaes (Leoule and Tihut, both juniors). So Coach (Ben) Thomas has a pretty deep group that can cover the different event areas and the distance medley relay, indoors. To be successful as a team, you have to be able to bring some good quality in each one of these areas."

## MEN'S THROWS

Ziegler, a three-time All-American in the weight throw, returns for the indoor season



Alexander Ziegler

and we have a new athlete, Tomas Kruzliak. Those three will all be factors in the weight, and I'm confident that those three will be (factors) at the national meet as well."

During the outdoor season, Matthias Treff will look to win his fourth ACC title in the javelin and his first NCAA title, as he has a second and a third in his prior trips to the national meet.

### MEN'S POLE VAULT

ACC point scorers Stephan Munz and Chris Uhle both return for the Hokies, while a pair of freshmen will also be called upon to pick up points.

"We have a couple of freshmen, Jared Allison and Brad Johnson, and I really like the way they're looking," Cianelli said. "They could improve to a point where they could be scorers at the conference level.

"But the other individual that looks very good is Scott Campbell in the heptathlon. He's certainly going to be a factor at the conference level, and he's made great strides over the last year. Matt Hoogland will be another person doing the heptathlon with him. He came in originally as a straight vaulter, but now he's doing the multi."

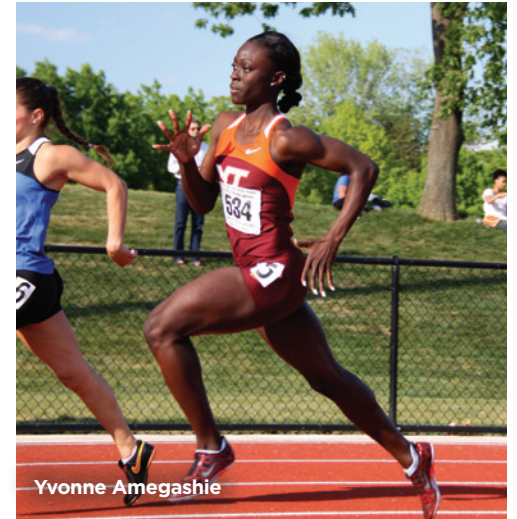
only and will throw the weight, along with Denis Mahmic, whose resume is solid, but who has never been good enough to unseat his predecessors for an ACC title. He's been third in the weight throw at the ACC indoor meet in Hokie sweeps (with Ziegler and Marcel Lomnický) twice and has a third (behind his teammates) and a second at the outdoor meet in the hammer.

"We have a really fine group of throwers," Cianelli said. "We really don't have a shot putter, but we are pretty strong in the weight throw. We'll have Alex returning, and Denis,

### WOMEN'S SPRINTS/HURDLES

Three of the four seniors on the Hokies' women's side are featured in this group, as Yvonne Amegashie, who was All-ACC last year, Jameice DeCoster, who is in her second year at Tech after transferring from Wisconsin, and Natalie Woodford return.

"Yvonne is going to have an outstanding year, both indoors and outdoors, and she's sort of the leader of this group," said Cianelli. "Then



Yvonne Amegashie



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it's a fairly young group, with sophomores Leah Nugent and Caira Simms and freshman Shaquera Leach.

"Leah is a hurdler, but will run some 400s for us as well. Caira is more of sprinter – 60-meter, 100-meter and 4x100. Then Shaquera will step in and do a lot of relay duty for us."

## WOMEN'S DISTANCE

If healthy, the distance group could be the strongest group for Tech this season. The Hokies return Sammy Dow and Frances Dowd, both NCAA qualifiers in the steeplechase (outdoors) and 800 (indoors), respectively, and they have a number of runners who can fill in all the way to the 10K.

"This is a pretty deep group, led by Sammy Dow, who didn't have cross country eligibility, but she's got both indoors and outdoors, so I'm expecting a really strong season from her," Cianelli said. "Frances Dowd was a national qualifier (indoors) in the 800 a year ago. We redshirted her for the outdoor season last year. She had some foot issues, so we held her out outdoors, but she set our school record indoors in the 800, and so I'm expecting her to be at the national meet both indoors and outdoors.

"Then we've got some people coming back from different types of injuries – Courtney Dobbs, who was a scorer two years ago in the 10,000 and 5,000 indoors, and Madalyn Nuckols, who's coming off a hip injury but was a scorer in the 5,000 at the ACC level the year before last.

"And then we have some really outstanding freshmen, and they are mainly middle distance runners. Shannon Morton and Britani Myers

are primarily 800, 1,500-type runners. Kaila Blackburn is a distance runner, like the 5,000 outdoors. So I think our distance group is pretty deep, and I think there's enough quality there to really help us at the conference level to move up into the top three of the conference."



Annjolie Vester

## WOMEN'S THROWS

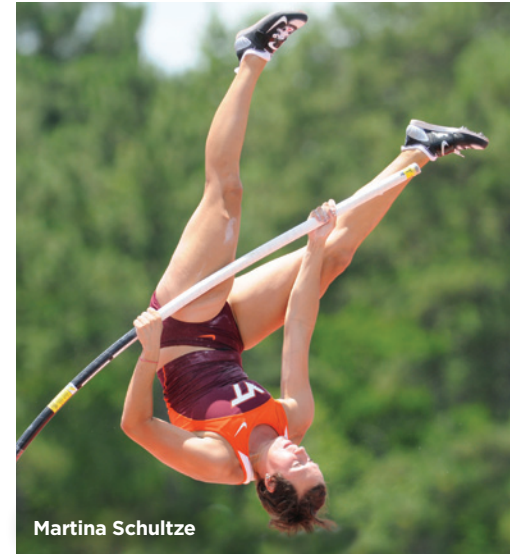
Annjolie Vester is one of just two returning ACC champions from last year's team, and only competed in the hammer throw at the outdoor meet. She will anchor the throws area. Tech also has brought in a transfer in Sabine Kopplin to toss the javelin.

"We just didn't feel like Annjolie was ready a year ago, so we'll see what she can do indoors with the weight," Cianelli said. "The hammer, she'll move up and should be the favorite at the conference meet, and then she should be at the

national meet this year as well.


"We also have a new javelin thrower in Sabine. She was at Nevada two years ago, and now she's here. She's an outstanding javelin thrower and should be one of the favorites at the conference level, but also has a good chance to be an All-American outdoors."

## WOMEN'S POLE VAULT



Martina Schultze

The other returning ACC champion is Martina Schultze, who was an All-American last year, both indoors and outdoors, and set the school record outdoors. She will need some help, and Cianelli points to a few newcomers.

"Leigh Allin is also returning and looks very good in training," he said. "But we'll have newcomers, Grace Giampietro and Lyndsey Saunders, also and anyone of those individuals could be scorers for us at the conference level." 



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