

INSIDE

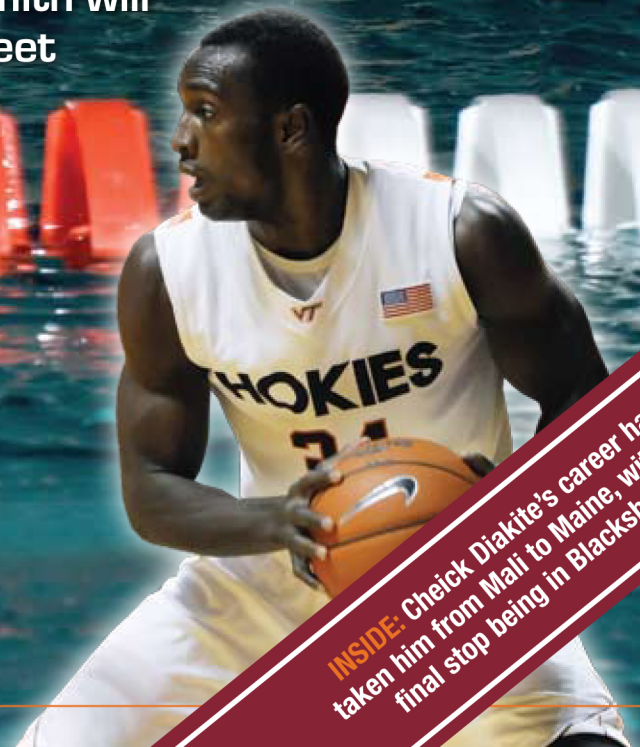
HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



ONE FINAL SPLASH

With five career ACC individual titles, Sara Smith will go for gold one last time at her final NCAA meet



INSIDE: Cheick Diakite's career has taken him from Mali to Maine, with the final stop being in Blacksburg

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Marcel Lomnický's first-place effort in the weight throw helped the Tech men to a second-place finish.



UPCOMING ATHLETIC EVENTS



		MARCH			
15	BASEBALL VS. NORTH CAROLINA	1:00 P.M.	22	MEN'S TENNIS VS. CLEMSON	NOON
	SOFTBALL VS. NC STATE	1:00 P.M.		BASEBALL VS. GEORGIA TECH	1:00 P.M.
17	BASEBALL VS. VMI	5:30 P.M.		SOFTBALL VS. GEORGIA TECH	1:00 P.M.
18	WOMEN'S TENNIS VS. RICHMOND	2:00 P.M.	24	SOFTBALL VS. RADFORD (DH)	5:00 P.M.
	*KIDS DAY! FIRST 100 FANS RECEIVE A VT FRISBEE!			*ACC CHAMPS PAPER WEIGHT GIVEAWAY!	
20	MEN'S TENNIS VS. GEORGIA TECH	2:00 P.M.	25	LACROSSE VS. NORTH CAROLINA	4:00 P.M.
	*VT KOOLIE, DRINK & POPCORN GIVEAWAY!			*THINK PINK! FIRST 100 FANS RECEIVE VT THINK PINK BAG!	
21	SOFTBALL VS. GEORGIA TECH (DH)	NOON	28	WOMEN'S TENNIS VS. MIAMI	NOON
	BASEBALL VS. GEORGIA TECH	5:30 P.M.		LACROSSE VS. OLD DOMINION	1:00 P.M.
	*DISCO NIGHT! FIRST 200 FANS RECEIVE A RETRO HOKIEBALL SHIRT!		29	WOMEN'S TENNIS VS. FLORIDA STATE	11:00 A.M.

		APRIL			
3	MEN'S TENNIS VS. NORTH CAROLINA	3:00 P.M.	7	LACROSSE VS. LONGWOOD	4:00 P.M.
	*HOKIEBIRD BOBBLEHEAD DOLL GIVEAWAY TO FIRST 100 FANS!		8	BASEBALL VS. JAMES MADISON	5:30 P.M.
4	BASEBALL VS. WAKE FOREST	1:00 P.M.	10	SOFTBALL VS. BOSTON COLLEGE	6:00 P.M.
	*MILITARY DAY! CAMO SHIRT GIVEAWAY!			*THINK PINK WITH THE HOKIES! VT DRAWSTRING BAG GIVEAWAY!	
5	MEN'S TENNIS VS. DUKE	1:00 P.M.	11	SOFTBALL VS. BOSTON COLLEGE (DH)	NOON
	BASEBALL VS. WAKE FOREST	1:00 P.M.		*TURN BACK THE CLOCK WITH THE HOKIES! FREE SODA FLOATS!	



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The Hokie Club, supporting Tech athletics since 1949.



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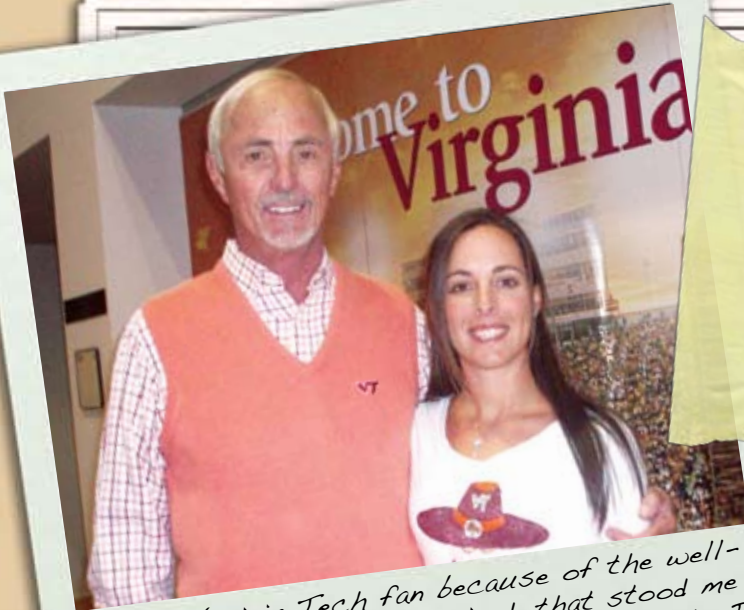
Listed below are the defined major giving levels currently available to Hokie Club members:

Cumulative Giving Levels

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



I'm a Virginia Tech fan because of the well-rounded education I received, that stood me so well in life - and the wonderful friends I have made here and whom I still see and love.

Mickey Hayes & Sarah Franklin

Hokie Club Level:
Silver Benefactor

Q: What year did you graduate?
A: 1964

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because ...

A: We all have an unbridled love for Virginia Tech that is hard to explain, but that binds us to one another and causes us to say "Go Hokies" when we happen to cross paths with another Hokie who is showing his orange and maroon, wherever that happens to occur.

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

A: The first Liberty Bowl bid back when we were striving so hard for recognition.

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

A: I got to know and became good friends with Mac McEver, the original "Mr. Hokie Club," right after graduation and caught on to his enthusiasm for and love of Tech athletics. Our early Hokie Club pregame and postgame social functions were actually held at Mac's home then, the historic "Solitude" residence near the Duck Pond. The Hokie Club was really birthed there in my opinion. In addition, early on, I was elected to the Board of Directors of the Student Aid Association (predecessor of the Athletic Fund) and got to see athletics here in that period from the "inside-out," a very exciting thing for a young man like me back then.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.

A: That day is upcoming because we are purchasing a home in Blacksburg and plan to live there part of the time.

Q: You have included Virginia Tech in your estate plans and this is critical to the future of our program. Can you share with the Hokie Nation why you felt this was important?

A: I want to give back to Tech in thanks for everything and to help be sure that our future remains strong.

Q: What motivates you to travel from the Outer Banks to VT for football games?

A: Of course, that's where the games are - and that's where I want to be ... and that's where my great Hokie buddies are going to be, too.

Q: What motivates you to give back to help Virginia Tech athletics?

A: Hands down, the quality of our student-athletes and their obvious successes.

Student-Athlete Call Night 2009

On February 16, a group of Virginia Tech student-athletes participated in the third annual Student-Athlete Call Night in conjunction with the Hokie Club and the Office of Student Life. Student-athletes representing many of Virginia Tech's varsity sports gathered in the Hokie Club offices and called approximately 345 current Hokie Club members who had upgraded their membership during 2008. Prior to making calls, the group shared a meal and also heard from local Hokie Club member Norman Fitzwater. As the president of the Blacksburg Hokie Club, Fitzwater spoke to the group and shared the importance of saying a simple "thank you." As is evident in the pictures, the student-athletes enjoyed their time spent talking and sharing with the Hokie Club members.



Mike Reid
Football



Betsy Horowitz
Volleyball



Ashley Owens
Women's Soccer



Queen Harrison
Track & Field

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The Blacksburg Hokie Club and Virginia Tech Athletic Fund would like to thank the following sponsors for their support of this year's Hokie Celebration.


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- Hawthorn Suites
- Hodges, Jones & Mabry
- Hokie Hardwood Club
- Hollywood's Restaurant & Bakery
- Hootie Ride Driving Service
- Inside Hokie Sports Magazine

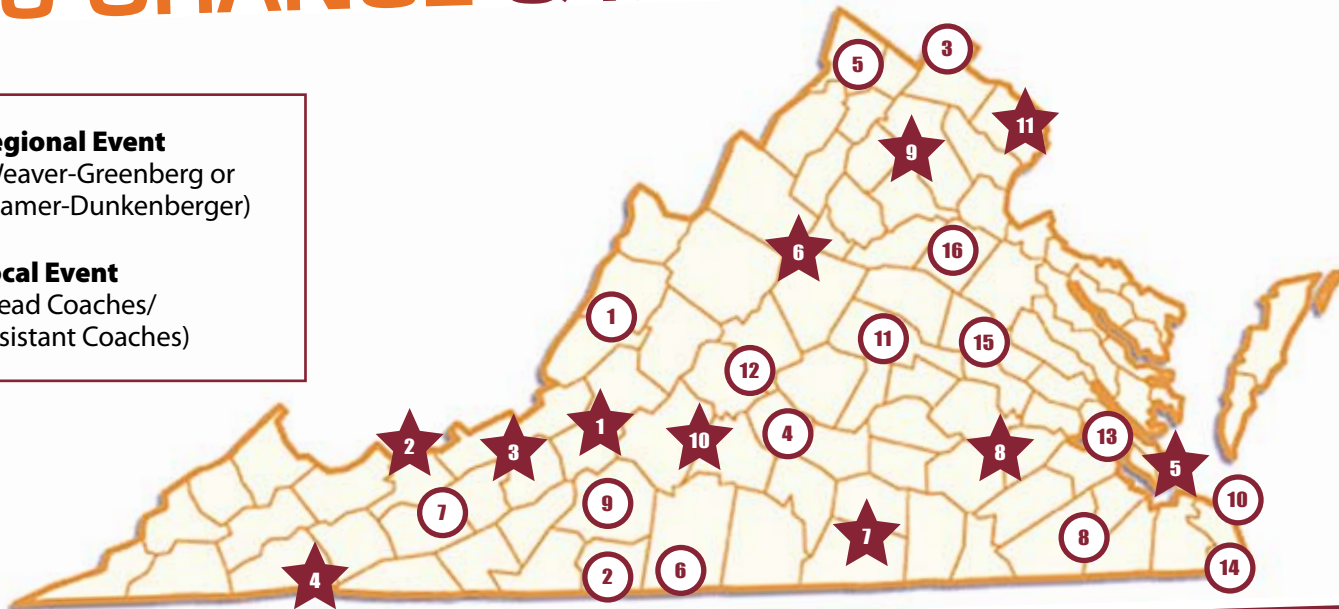
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 **Local Event**
 (Head Coaches/ Assistant Coaches)



REGIONAL EVENTS

1. **April 21 – Roanoke Valley (Regional)**
Frank Beamer & Beth Dunkenberger
2. **April 21 – Bluefield (Regional)**
Jim Weaver & Seth Greenberg
3. **April 23 – Blacksburg (Regional)**
Frank Beamer & Beth Dunkenberger
4. **April 23 – Southwest Virginia (Regional)**
Jim Weaver & Seth Greenberg
5. **April 29 – Peninsula (Regional)**
Frank Beamer & Beth Dunkenberger
6. **April 29 – Staunton/Waynesboro/Harrisonburg (Regional)**
Jim Weaver & Seth Greenberg
7. **April 30 – Southside (Regional)**
Jim Weaver & Seth Greenberg
8. **May 5 – Tri Cities (Regional)**
Frank Beamer & Beth Dunkenberger
9. **May 13 – Fauquier (Regional)**
Frank Beamer & Beth Dunkenberger
10. **May 14 – Lynchburg (Regional)**
Frank Beamer & Beth Dunkenberger
11. **May 19 – Northern Virginia (Regional)**
Jim Weaver & Seth Greenberg

LOCAL EVENTS

1. **April 28 – Clifton Forge**
Bryan Stinespring
2. **April 29 - Martinsville**
Bud Foster & Angela Crosby
3. **April 30 – Loudoun County**
Ryan Odom
4. **April 30 - Appomattox**
Curt Newsome
5. **May 1 – Winchester**
Torrian Gray & Ryan Odom
6. **May 7 - Danville**
Mike O'Cain & Shellie Greenman
7. **May 8 - Pulaski**
Billy Hite & Shellie Greenman
8. **May 11 – Franklin/Southampton**
Curt Newsome & Stacy Cantley
9. **May 11 – Franklin County**
Kevin Sherman & James Johnson
10. **May 12 – Peninsula**
Curt Newsome & Stacy Cantley
11. **May 12 - Charlottesville**
Kevin Sherman & James Johnson

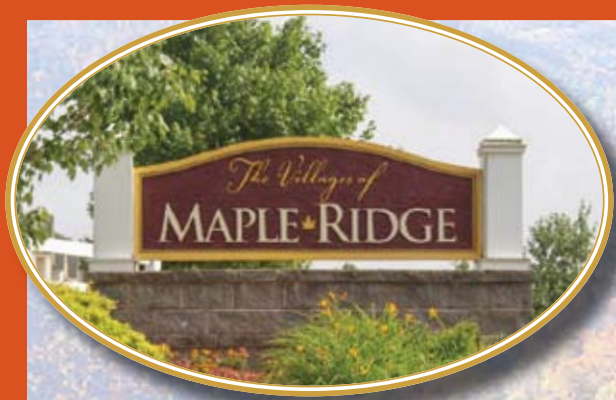
(DATE, LOCATION, SPEAKERS)

12. **May 13 – Amherst-Nelson**
Kevin Sherman & Shellie Greenman
13. **May 18 – Western Tidewater**
Bryan Stinespring & Stacey Palmore
14. **May 19 – Tidewater**
Bryan Stinespring & Stacey Palmore
15. **May 19 – Richmond**
Jim Cavanaugh
16. **May 21 – Fredericksburg**
Bud Foster & Stacey Palmore

EVENTS OUTSIDE VIRGINIA

- May 5 - Triad (Greensboro, NC)**
Mike O'Cain & Angela Crosby
- May 6 – Charlotte, NC**
Mike O'Cain & Angela Crosby
- May 7 – Maryland**
Seth Greenberg & Kevin Dresser
- May 14 - Kingsport, TN**
Zac Lowe & Stacy Cantley
- May 18 – Raleigh-Durham, NC (Regional)**
Jim Weaver & Seth Greenberg

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THE HUDSON TEAM



News & Notes

By Jimmy Robertson

2009 football schedule filled with exciting match-ups

In mid-February, the ACC finally released the football schedules for each team for the upcoming season, and the Hokies' slate features attractive non-conference match-ups against Alabama and Nebraska and two Thursday night appearances for the sixth straight season.

Tech opens the season on Sept. 5 against Alabama in the Chick-fil-A College Kickoff. Tickets to the Chick-fil-A College Kickoff will not be included in the Tech football season ticket package. After the game with the Crimson Tide, the Hokies play Marshall and Nebraska at home before opening ACC play with a game against Miami in Blacksburg.

The two Thursday night games will be against North Carolina on Oct. 29 and at East Carolina on Nov. 5. The Hokies conclude the season on Nov. 28 against Virginia in Charlottesville.

Nine of the 12 teams on Tech's slate played in bowl games a year ago. Here's a look at the complete schedule:

Date	Opponent	Location
Sept. 5	Alabama	Atlanta, Ga.
Sept. 12	Marshall	Blacksburg
Sept. 19	Nebraska	Blacksburg
Sept. 26	Miami	Blacksburg
Oct. 3	Duke	Durham, N.C.
Oct. 10	Boston College	Blacksburg
Oct. 17	Georgia Tech	Atlanta, Ga.
Oct. 29	North Carolina	Blacksburg
Nov. 5	East Carolina	Greenville, N.C.
Nov. 14	Maryland	College Park, Md.
Nov. 21	N.C. State	Blacksburg
Nov. 28	Virginia	Charlottesville, Va.

Football program holds 'prospect' day

Feb. 28 marked 'prospect' day in Blacksburg in which the Tech football program invited 20 junior prospects and their families to campus for a one-day visit. This marks the first time the football coaching staff has brought in prospects for a one-day visit – typically called 'junior' day at other schools.

"Basically, we've been seeing the recruiting process for high school kids moved up anywhere from eight to 10 months," said Jim Cavanaugh, Tech's whips and rovers coach who also doubles as the recruiting coordinator. "We're seeing more and more kids commit before their senior season of high school even starts. My guess is that two-thirds of the kids are doing that now.

"So we decided to bring some of those juniors to our campus for a day to meet with us and get to know what our school and our program is all about. We want to get in on these kids early and make sure we're always in the running for the top players in this state."

For the 20 prospects and their families, the day consisted of meetings concerning academic support services, career planning, and strength and conditioning. Then each prospect and his family met with his projected position coach before later meeting with the players.

Tech's staff also provided a lunch and then the prospects and their families got to attend the Tech-Duke basketball game at Cassell Coliseum.

"We thought that was important," Cavanaugh said. "It was a great way to show them how much our fans support us in all sports. That makes an impression on those kids."

Each one of the 20 prospects had been offered a scholarship to Tech before being invited for the day. Given the success of the prospect day at Tech, this will be something that the staff probably will continue to do.

Dowdell playing in Italy

After playing in France last season, former Tech guard Zabian Dowdell decided to go to Italy and play this season, and he is tearing things up for Casale Monferrato, a team that resides in a city with the same name



in the northwestern part of the country. Casale Monferrato currently holds second place in one of the Italian professional leagues.


As of March 1, Dowdell was averaging 21.5 points per game and hitting 55.3 percent of his field-goal attempts (42.9 percent from beyond the 3-point arc). He was also hitting 84.7 percent of his free-throw attempts.

"So far it's going pretty good," said Dowdell, who played in Nancy, France, last season and led that team to the French league championship. "My team is in second place and I've been a big part of the team's success.

"I was in France last year and the transition from English to French was completely different from the transition from English to Italian. But basketball is basketball, no matter where you are."

Dowdell had scored in double figures in 21 of the team's first 22 games, including single-game outbursts of 36, 33 and 31 points.

The Pahokee, Fla., native - who finished his career sixth on Tech's all-time scoring list with 1,785 points - hopes to get back to Blacksburg this summer for a visit. His basketball season will end in late April.

"Hopefully I'll get a chance to come back this summer and hang out for a while and catch up with some old friends," he said. "I also want to see what's going on with the basketball team." 

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Jimmy Robertson

Judging from message board fodder, snippets of conversations unintentionally overheard and harsh critiques delivered by friends, the prevailing thought here is that Tech fans certainly care little for the Duke Blue Devils.

Part of that stems from paranoia – you know, those private school future lawyers and doctors looking down on the public school built on blue-collar values. Most of it stems from knowing that Duke officials retched at the thought of Tech being in this country club of a league and all but spouted so publicly.

And maybe Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski felt the same way. If so, he appears to have pirouetted 180 degrees, or at least that's the impression your resident wordsmith gets after listening to Coach K following Tech-Duke hoops games.

Duke won the latest installment in this series, a 72-65 decision on Feb. 28 in yet another breathless, passionate game between the two. The Blue Devils took the season series and have secured their fair share against the Hokies since Tech joined the league, but those conquests rarely have come easily, as evidenced by the sweat on Coach K's forehead as he met with the media afterward.

As it usually does in March, the discussion migrated toward the NCAA Tournament. This time, Krzyzewski came out of character. Unprompted, he basically took the microphone and espoused the Hokies' credentials, no matter their conference record (Tech was 7-8 in the league at press time), for several minutes.

And his voice went up an octave as he did so.

"What should happen in the NCAA

AN UNLIKELY LEAGUE COACH MAKES CASE FOR HOKIES

Tournament, once you get your conference champions, from then on, it doesn't matter what you've done in your conference," Krzyzewski said. "It matters what you've done your whole season. To put more criteria in, like what you've done in your past 10 games or what your conference record is, is wrong because not everyone plays the same last 10 games and not everyone plays in the same conference. But everyone plays a whole season.

"After the 31 champions are determined, it's the 34 best. Twelve of them could come out of our conference or 10, 6, 4 ... it shouldn't matter. Conference affiliation after you pick the conference champions shouldn't have anything to do with it.

"Virginia Tech's had a great year. They've been in some hellacious games. Because of a skewed schedule, you can't look at conference records either. My feeling is that the top eight teams in our league need to be in. There might be nine. But it shouldn't have anything to do with conference record. I think that is such a big mistake."

Now, supposedly the selection committee plans on putting primo emphasis on the Ratings Percentage Index and on top-50 wins (Tech had four at press time). We're skeptical. To break stalemates, will the committee revert back to record in the past 10 games or conference record?

"A lot of people don't even know who is in the conference," Krzyzewski said. "They couldn't even tell you the difference between Notre Dame's schedule in the Big East and Cincinnati's. If you don't think the schedule is different, you're nuts. So why are you looking

at the conference record? It's the same thing in our conference. Because of expansion, there is a different schedule."

He brings forth a compelling point. It will be interesting to see what happens, not just in the Hokies' case, but also in others.

Of course, by the time many of you park yourself into your recliner to read this issue, Tech's NCAA Tournament fate will have been decided. For sure, the Hokies will have some allies in the continuing debate.

Tech fans, though, should remember that Coach K – interestingly – is one of them.


Looking to next year's slate

Tech coach Seth Greenberg commented on the Hokies' 2009-10 schedule on a recent Hokie Hotline and divulged some interesting tidbits.

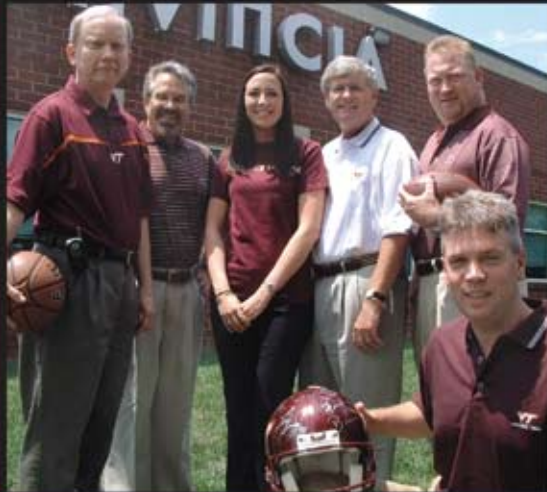
First, he plans on scheduling at least 16 home games next season. This year, the Hokies played just 14 home games – the fewest in the ACC.

Second, two of those home games will be part of a four-game tournament. The other two games would be in Philadelphia. The field hasn't been disclosed.

Also, Georgia comes to Cassell Coliseum next season in return for the Hokies' visit there this season. And the Hokies may add another SEC team – LSU – to the slate. Officials from the Wooden Classic have approached the Hokies about playing the Tigers.

So if this all works out, Tech would play Georgia, LSU, a team from the Big Ten as part of the ACC-Big Ten Challenge and then whoever participates in the four-game tournament. That said, the Hokies have the makings of an intriguing schedule. 

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Bill Roth

ISRAELI ATHLETE VAULTS LARGE OBSTACLES TO GET TO TECH – AND CLAIM AN ACC CHAMPIONSHIP

“I am like a bull, focused on chasing that red cape,” Yavgeniy Olhovskiy says with a little smirk, followed by a squint and then a confident nod.

“Yes, that’s it!” he says, excited that he’s finally found the metaphor that aptly describes his approach. “I am the bull, totally focused on one thing.”

For Olhovskiy, his single focus is clearing a bar that sits over 18 feet in the air.

Olhovskiy, or “Jenna,” as he is called by his teammates, is one of the most successful athletes at Virginia Tech today, competing in the pole vault for the Hokies’ track and field team.

On Feb. 27, Olhovskiy accomplished one of his dreams when he claimed his first ACC title at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships held at Tech’s Rector Field House. He tied an ACC meet record with a vault of 18 feet, 0.5 inch.

Amazingly, Olhovskiy has done better. Two weeks earlier, the junior set the all-time Virginia Tech record, clearing 18 feet, 2.5 inches. That performance automatically qualified him for the NCAA Indoor Championships in College Station, Texas, in mid-March where he’ll have a legitimate shot to win a national championship for the Hokies.

While that’s a remarkable story in itself, you should consider this. If he weren’t wearing a Virginia Tech track uniform, he’d be wearing an Israeli Army uniform.



Yavgeniy Olhovskiy was born in the Ukraine, but his family moved to Israel in 1992.

“It was hard to be Jewish in the Ukraine,” he said.

The Soviet Union was collapsing, its citizens faced economic, political, and social chaos. Anti-Semitism was rampant, so many Jews fled for Israel.

“We just packed and left,” Olhovskiy said. “We had to start over completely. My mom was a teacher and my dad was an engineer, but when the USSR broke up, we just got out.”

Eight-year-old Yavgeniy didn’t bring much. “I was allowed to bring my bike,” he said. “That was it.” His mother went back to school at Hebrew University and his father starting selling leather goods.

“It was a new country. A new start,” he said. “And I was one of the better athletes in school.”

Olhovskiy enjoyed the track events and experienced success in the long jump and the sprint events but, “when I was 14 or 15, one of my coaches in school suggested I try the pole vault.” Success soon followed and Olhovskiy quickly learned he had a knack for the sport.

Clearly, he had a future in the pole vault, but like all Israeli citizens, he had a three-year commitment to the Israeli Army upon graduation from high school.

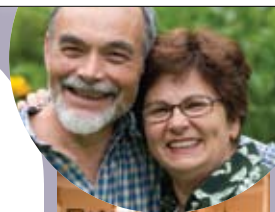


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"It was hard, believe me. The Israeli Army is hard. Boot camp is rough. Cleaning barracks, guarding the camp," Olhovsky said.

But since he excelled in the pole vault, Olhovsky was granted special status in the Israeli Army: athlete.

"I was able to practice every day, and I did have some days off, but it was a rough three years," he said. "You lose all your freedom. For three years, they have you. I was in Ramala, in the West Bank. Same thing every day. Guard, sleep. Guard, sleep. It's almost like jail for three years."

After his three-year commitment to the Israeli Army, Olhovsky had the grades and athletic skills to be recruited by major American universities. He picked Tech over Idaho, Memphis, Washington and Arkansas, among others. Former Tech assistant coach Lawrence Johnson had a contact in Illinois who knew Olhovsky. That friendship opened the door to Olhovsky becoming a Hokie.

"I did some research on line and picked Virginia Tech. It was a school with a good track program and one that had a good tradition in the pole vault," Olhovsky said.

And since he is enrolled at Virginia Tech, Olhovsky is currently excused from his military responsibilities as a member of the Israeli Army reserves. While he was home in Petah Tikva, Israel, in December, the reserves were called to active duty.

"A friend of mine from high school was killed in the operation in Gaza in December," he said. "It's shocking. If I weren't an athlete here, I'd be one of those guys in Gaza. That could've been me.

"It's good and bad. It's good that I'm here studying and safe, but at the same time, I know I should be with my friends. I should be there with them."

Olhovsky's background is obviously different than most Tech student-athletes. At 25, he's

older than most. He's lived in three countries and is fluent in Russian, Hebrew and English. Plus, three years of duty in the Israeli Army will change anyone's perspective on life.

"My teammates are great," Olhovsky said. "They are so supportive. They follow the news and they ask questions about Israel. And I've had discussions here with Iranian and Palestinian and Syrian students."

Sometimes, Olhovsky admits, those are "uncomfortable" conversations.

"In Israel, I didn't even feel Jewish because everyone else is," he said. "Here, I feel more related to my religion and closer to my country."

He misses his family and says he visits twice each year. He keeps in touch with them, and his girlfriend, Ania, through Skype and hopes they'll all visit Blacksburg for his graduation.

It's not the typical college experience for a student-athlete. But his skills in the pole vault have opened so many new doors.

"Clearly, it would be great to win the ACC championship and the NCAA championship next month in Texas," Olhovsky said.

Olhovsky's ultimate goal, however, is to compete for Israel in the 2012 Olympics and someday clear the 19-foot mark. His Virginia Tech school record of 18 feet, 2.5 inches is the best of any Israeli this year.

"If the Olympics were this summer, I'd qualify, but I'll have to wait until 2012," he said with a laugh.


There are no Olympics this summer, but the World Championships will be held in Berlin and there's a very good chance Olhovsky will be there.

Olhovsky's hero is Alex Averbukh, a Russian decathlon

champion from Siberia who also immigrated to Israel and won the gold medal in the men's pole vault at the European Championships in 2002. It marked the first time in the competition's history that an Israeli athlete ever won a gold. Ironically, those championships were held in Munich.

But before Olhovsky can think about the competition in Berlin this August, there are the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships in Texas in mid-March. Coming off his first-place finish at the ACC Championships, he has high hopes of adding another gold medal to his collection.

Then, of course, there is the upcoming outdoor season. Olhovsky is certainly one of the best in his sport, and he'll get the chance to prove it again at the ACC's outdoor meet held in Coral Gables, Fla., in mid-April.

If you happen to go, keep an eye out for him. He'll be the guy in the VT uniform racing down the runway, with the focus of a bull. 



Yavgeniy Olhovsky and his mother, Margarita.

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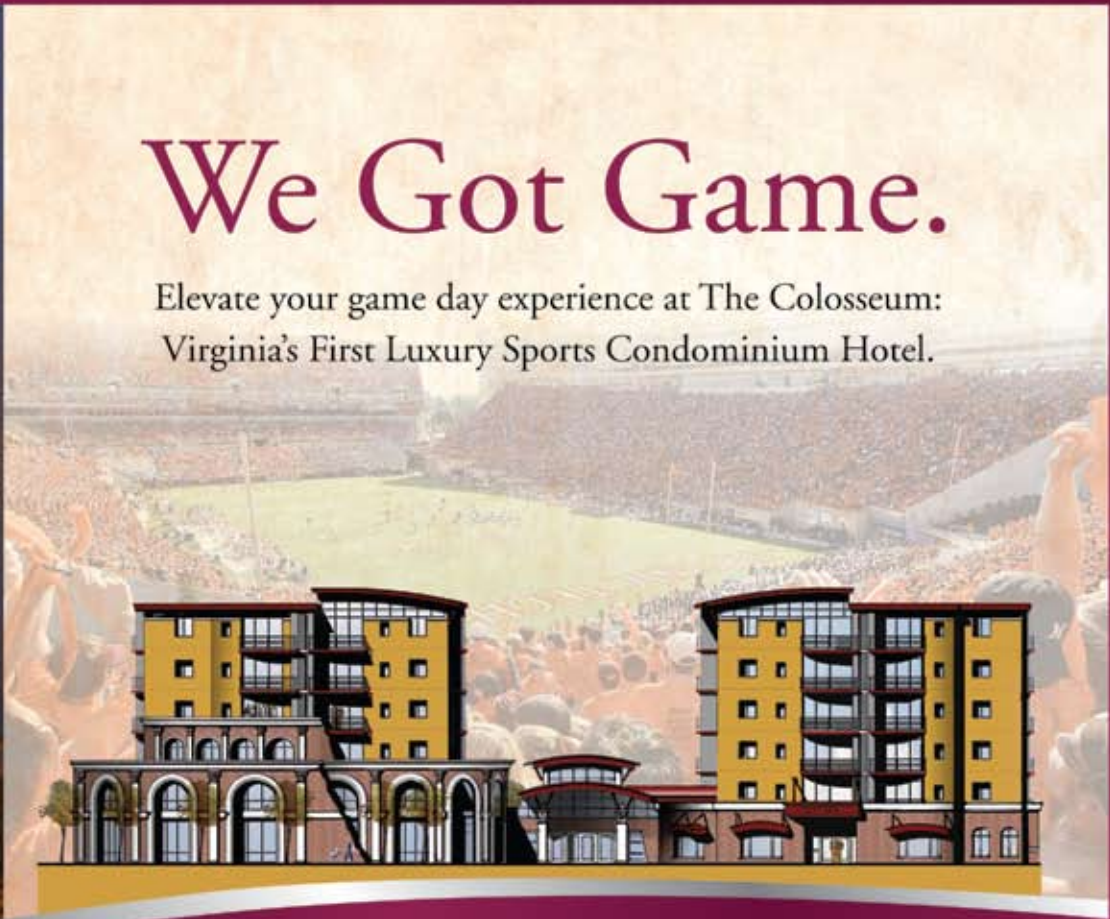
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BASKETBALL FAMILY LOSES BELOVED MEMBER

By Jimmy Robertson

Allen Calloway's battle with cancer unfortunately ended the way most do against this insidious disease.

A popular, yet quiet, player, Calloway passed away on Feb. 15 at his family's home in High Point, N.C., ending a nearly four-year war with the ailment. He was only 25 years old.

"It's a tremendous loss," Tech head coach Seth Greenberg said. "Allen just had such a competitive spirit and a great heart. He was an unbelievable young man who was just taken away from us way too soon.

"I don't think I ever heard him complain one time. One of the things I will always remember about him was a play in an exhibition game not long after he had been diagnosed. He only weighed around 160 pounds and yet he stood in there and drew a charge. He was always a competitor.

"I addressed that with our guys, too. You have to embrace every opportunity because you never know. One thing I do know is that Allen's in a better place."

Calloway, originally from Danville, Va., played ball at Tunstall High School and then went to Coastal Christian Academy in Virginia Beach, Va., for his senior season before coming to Tech. He was diagnosed with alveolar soft part sarcoma, a rare form of cancer, in the summer of 2005 before the start of his senior season. A tumor on his calf ultimately led to the diagnosis and the cancer already had spread to his lungs at this point. Because of complications related to both the cancer and the treatment, Calloway was forced to give up basketball, playing in just two games during the 2005-06 campaign.

Calloway later developed brain tumors and underwent three brain surgeries in a 10-month span. But he never gave up.

In the spring of 2006, he took part in graduation ceremonies at Tech. In early February of 2007, he returned to Blacksburg to turn in a project on real estate appraisal. That project marked his final task toward completing his degree requirements in residential property management.

For his career, he played in 83 games, starting nine, and averaged a little over two points and two rebounds per game. His best two games came during his junior season. He scored nine points in the Hokies' win over Georgetown in Washington, D.C., and then he scored seven points and grabbed five rebounds in 17 minutes in Tech's win over Rutgers in the Big East tournament that season – the Hokies' lone win in that league's tournament. In that game, he drained a 3-pointer, the first and only one of his career.

"When Allen Calloway knocked down that 3-pointer, I knew the basketball gods were on our side," Greenberg joked after that game.

Greenberg, basketball trainer Keith Doolan, Tech AD Jim Weaver, and associate AD Tom Gabbard all went to Calloway's funeral in Gretna, Va., on Feb. 19. Several of his former teammates, though, expressed a desire to be



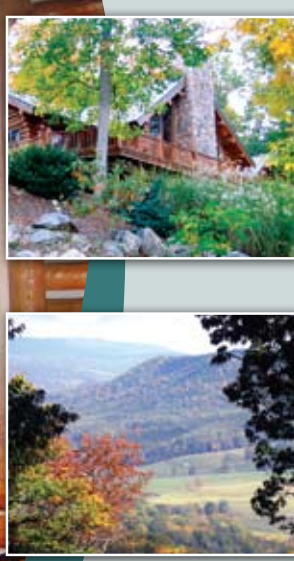
Despite having cancer, Allen Calloway never complained during his battle with the disease. His quiet, unassuming manner will be missed by all.



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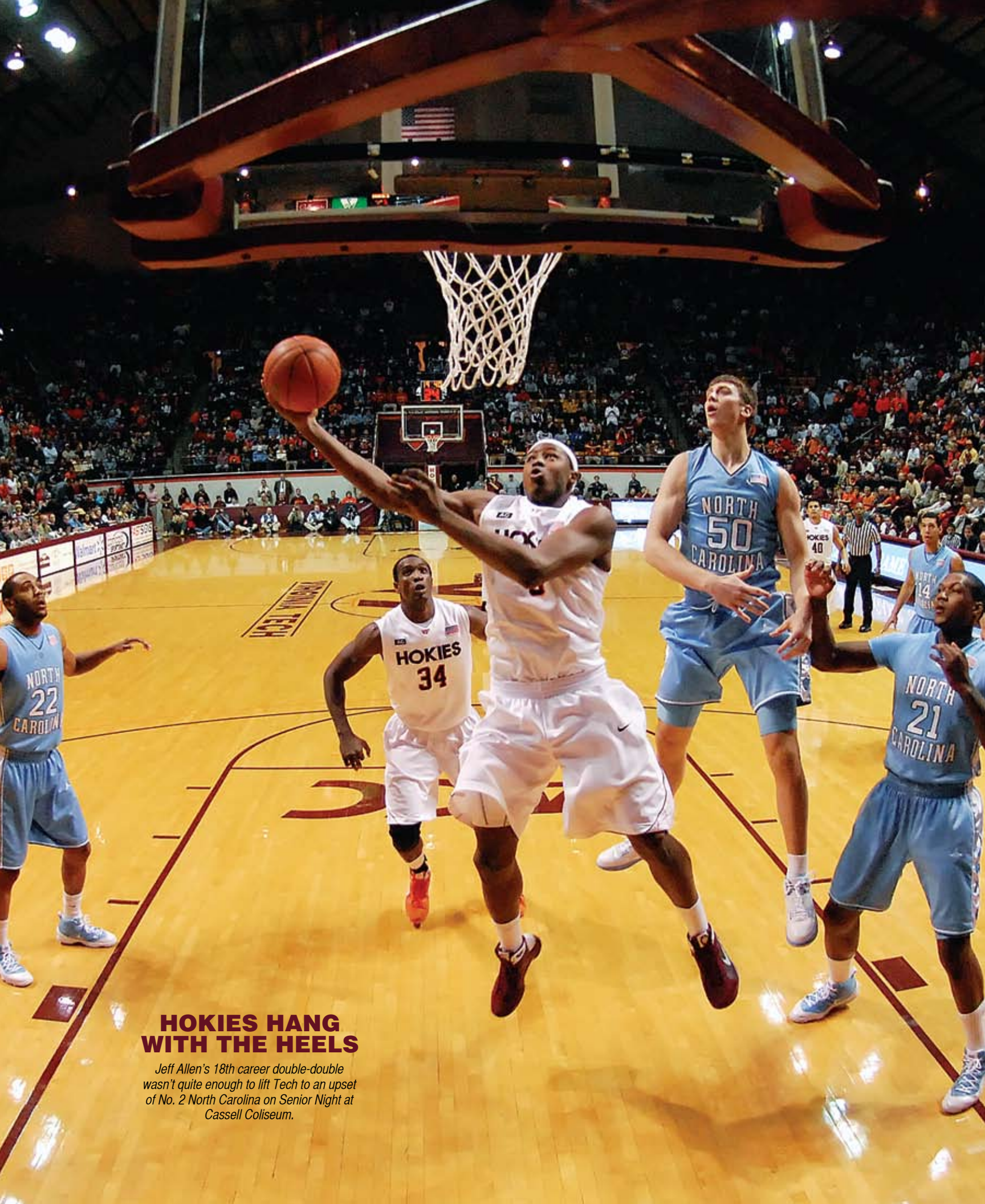
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HOKIES HANG WITH THE HEELS

Jeff Allen's 18th career double-double wasn't quite enough to lift Tech to an upset of No. 2 North Carolina on Senior Night at Cassell Coliseum.

there and passed along condolences.

"I got to show him around on his visit before he signed with Tech," former forward Bryant Matthews said. "There really aren't enough words to describe him. He really wanted to please the people who cared about him.

"In college, you often go your separate ways, but by playing with him, I would have done anything for him. It saddens me to know I can't see him off and didn't get a chance to go see him. But I talked with him and I'll cherish that moment always. I'll always keep a vision of his laughter and smile. I pray for his family for their loss of a treasure."

"The thing I'll remember most about Allen is that I never heard him complain or feel sorry for himself," former guard Zabian Dowdell said. "He always seemed to have that 'I'm going to beat this' attitude and it's hard not to respect a person like that."

VASSALLO'S HOT HAND

Tech forward A.D. Vassallo has been torrid down the stretch for the Hokies. In Tech's game with No. 2 UNC, he scored a game-high 25 points, hitting 11 of 21 shots from the floor, including 3-of-8 from beyond the 3-point arc. Nineteen of those points came in the second half, as the Hokies rallied from a nine-point deficit in the first half to tie the game on two occasions, but couldn't overcome the Tar Heels in an 86-78 loss.

Against No. 7 Duke on Feb. 28, he registered his first double-double of the season (and fifth of his career), scoring 26 points and grabbing 10 rebounds. He hit 10-of-17 from the floor, including 4-of-8 from beyond the arc.

The North Carolina game marked the seventh time in the previous nine games that the senior had scored at least 20 points – almost solidifying his spot on the All-ACC team in the process.

"He's a guy who has continued to get better year after year," Greenberg said. "He's not just a jump shooter. He can take guys off the



A.D. Vassallo

dribble. He finishes at the rim. He's an opportunistic defender. He rebounds his position. He's just a complete player and he's not afraid to take – and make – big shots."

HOKIES NOTCH ANOTHER ROAD WIN OVER RANKED OPPONENT

On Jan. 29, Tech let a 15-point lead slip away in an 86-82 loss to No. 12 Clemson at Cassell Coliseum, but the Hokies exacted revenge with an 80-77 victory at Littlejohn Coliseum on Feb. 25 – a game that snapped the Hokies' three-game losing streak and a four-game skid to the Tigers.

It marked the second time this season that the Hokies had knocked off a ranked opponent on the road. Tech stunned No. 1 Wake Forest on Jan. 21 in Winston-Salem, N.C.

"When you consider the recent history between these two teams, a three-point win almost seems like a blowout," Greenberg said,

2008-09 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
Nov. 14 Fri.	GARDNER-WEBB	W, 65-62
17 Mon.	MOUNT ST. MARY'S	W, 62-57
<i>O'Reilly Auto Parts Puerto Rico Tip-off</i>		
20 Thurs.	vs. Fairfield	W, 74-57
21 Fri.	vs. Xavier	L, 62-63 (OT)
23 Sun.	vs. Seton Hall	L, 73-77
26 Wed.	ELON	W, 76-67
<i>Big Ten/ACC Challenge</i>		
Dec. 1 Mon.	Wisconsin	L, 72-74
<i>BB&T Classic</i>		
7 Sun.	vs. Navy	W, 79-70
9 Tues.	at Georgia	L, 66-67
14 Sun.	LONGWOOD	W, 79-57
<i>Aeropostale Holiday Festival</i>		
20 Sat.	vs. Columbia	W, 64-52
21 Sun.	vs. St. John's/Marist	W, 81-67
29 Mon.	at Charleston Southern	W, 75-66
Jan. 4 Sun.	at #5 Duke *	L, 44-69
10 Sat.	VIRGINIA *	W, 78-75
14 Wed.	RICHMOND	W, 62-48
17 Sat.	BOSTON COLLEGE *	W, 79-71
21 Wed.	at #1 Wake Forest *	W, 78-71
25 Sun.	at Miami *	W, 88-83 (OT)
29 Thurs.	#12 CLEMSON *	L, 82-86
31 Sat.	at Boston College *	L, 66-67
Feb. 8 Sun.	NC STATE *	W, 91-87 (OT)
11 Wed.	GEORGIA TECH *	W, 76-71
14 Sat.	at Maryland *	L, 73-83
18 Wed.	at Virginia *	L, 61-75
21 Sat.	FLORIDA STATE *	L, 65-67
25 Wed.	at Clemson *	W, 80-77
28 Sat.	DUKE *	L, 65-72
Mar. 4 Wed.	NORTH CAROLINA *	L, 78-86
8 Sun.	at Florida State *	2 p.m.
<i>ACC Tournament</i>		
12-15 Thu-Sun Atlanta (Georgia Dome)		TBA
*ACC game - Home games in CAPS		

referring to the close games in this series – the past eight have been decided by five points or less. "These games have turned into epic games.

"I talked to our guys and made a point to tell them to go out and play hard, but also to be tough. You can play hard and lose. I thought we were tough tonight."

Tech led 78-77 with possession of the ball when the Tigers' Demontez Stitt fouled Vassallo with 12.5 seconds remaining, sending him to the free-throw line.

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Facing a raucous Clemson student section – a proverbial sea of orange – Vassallo buried them both to give the Hokies an 80-77 lead.

“I’ll be honest, I didn’t see a sea of orange,” Vassallo said. “All I saw was the orange rim. I was going to force them to hit a 3-pointer. There was no way I was going to let them beat us on a buzzer beater. There was no way. I just stepped up and knocked them down.”

After Vassallo’s free throws, Clemson pushed the ball up the floor and got it into the hands of Terrence Oglesby – the Tigers’ hot hand on this evening with 22 points. But Tech’s Dorenzo Hudson played good defense, and the Hokies, as a unit, played the possession perfectly. Stitt threw up a prayer toward the rim at the buzzer that didn’t come close, and Tech walked away with its third ACC road win of the season.

“The last possession of the game, I was really proud,” Greenberg said. “Because we hadn’t been able to get that stop or that 50-50 ball to finish a game. So I was really proud that we were able to get that stop and win the way we want to try and win.”

Malcolm Delaney paced the Hokies with 26 points – his 11th game of the season with 20 or more points. Vassallo added 21 points.

Both Delaney and Vassallo drained four 3-pointers each. As a team, Tech tied a season high with 11 3-pointers, and the Hokies hit 11-of-19 from beyond the arc, for a 57.9 percentage – easily their best of the season.

THORNS MAKES FIRST START OF THE SEASON

Greenberg elected to start Hank Thorns at the point guard position and move Delaney to the shooting guard spot for the Clemson game and the start marked Thorns’ first of the season. He started 12 games as a freshman last season.

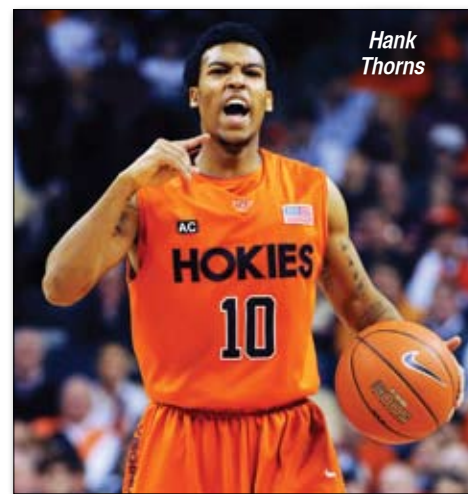
“I started Hank because we wanted to throw over their press,” Greenberg said. “We wanted to get our scorers up the floor and I thought he did just a great job of attacking and getting the ball to guys with room and rhythm. And we’ve got two guys [Delaney and Vassallo] who can make some shots. But I thought he [Thorns] did a great job with that.”

Thorns rewarded his coach by playing his best game of the season. He tied a season high with 10 points – just his second double-figure scoring game this season – and he dished out four assists to go with four steals. He hit 3-of-4 from the floor, including a 3-pointer, and 3-of-4 from the free-throw line in a season-high 30 minutes.

DELANEY SEES STREAK COME TO AN END

Delaney saw his streak of scoring in double figures come to an end after he scored just seven points in the Hokies’ 72-65 loss to No. 7 Duke at Cassell Coliseum on Feb. 28. The string ended at 32 games.

Delaney hit just 2-of-12 from the floor and



Hank Thorns

went 0-for-6 from beyond the 3-point arc. He also took just three free-throw attempts, making all three. He did, however, tie a career high with eight assists and played all 40 minutes.

“I was just off,” Delaney said. “I was getting to the rim whenever I wanted. I only had a few shots that were contested. I just didn’t hit them. I did a lot of stuff where I missed shots because I was trying to avoid charges. I knew I couldn’t get in foul trouble. I think that probably threw some of my shots off because I didn’t want to draw a charge.”

Part of Delaney’s struggles could be attributed to Thorns’ absence. Thorns missed the Duke game after contracting a virus and becoming severely dehydrated. Without him,

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Delaney was forced to play the point guard position for the entire game.

"He didn't make shots, but he played well," Greenberg said. "They did a good job on Malcolm, but he also played well. He defended, he distributed, he competed, he got caught on switches and fronted the post, he got caught on switches and defended [Gerald] Henderson ... everyone asks 'What happened to Malcolm?' Well, he missed some shots, but we asked him to do a lot and I'm proud of him."

WITCHER'S BIG GAME

Reserve forward Lewis Witcher played his best game of the season in the Hokies' loss to Maryland on Feb. 14 in College Park, Md. The junior from Rocky Mount, Va., scored eight points, hitting 4-of-5 from the floor in 20 minutes of action. He played mostly because of Jeff Allen's foul trouble.

All eight of Witcher's points came in the first half. He scored more in the first half than he had scored in any game this season and finished just three points short of his career high.

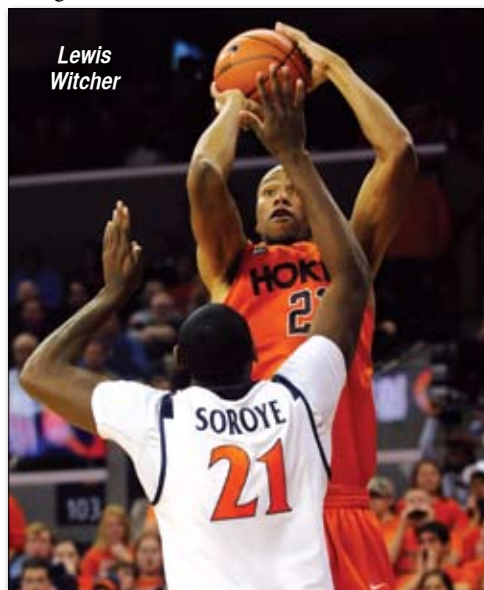
"It was exciting to have a good game," Witcher said. "It's bad that we didn't get the win out of it. I wanted to come in and play hard and do everything I could to help the team out. Fortunately, my shot was falling and that made it exciting."

Interestingly, Witcher spearheaded a great game by Tech's bench - maybe the Hokies'

best bench performance of the season. Tech's reserves scored 25 points and grabbed 12 rebounds in the game. Usually, the Hokies tend to win when they get good production from the bench. For example, Tech's bench scored 16 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in the win at Clemson.

J.T. Thompson and Terrell Bell scored seven each to aid the cause at Maryland.

"Even though we didn't play well, that was a good point," Witcher said. "We had some good contributions from our bench, so that was good."



Lewis Witcher

DIAKITE STRONG AGAINST GT AND UVA

On Feb. 11, the Hokies knocked off Georgia Tech 76-71 at Cassell Coliseum and they got a huge game from center Cheick Diakite.


The senior from Mali scored a season-high 10 points in 31 minutes, and he also chipped in seven rebounds against the bigger Yellow Jackets. He hit 4-of-8 from the floor and 2-of-4 from the free-throw line.

The 10-point outburst came one point short of his career high of 11. He scored 11 points against Mount St. Mary's his freshman year. His four field goals tied a career high and his eight attempts were a career high.

"I can score the basketball if I get the ball," Diakite said. "My job is to play post defense, but if they feed me, I can score."

Diakite also impressed with his defense in the second half. Gani Lawal scored 23 points for the Yellow Jackets, but he finished with just one second-half rebound after grabbing seven in the first half. In contrast, Diakite grabbed five rebounds in the second half - and scored six points.

"I wasn't happy with my first half," Diakite said. "In the first half, my rebounding effort was bad. I had a head cold and my eyes were killing me. In second half, I was ready to go."

Diakite was also one of the few bright spots in a 75-61 loss at UVa on Feb. 18. He scored nine points and grabbed a season-high nine rebounds, just one short of his career high. 

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BASKETBALL KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

CHEICK DIAKITE'S DECISION TO COME TO THE U.S. PAYS DIVIDENDS FOR HIM

By Jimmy Robertson

When he walks into a room or down a hallway or across campus, he casts a long shadow, and strangers with no knowledge of who he is often gawk at him in wonderment, trying to ascertain where Frank Beamer actually found this guy.

After all, he stands anywhere from 6-foot-7 to 6-9, depending on which roster listing one chooses to believe. He pushes 225 pounds, with a body that looks hewed out of Hokie stone. He wears a scowl that actually contradicts his true personality, but all of this nonetheless leaves one to contemplate where Beamer plans on lining this kid up next fall.

But Cheick Diakite is a basketball player. He possesses a football player's body, mind you, with a temperament girded for the gridiron. He beats a warrior's heart, too. But he's a basketball player and wants you to believe nothing less.

His teammates learned quickly of his fierce motivation. Challenge him after a rebound at your own peril. Some have, only to be rudely kissed with a pointed elbow to the jaw.

But that's just what Cheick Diakite has brought to the Hokies the past four years – overwhelming toughness and an unmatched work ethic. Those are constants, his constant.

After all, he's still learning the game even at this stage, absorbing its intricacies and subtleties. He grew up in a foreign country playing a different sport, and even when he transitioned to basketball, he didn't have the advantages of camps or AAU teams or other sport-specific training. He only had a ball and a goal and a desire to succeed.

In short, basketball's been a process for him, one that still continues.

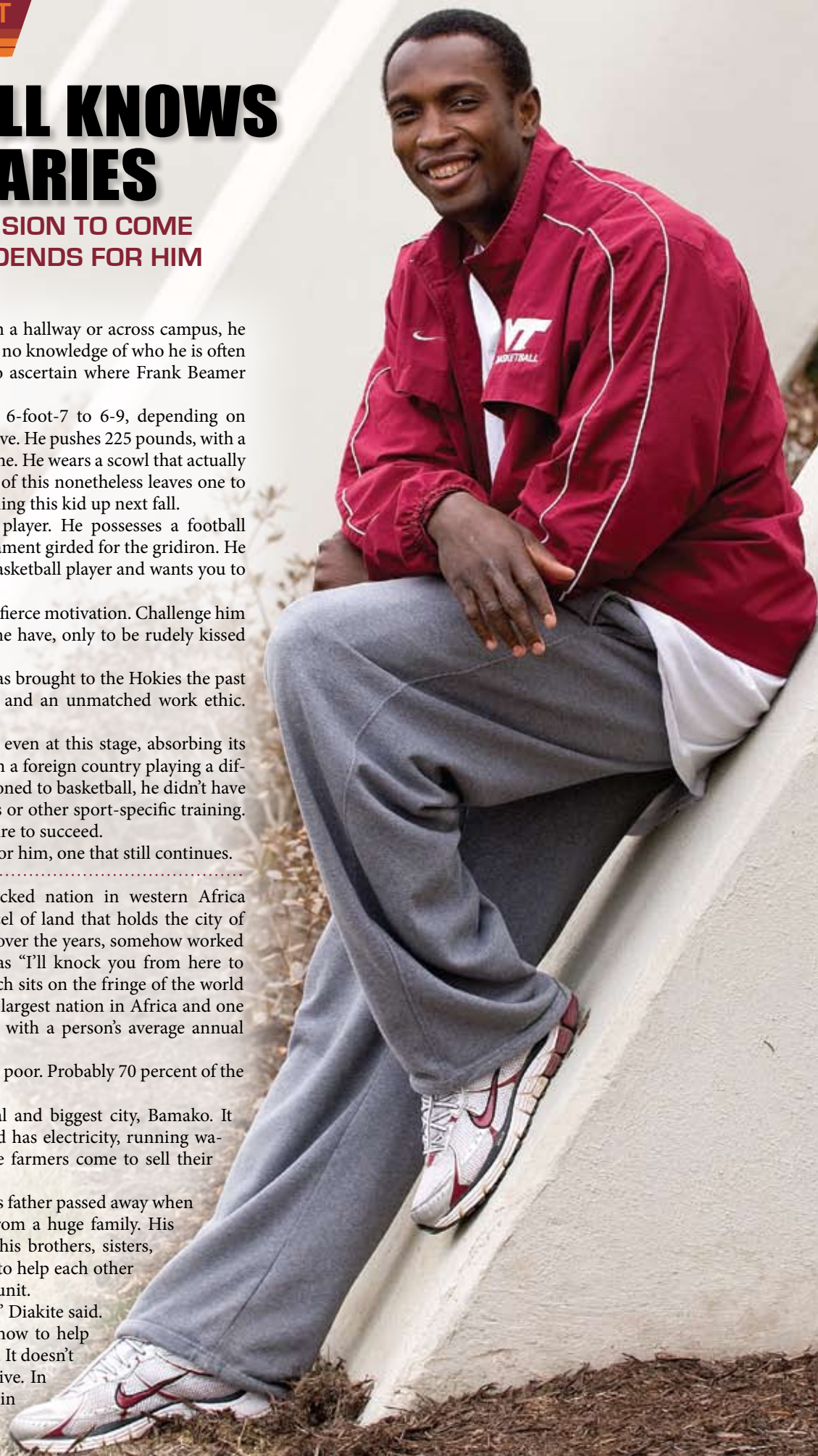
Diakite hails from Mali, a land-locked nation in western Africa arguably best noted for being the parcel of land that holds the city of Timbuktu, an elusive destination that, over the years, somehow worked its way into American sayings (such as "I'll knock you from here to Timbuktu," among others). Mali – which sits on the fringe of the world famous Sahara Desert – is the seventh-largest nation in Africa and one of the poorest countries in the world, with a person's average annual income consisting of roughly \$1,500.

"In Africa," Diakite said. "Everyone is poor. Probably 70 percent of the people are very poor."

He himself grew up in Mali's capital and biggest city, Bamako. It houses more than a million people and has electricity, running water and a thriving market place, where farmers come to sell their harvests.

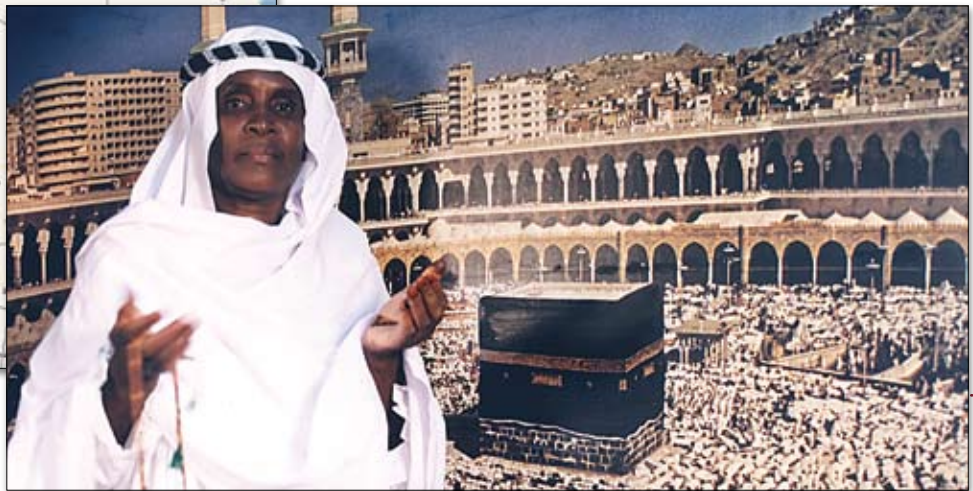
Diakite grew up without a father – his father passed away when he was six months old – but comes from a huge family. His mother, Fatoumata Coulibaly, and all his brothers, sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters pitched in to help each other out, each an integral part of the family unit.

"Growing up in Mali, you learn a lot," Diakite said. "You learn a lot about life and about how to help each other. Your parents teach you a lot. It doesn't matter how old you are or where you live. In Africa, your parents teach. It's not like in





Fatoumata Coulibaly, the mother of Cheick Diakite, raised him and took care of the rest of the family in Bamako, Mali, after Diakite's father passed away when Diakite was six months old. A practicing Muslim, she is seen here during a trip to Mecca.



the USA. Once you turn 18, you're free. But it's not like that in Africa and I appreciate that."

As a kid, Diakite rarely noticed his mother's struggles. She runs a small clothing business and provided only the essentials for him – basically, food.

"Growing up, you'd get food at the house," Diakite said. "But you might want some expensive clothes or some other stuff. Then you really have to work to get those things. But food, they [the family members] do whatever they can, and when you get sick, they take care of you.

"I didn't work [as a kid]. We didn't have summer jobs like they do here in the USA. My mom would give me money, and my brothers, if I needed anything. But I didn't need a lot of stuff. All I needed was to go to school and eat at home. We didn't go out to eat and do stuff like that because we couldn't really afford it."

He spent many of his formative days playing soccer in the streets. Soccer is considered by many to be the sport of the world, and in Mali, it isn't any different.

Entering his teen years, Diakite sprouted past his friends. At the age of 14 or 15 – Diakite is fuzzy on the details – a friend of his sister suggested he give basketball a shot

given his ever-increasing height. He was hesitant to try it, though not for the reasons one might imagine.

"I thought it was a ladies' sport," he said, with a smile.

Imagine a gangly teenager picking up a ball for the first time and shooting it toward a goal after a lifetime spent kicking one around. Certainly, it was an awkward sight.

"The first week I started doing it, I was terrible," he said. "People tried to encourage me and told me to keep working. They told me to come there [to the dirt court] every day. People were kind to me, and it all worked out."

It took all of about one jumper for Diakite to come to an astonishing realization.

He liked this game of basketball. This was the sport for him.

...Diakite attacked his newfound passion with an insatiable work ethic, one probably instilled into him by his mother and a host of family members. After all, when you come from a family as large as his, you learn quickly

that nothing comes for free.

Understandably, his game lacked polish. But his toughness and work ethic, combined with his physical stature, gave him a foundation on which to succeed.

He didn't play in high school there in Mali simply because there are no high school teams. In Mali, kids earn spots on club teams and play against each other, and Diakite earned his, all while rapidly developing into a more than serviceable player.

His big break came when he earned a spot on an international squad and got to fly to Egypt to play in a tournament there. Sitting in the stands was a gentleman named Rob Meurs, who used to run a scouting service and traveled the world in search of basketball talent – and possessed a keen eye for spotting it.

Meurs also happened to be one of Tech assistant Ryan Odom's better friends. He liked what he saw from this basketball-raw Mali kid, and he dialed up the Tech assistant, telling him that he may be able to mine a rugged gem of a big man out of western Africa.



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Odom was intrigued. So he initiated the correspondence with Diakite through e-mail.

Problem was Diakite knew nary a lick of English. Like most in Mali, he spoke French and/or a local dialect. Ever resourceful, he used the Internet and found a Web site that helped him translate Odom's words. Diakite, too, became intrigued with the thoughts of going to America, getting a college education, and best of all, playing basketball.

Odom and the rest of the Tech's staff, though, wanted Diakite to spend a year at prep school first before they decided to commit to a scholarship offer. That only made sense because Diakite needed to learn English first before he could gain admission to any American university, and the year also gave Tech's staff time to evaluate Diakite to see if he fitted within the framework of what they liked to do.

At this point, Odom contacted another friend, Whit Lesure, and Lesure entered the picture. Lesure coaches the basketball team at Bridgton Academy, a prep school secluded in the mountains of southwestern Maine.

"We don't take foreign kids every year, but we've had maybe 10 since I've been here," Lesure said. "We've found that, for the most part, they're more academically mature than American kids. So when you're taking one, you don't look at their past from that standpoint. It's not about what they've done, but what they're likely to do.

"Now, from a basketball standpoint, you kind of go on faith. But there was enough information on him [Diakite] to suggest he'd be good. Of course, you never know. But I've known the Odom family for years and there's a trust level there."

Diakite ultimately packed up his meager belongings and came to America. When he arrived on Bridgton's campus, he knew no one, spoke no English and wondered how he'd landed in this rural spot on the U.S. map, thousands of miles from his former desert utopia.

"I didn't have a clue about Maine," he said. "The first few days, I was disappointed because, back home, all I knew was tall buildings. When you heard about the USA in Africa, all you'd hear would be L.A., New York, Las Vegas and places like that.

"When I got to Maine, I was like, 'Where the heck am I?' But I talked to my friends and they told me that the USA was huge. I calmed down after that."

He quickly became friends with the school librarian, Linda Kautz, and she tutored him on the English language. During his spare time, he stayed either in the weight room or in the gym, practicing and honing his game.

The language barrier wasn't really a barrier on the court – something Lesure says gets overblown.

"At times, I'm happy when guys can't talk back," Lesure joked.

Diakite's toughest opponent during his time in Maine was Mother Nature, who gets pretty physical with her winds and sub-zero temperatures. She was cruel to Diakite, who was used to Mali's desert climate. The coolest month in Mali averages 87 degrees.

"My first two months weren't too bad," Diakite said. "But November, December, January and February, it was freezing. Just freezing. I'm from a warm country and I ended up in the coldest place in the USA.

"I had the clothes, but I didn't have a big jacket because I didn't know what the weather would be like. I had no clue. I had never seen snow. My prep school coach, he bought me a big jacket. Then one of my friend's dad bought me clothes. His dad helped me a lot. He bought me clothes and whatever I needed."

Over time, Diakite got used to the New England way of life. He made friends. He gradually learned English. And on the court, he nearly averaged a double-double, which kept Lesure busy fielding calls.

In short, life could have been worse.

"I like Maine a lot now," he said. "When I was there, I met lots of great friends over there who are really, really nice and I really had a good time in prep school. I had fun."

There really wasn't much of a recruiting process for Diakite. He knew where he planned to go all along.

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You see, in Mali, the citizens take great pride in their respect for one another. If someone helps you out, then you return the favor. You never give it a minute's thought.

Diakite signed with Tech in the spring of 2005 because someone helped bring him to the U.S. – Odom.

“The way our parents educated us, if someone helps you, you’ve got to let him know that you appreciate it,” he said. “So the only way for me was to come to his [Odom’s] school and follow him. If it weren’t for him, I wouldn’t be here today.”

“I’m really looking to go play in Europe. We’ll see ... I really want to play basketball and make some money. That way, I can help my family. My mom did everything for me when I was little, so it’s time for me to step up and help my family.”
- Cheick Diakite

Diakite hasn’t been a superstar during his four years in Blacksburg. He’s averaged 2.5 points and 2.8 rebounds per game for his career and only scored in double figures on two occasions.

But this, his senior season, has been his best. He’s averaging four points per game and four rebounds per game, easily career bests, and he came up big in a win over Georgia Tech (10 points, seven rebounds) and a loss at UVa (nine points and nine rebounds).

Diakite has given this program that which can’t be measured in a box score – toughness and work ethic.



His recent game against Florida State’s Solomon Alabi epitomizes his career. He held Alabi, a 7-footer widely considered an NBA prospect, to just six points and six rebounds, while scoring three points, grabbing eight rebounds and blocking two shots himself. He will leave as one of Tech’s all-time leading shot blockers.


“He gives us a physical presence and I think he’s competitive,” Tech coach Seth Greenberg said. “He’s been facing up and making that 15-footer when people help. He’s done a nice job.

“There are a lot of different ways to contribute. Even though he doesn’t score a lot, he’s been giving us rebounding and defense, and those are positive contributions.”

Diakite graduates with a degree in agricultural economics this spring and wants someday to run his own business, but first plans on taking his game to the next level – hopefully overseas. He desperately hopes to play in Europe for the primary reason of providing for and being closer to his mother – who never once got to see him play at Tech, either in person or on television. A flight from Mali to the U.S. costs more than most of its citizens make in a year.

“I’m really looking to go play in Europe,” he said. “We’ll see what kind of agent I get to go to Europe. I really want to play basketball and make some money. That way, I can help my family. My mom did everything for me when I was little, so it’s time for me to step up and help my family.”

“I think he’s probably four or five or six years from being as good as he can be,” Lesure said. “It’s a shame he’s 6-7, 6-8. If he were 6-11 or 7-0, he could be like a Dikembe Mutombo [Houston Rockets center]. But I think he’ll get better and can help a team.”

One thing is for sure. This young man from Africa with a football player’s body and temperament and burgeoning basketball skills is unafraid of working to get to that point. 



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THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE

A LOOK BACK AT THE SEASON THAT WAS FOR WOMEN'S HOOPS IN 2008-09

By Matt Kovatch

Sitting in the media room after the regular-season ending loss to Georgia Tech on Feb. 26, head women's basketball coach Beth Dunkenberger and players Utahya Drye and Shanel Harrison had a different mood about them. Gone were the long faces and the quiet voices of the players, and absent were the stern responses and clenched teeth of Dunkenberger, all of which were normally present after one of Tech's many defeats this season.

But not this time. Instead, Drye and Harrison made solid eye contact with reporters and gave confident answers. Though bummed out that Tech couldn't emerge with a win, Dunkenberger seemed content with her team's performance. They didn't say it, but there was almost a sense of, 'What more could we have done?' The Hokies had battled back to force overtime, and when your regular-season record is 12-17 with just two ACC wins in 14 tries, sometimes battling is all you can ask for.

"I am proud of this team for continuing to fight," Dunkenberger said after the 73-68 setback. "I thought it was a great effort to come back and tie it up. Although we are very disappointed that it slipped away from us in overtime, this gives us confidence to know that we can play with anybody in the ACC tournament."

Though Tech went on to bow out of the ACC tournament with a loss to Virginia on March 5 in Greensboro, N.C., the effort against Georgia Tech, paired with a dominating performance over Wake Forest on Feb. 22, seemed like an adequate way to conclude what had been a very trying season for the Hokies.

It was only their first losing season since 1996-97, and it certainly had its share of ups and downs. Here's a look at some of those ups and downs:

BEST WIN: This was probably the 79-55 drubbing of Wake Forest at home on Feb. 22. Not only did it snap a five-game losing streak and help the Hokies to match their ACC win total from 2008, but it also avenged one of Tech's ugliest losses of the year, a 66-44 defeat in Winston-Salem from a week before.

The Hokies got double-figure scoring from five players for the only time this season in the win, and the 24-point advantage was the largest final margin of victory for Tech in an ACC game since beating the Deacons by 40 on Jan. 18, 2007.

The Hokies shot a season-high 65.2 percent from the field in the game – including a 6-of-12 mark from the 3-point arc – while holding Wake Forest to 33.3 percent from the field and 6-of-22 from long distance. Tech also limited Wake to just 21 rebounds, a season low for a Hokie opponent.

It was nice to see Tech get back on the right foot with a total team effort in this one, especially over a team like Wake who was at the bottom of the conference with Tech in 2008 before making a marked improvement in 2009.

WORST LOSS: If it wasn't the 22-point loss to the Demon Deacons on Feb. 15, then it was probably the 57-46 setback to N.C. State in Blacksburg on Feb. 1. After holding a five-point lead at the intermission, the Hokies got out-scored by 16 in the second half to lose by 11 and go into a February tailspin that produced just two wins in nine tries.

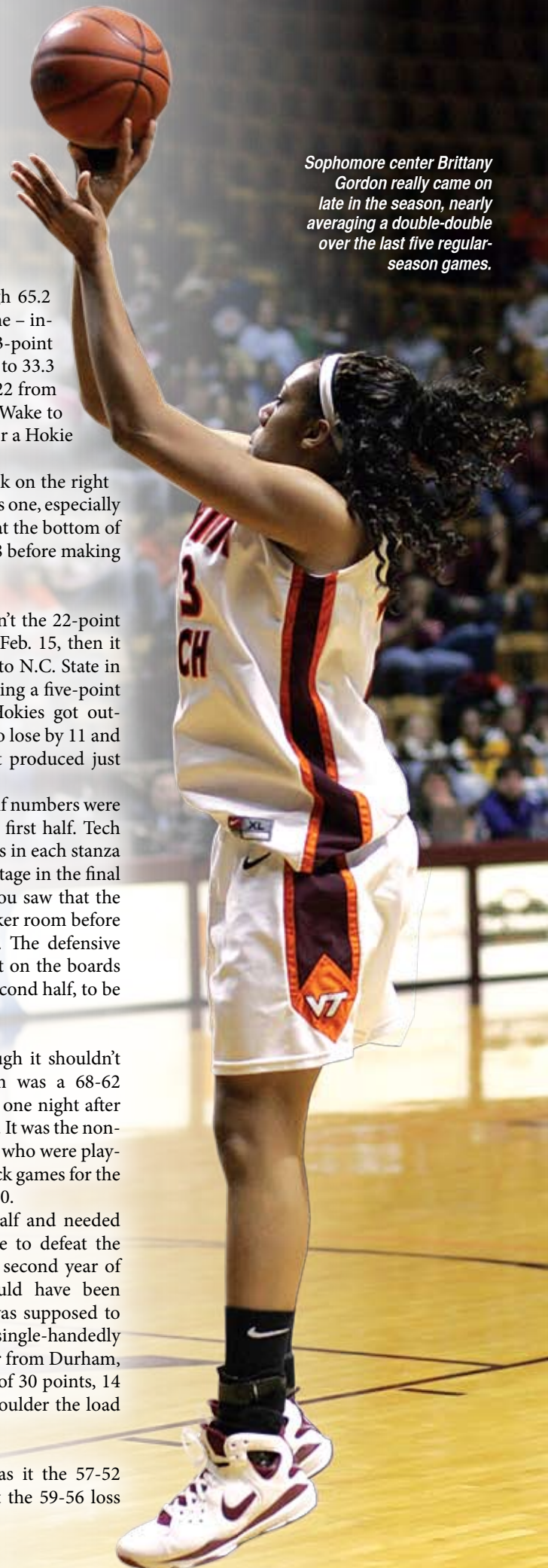
And it's not like the second-half numbers were all that much worse than in the first half. Tech scored an equal number of points in each stanza and actually shot a better percentage in the final period. But if you were there, you saw that the Hokies left something in the locker room before coming out to finish the game. The defensive pressure was gone and the effort on the boards was missing. It was a stagnant second half, to be kind.

TOUGHEST WIN: Though it shouldn't have been, Tech's toughest win was a 68-62 overtime defeat of USC Upstate one night after the sluggish loss to the Wolfpack. It was the non-conference finale for the Hokies, who were playing non-tournament back-to-back games for the first time since November of 1980.

Tech actually trailed at the half and needed a 14-point outburst in overtime to defeat the Spartans, who are only in their second year of Division-I competition. It would have been a disaster had Tech lost what was supposed to be an easy victory, but Drye single-handedly didn't let that happen. The junior from Durham, N.C., exploded for career highs of 30 points, 14 rebounds and seven steals to shoulder the load for the Hokies.

TOUGHEST LOSS: Was it the 57-52 loss to Duke on Jan. 16? Was it the 59-56 loss

Sophomore center Brittany Gordon really came on late in the season, nearly averaging a double-double over the last five regular-season games.



to last-place Miami on Feb. 12? Or was it the aforementioned loss to the Yellow Jackets in the regular season finale? Well, Duke was ranked fourth in the nation at the time, so it's tough to pick nits about that one, and the Hokies gave away a 12-point lead to Miami, including a back-breaking offensive rebound and put-back with seven seconds left that proved to be the game-winner.

But the Georgia Tech loss was tough to swallow. The Hokies rode the momentum of a 15-4 run into the overtime period against one of the ACC's best up-and-coming teams, a squad that finished fifth in the league. They overcame an 11-point deficit with less than five minutes to play in regulation, and a win would have secured them 10th place in the league, back-to-back conference wins for the first time since 2007 and a much-needed confidence boost. But sometimes when it rains, it pours, and it's rained a lot on the Hokies lately.

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER: Drye. A natural small forward, Drye was asked to play in the post this season and she responded with All-ACC level statistics, though she wasn't recognized for it.

It's a crime that she didn't at least get an honorable mention on the all-conference team, especially after finishing the regular season fourth in the league in minutes played

at 34.4 minutes per game, 10th in scoring with 14.1 points per contest, 15th in rebounding at 6.5 boards per game, and 13th in both field-goal percentage (.468) and free-throw percentage (.734).

"We lost a couple of players due to injuries, so I knew I would have to step up and be a leader - I'm not a freshman or a sophomore anymore," Drye said of her success this year. "We were kind of young somewhat; we only had one senior playing this year. I focused on trying to be more aggressive so that whenever ACC play came around, I could take what I'd been practicing and put it to use on the court."

MOST IMPROVED PLAYER: Lindsay Biggs. You could argue for Brittany Gordon here, but Biggs was actually a contributor in 2008, whereas Gordon saw almost no time at all. Biggs averaged 5.1 points per game as a sophomore in 2007-08, but has more than doubled that in her breakout junior season, ranking second on the team with an average that sat at 12.6 points per game heading into the ACC tournament. Because of her ability to stroke the 3 (she ranked third in the league in made 3-pointers as of March

2008-09 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time	
Nov. 10	Mon.	PEACH STATE (Exh.)	L, 70-79
14	Fri.	UNC GREENSBORO	W, 59-53
18	Tues.	RADFORD	W, 78-54
20	Thurs.	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL	W, 81-45
23	Sun.	at George Mason	W, 69-52
<i>Vanderbilt Thanksgiving Tournament</i>			
28	Fri.	vs. St. Joseph's	W, 66-63
29	Sat.	vs. #17 Vanderbilt	L, 43-72
Dec. 4	Thurs.	at Wisconsin (ACC/Big Ten Challenge)	L, 52-61
14	Sun.	JAMES MADISON	W, 72-70 (OT)
<i>South Padre Island Shootout</i>			
19	Fri.	vs. IUPUI	L, 52-64
20	Sat.	vs. SMU	L, 56-63
<i>Hokie Hardwood Classic</i>			
29	Mon.	LAFAYETTE	W, 66-44
30	Tues.	LIBERTY	L, 43-45
Jan. 5	Mon.	Presbyterian	W, 64-31
8	Thurs.	FLORIDA STATE*	L, 63-67
11	Sun.	at Boston College*	L, 62-73
16	Fri.	#4 DUKE*	L, 52-57
18	Sun.	at #12 Maryland*	L, 79-96
21	Wed.	#16 VIRGINIA*	L, 69-75
25	Sun.	LONGWOOD	W, 73-57
28	Wed.	at Clemson*	W, 65-61
Feb. 1	Sun.	NC STATE*	L, 46-57
2	Mon.	USC UPSTATE	W, 68-62 (OT)
5	Thurs.	at #8 North Carolina*	L, 77-93
8	Sun.	at #17 Virginia*	L, 61-69
12	Thurs.	MIAMI*	L, 56-59
15	Sun.	at Wake Forest*	L, 44-66
19	Thurs.	at Duke*	L, 46-62
22	Sun.	WAKE FOREST*	W, 79-55
26	Thurs.	GEORGIA TECH*	L, 68-73 (OT)
<i>ACC Tournament</i>			
5	Mar.	ACC Tourney vs. UVA	Greensboro, N.C.

*ACC game - Home games in CAPS

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4), she was the main target of many opposing defenses.

"I told Lindsay that she is everybody's primary defensive focus – they're going to be on her," Dunkenberger said. "She's got to quit trying to create her own shot and looking for it early – she's got to let it come back to her. We likened it to Brittany Cook last year. When she gave it up and then got it back, that's when she got her cleaner looks."


BIGGEST SURPRISE: The development of Gordon. A sophomore who played just 51 total minutes her freshman year, the 6-foot-4 center has learned on the fly in 2008-09 and ended the regular season on a tear. In the five games prior to the ACC tournament, Gordon put together two double-doubles, including four games of double-digit rebounds and three games with 12 points. She averaged 9.6 points and 11.2 rebounds per game over that span, and finished the regular season ranked 14th in rebounding in ACC games.

"My team has relied on me to crash the boards and I know that's my job," Gordon said of her rapid development. "I also feel like [the team and I] are communicating better. I guess it's kind of like my reward for getting a rebound – they'll look for me more on the offensive end."

"Going into it, I told Brittany that we needed her to play great post defense and to rebound," Dunkenberger said. "Defensively, she gets caught behind once in a while and we'll work on that, but when she can do those two things for us consistently, her offense will come around. She's done a great job rebounding, and I thought that was something that we needed last year. It's been nice to see her step up and fill that role."

THE SENIORS: Injuries rained down on the Tech seniors this season, as only one was in uniform when they were honored before the last home game on Feb. 26. Brittany Cook and A.J. Lemaitre never even saw action this year due to knee injuries, and Amber Hall, a post player on a team that has few, was limited to just eight games with an ailing back.

That left point guard Laura Haskins as the only senior for most of the schedule, and she responded with a typically solid effort. Entering the ACC tournament, Haskins was averaging 5.7 points, 4.7 assists, 4.3 rebounds and two steals per game. Even more importantly, Haskins was named both a third-team academic All-America selection and the ACC's Kay Yow Scholar-Athlete Award winner, an honor that recognizes the conference's top student-athlete among the league's women's basketball players.

"Laura will show up in the record books as one of the all-time leaders in steals and assists and both of those are hustle categories and good teammate categories," Dunkenberger said. "Her leadership on the court is invaluable and we will miss her." 

Utahya Drye carried a big load for the Hokies this season, leading the team in points, rebounds, field-goal percentage and free-throw percentage.



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TEAM CHAPLAIN COMBINING WITH A HIGHER POWER TO IMPACT TECH'S FOOTBALL PROGRAM

By Jimmy Robertson



Johnny Shelton, Tech's football team chaplain, delivered a prayer before the Hokies took the field in every game this past season.

Roughly 25 years ago, Frank Beamer, then a young sprit of a coach at Murray State, recruited a particularly talented defensive back in hopes of luring the young man to the bluegrass state.

The young man ended up going to Missouri briefly before transferring to Southeast Missouri State, and there, he ended up facing Beamer and the Racers on an annual basis, even occasionally tormenting the man who tried to convince him that Murray, Ky., should have been his future home.

But two decades and many fourth quarters later, Beamer got the chance to recruit this man again. And fortunately for him and for Virginia Tech's program, the outcome was different.

Last April, thanks to a little heart-tugging from the Lord and a little arm-twisting from Beamer, Johnny Shelton relocated to Blacksburg from Greensboro, N.C., to continue his work for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and also to serve as the football team's chaplain. He previously worked as an area director for the FCA in Greensboro while also doubling as Elon's team chaplain. And he also had worked as Tech's team chaplain for a couple of games in 2006 and then in 2007, driving up from Greensboro for game weekends.

But Beamer saw a need for a full-time presence – and landed his No. 1 target.

"You know, we have a great strength and conditioning program and a nutritionist and a psychiatrist," Beamer said. "I just really felt like it was important to have someone here whom the kids could talk to and someone they could talk to about their Christian beliefs.

"This had been in the works for a while. I thought it was necessary and it's all turned out better than I ever could have hoped."

"God was going to have to make it totally clear that I needed to come here," Shelton said. "In January of 2007, I went out to San Antonio for the coaches convention and the FCA held a breakfast there for all the coaches. Then I got on the plane to leave and my seat mate happened to be Coach Beamer. That was kind of clear to me at that point.

"Coach Beamer and I had a conversation on the plane. He explained to me that he was really interested in building the character of the players at this point in his career. We had a heart-to-heart talk on the plane, and it was clear that was the direction we needed to go."

While Shelton shuns any sort of publicity and attention, his impact on this team has

been nothing short of dramatic since he became the Hokies' chaplain. Call it what you want – counseling, ministering, mentoring – but the Lord appears to be working through Shelton to capture the attention of a lot of the players on the team, and the numbers continue to grow.

"Johnny's having such a positive impact," said Tyrod Taylor, one of the Hokies' more religious players. "The thing with Johnny is he's always open and available. You can trust him with your problems and he's not going to share that with anyone. You can e-mail him or call him or text him. He's always going to reply back and try to help you."

In 2007, when he served as Tech's team chaplain, Shelton started a "share" time the night before football games, a time in which he allowed the players to pick a topic – any topic – and then they discussed it. The meeting lasted between 45 minutes and an hour, and at the end, Shelton usually picked out a Biblical verse that related to the topic.

Then, on game days, he would hold a chapel service before the game. That was pretty much the extent of the ministry for the 2007 season.

But he has gradually begun to expand it. He continued the share time this past fall,

and even with the season over, he and the players still meet once a week, usually in the team meeting room in the Merryman Center. There, they discuss a wide range of topics, including girlfriends, family issues, parents divorcing, fathers having a drinking problem, anger problems, frustration over a lack of playing time, among many others.

The number of players attending the meetings continues to grow – only 12 showed up at the first meeting, but more than 50 show up now on a routine basis. It's a completely volunteer situation as well. No player is forced to come to the meetings or to speak, and interestingly, Shelton doesn't force religion upon the players. Instead, he patiently waits until God opens the door and uses him in the way He wants.

"I don't call it a Bible study because that immediately turns guys away, guys who have never been in church," Shelton said. "This is just an open dialogue to get those guys to share what is going on in their lives.

"As we sit in the meetings and a guy starts to share his heart and things that are going on and things that the guys knew nothing about, they all get closer. It's like, 'Man, I did not know you were going through that.' The ones who are stronger in their faith pray for them, and other guys may be going through something similar. It creates a bond that has nothing to do with football."

The share times aren't all doom and gloom. In fact, Shelton makes it a point to open the meetings on a positive note, encouraging the players to share something positive that occurred in their lives that week.

"We open every meeting with a praise report where they share the good things that are happening," he said. "We don't want everything to be somber. Now it's not a surprise when I get a text from a player sharing the good things that have been happening. I got a text recently where a player told me that his brother got a job. We had been praying for his brother, and he was really happy for his brother. It's not just the issues that they're sharing. Now they're sharing the good things, too."

Shelton, who played in the NFL with San Francisco and Atlanta, also meets with players individually. During the fall, the football staff cleared out an office for him in the Merryman Center to allow him to spend some one-on-one time with players who want or need to talk with him. He often exchanges text messages and phone calls during off hours and he routinely eats lunch with them.

"I meet with the players. I have lunch with them. Just all kinds of things to build relationships," Shelton said. "That's the No. 1 thing, building relationships. Everything is

not spiritual. A lot of it is being a role model and a mentor."

He also holds a share time for Tech's coaching staff, with the format being the same as the players' time. He picks a particular topic, they discuss it and then he picks out a Bible verse that relates to the topic.

"That's been good," Beamer said. "Looking back at last season, the end results were good, but we had a hard season. We had a lot of difficult times. Johnny's a guy who was able to say the right things at the right time. He's not from the outside, but he's someone who could see things from a different perspective and I thought that was good for our staff."

"The strategy is the same," Shelton said. "My main goal is to stir them [the coaches] up and make them think about the direction of where they're going. We talk about their relationships with their wives and with the players. I'm challenging them to go beyond the wins and the losses and get to know the players on a personal level. That's going to make the players want to play harder for them. That's what I'm getting from the players. My share time with the coaches is based on what I'm getting from the players and vice versa."

In addition to holding meetings with the players and the coaches – both one-on-one and in groups – Shelton takes players out into the community as part of an outreach program. Recently, a person called into the football office looking for former quarterback Bryan Randall to speak to a group at a church in Roanoke on Super Bowl Sunday. Randall wasn't accessible, but Shelton suggested Kenny Lewis Jr., and he and Lewis ended up taking a group of Tech players, who, by all accounts, enjoyed the occasion.

Groups of players have also visited other churches in Roanoke and the New River Valley, and a group recently traversed to Roanoke to meet with some at-risk youth. Shelton wants to do one community outreach event each month.

"I tell them, 'You're not here for football,'" Shelton said. "The coaches probably don't want to hear that, but in reality, they're here for more than that because of the influence they have. They're starting to believe that.

"We're hitting the community and doing little things here and there and trying to uplift younger kids. More and more guys are doing that. They're using their influence to encourage other people."

Ultimately, there are no limitations to how large and successful God's work among the football team and the athletics department can be.

"I can see this going to other teams because the other teams need it," Shelton said.


"The women's basketball team, they need a woman chaplain. I've done some things with the women's team, but there's only so much I can do as a male. So I can see things going that way where it'd be nice for all the teams to have that chaplain there.

"I don't know what's going to happen, but it'll be exciting to see. We won't know until years from now. I tell them [the football players] all the time that I'm interested in seeing them become husbands and fathers. That's when we're going to know."

Given what has been transpiring, the answer certainly seems pretty obvious. Everyone knows that Beamer has recruited plenty of great players for success on the field over the course of more than 20 years. Now, he's recruited a blue chipper in Shelton to help mold the character of those players for success off it.

"I don't think the inner workings of our team have ever been better," Beamer said. "When you see the results and the chemistry on this team, it's been great, and a lot of that is because he relates to the kids and they relate to him. It's been good for the kids."

Not that Shelton's taking any credit, mind you.

"I let God open the door for the timing, His timing," he said. "And He does it. It's been great how it's working out." 



Johnny Shelton worked for the FCA in Greensboro before moving to Blacksburg last spring.

TEEING OFF

TECH'S GOLF TEAM EXPECTS THIS SPRING TO BE BETTER THAN PAR FOR THE COURSE *By Jimmy Robertson*

Garland Green, a sophomore from Tazewell, Va., had an impressive fall and hopes that carries over to this spring.

A while back, after one of his team's rounds, a reporter walked up to Tech golf coach Jay Hardwick and asked him which member of his team was his favorite player.

Hardwick wasted little time in answering.

"The guy who is shooting 65," he said. "That's pretty easy for me. I want the one who is shooting the low number every time.

"I'm not good at math, but when I look at the scorecard and I don't see anything above a 4, I can add pretty quickly."

Hardwick's 2009 Hokies should be doing anything but hacking as they enter this spring campaign. His team exhibited an ability to put up some low scores this past fall, thus enabling Hardwick to keep his calculator in his pocket. The Hokies participated in four tournaments in the fall and finished in the top seven in all four.

His team is small in numbers – he only has seven golfers. But they each possess the ability to record small numbers.

"Any player on our team can do it," said Hardwick, who is in his 26th season as the Hokies' head coach. "Every player has the talent to do it. We only have seven players, but top to bottom, it's the closest group talent-wise that I've had. There's not a lot of disparity there.

"Every player on our team has enough talent. Any one of them could be our No. 1 player. Last year, that happened a lot. When you look at our lineup and see all our guys, you see a lot of top-25 finishes by all of them."

Hardwick heads into the spring optimistic about his team's chances in large part because of their talent and experience. He only lost three golfers off last season's squad, though one of those was an All-American and one of the best ever to play at Tech. Jurrian van der Vaart, a Netherlands native, earned All-America honors a year ago, finished ninth at the NCAA Golf Championships, and closed out his Tech career by finishing second on the school's all-time scoring list. The others to depart were Nick MacDonald and Chad Fultz.

But Drew Weaver shunned an opportunity to turn professional and returned for his senior season. He headlines Tech's program and appears poised for a tremendous spring. In the summer of 2007, Weaver stunned the golfing community when he won the British Amateur, which thrust him on the national stage in this country. He brought home a veritable golf bag filled with prizes, including an exemption to play in the Masters last spring.

Weaver, a native of High Point, N.C., pressed a little last spring. Perhaps partly because of the newfound fame that put added pressure on him, he finished 23rd at the ACC Championships and then tied for 58th at the East Regional. But this past fall, he played well in all four tournaments, wrapping up the autumn with four top-20 finishes, including three top-10s. He narrowly missed his first victory in a collegiate tournament, falling by a stroke at the Brickyard Collegiate Championship held in Macon, Ga., despite shooting a respectable 2-over-par.

"He was pressing last year with all the publicity," Hardwick said. "He felt people were looking at him to be the top player in every event and he put a lot of pressure on himself. I told him, 'You just need to play your game. What you've done speaks for itself.' He worries that he hasn't won a college tournament, but this fall at the Brickyard, he did everything he could do and he just came up a shot short.

"I want Drew just to play his game and not get caught up in wins and losses. Scores are what matter. Jurrian was an All-American and he didn't win a college tournament and finished ninth at the national championship. I'd rather have a top 10 at the national championship than a college win somewhere down the line because he [Van der Vaart] finished in the top 10 in the best tournament in college golf.

"I think Drew will be fine. He had a good fall. He had a good off-season. There's no indication that he won't continue with that. If he plays well and everyone puts it together, then we'll win tournaments."

Three sophomores figure to join Weaver and be fixtures in Tech's lineup this spring – Marshall Bailey, Aaron Eckstein and Garland Green. Bailey, from Fincastle, Va., and Eckstein, from nearby Salem, played in all four tournaments in the fall. Bailey recorded a top-20 fin-

ish at the VCU Shootout, claiming 19th place at even par. He was in the top 30, though, in all four tournaments. Eckstein's best finish was 22nd at the VCU Shootout, checking in at 1-over-par.

Green, though, may be the one to watch. The Tazewell, Va., native played in three tournaments in the fall and recorded top-20 finishes in all three. He closed the fall with a flourish, coming in fifth at the Landfall Tradition (5-over-par).

"Garland had his best tournament the last event of the fall," Hardwick said. "He finished fifth in tough conditions – about as tough as we've played in. That gave him a lot of confidence. He played a lot in the offseason and is continuing to play well.

"Marshall has been solid. He may not have been as highly recruited or had quite the credentials when we recruited him, but he played well for us. And Aaron has the ability to shoot some really low numbers.

"We've got seven players and everyone has played in at least two tournaments."

The rest of Tech's roster includes redshirt senior and captain Will Oldham, redshirt junior Matt Boyd and freshman Blake Redmond. Oldham played in three tournaments in the fall and recorded a top-10 finish at the VCU Shootout, where he came in 10th at 2-under-par. Boyd and Redmond played in two tournaments each.

"I didn't play the same lineup in any tournament this fall," Hardwick said. "We try

to put the best five players in depending on how they're playing and how the golf course fits their game. That's where Coach [Brian] Sharp and I make those decisions.

"We always have opportunities for players to play their way into lineups. We have a rule that if a player finishes within eight shots of the individual lead the previous week, he's in [the next week]. In qualifying, they have to shoot certain numbers, and if they do that, they're in. I like it when the players take those decisions out of my hands."

Hardwick and associate head coach Brian Sharp kept the roster small for a couple of reasons. A smaller roster allows them to travel the entire group and foster camaraderie, while also providing for evaluation time in tournament conditions as opposed to wondering how the ones at home would have fared.

It also freed up scholarships for two standouts for the 2009-10 season – Mikey Moyers from Ruckersville, Va., and Jacob Everts from Ooltewah, Tenn., both of whom signed in the fall. Moyers won the Group AA championship on two occasions, torching the field by 18 shots this past fall and setting a

2009 Spring Schedule

Feb. 27 - Mar. 1	at Puerto Rico Classic	All Day
Mar. 15 - 17	at Pinehurst Intercollegiate	All Day
Mar. 27 - 29	at Furman Intercollegiate	All Day
Apr. 4 - 5	at Adminstaff/August State Invitational	All Day
Apr. 10 - 11	at River Landing Intercollegiate	All Day
Apr. 17 - 19	at ACC Championship	All Day
May 14 - 16	at NCAA East Regional	All Day
May 26 - 30	at NCAA Championship	All Day

2008 Fall Tournament Results

WOLVERINE INTERCOLLEGIATE		
TEAM	288-284-285--857	7th of 16 teams
Drew Weaver	73-66-70--209	6th of 90 players
Marshall Bailey	72-72-70--214	22nd
VCU SHOOTOUT		
TEAM	279-280-291--850	6th of 15 teams
Drew Weaver	68-69-74--211	10th of 81 players
Will Oldham	74-65-72--211	10th
Marshall Bailey	71-70-72--213	19th
Aaron Eckstein	68-74-72--214	22nd
BRICKYARD COLLEGIATE CHAMPIONSHIP		
TEAM	291-286-298--875	5th of 15 teams
Drew Weaver	68-73-71--212	2nd of 81 players
LANDFALL TRADITION		
TEAM	313-308-293--914	4th of 12 teams
Garland Green	75-71-75--221	5th of 60 players
Drew Weaver	76-78-71--225	12th

state record with rounds of 65 and 62. Everts is ranked the No. 11 golfer in the nation in the Polo Golf Rankings and 30th in the Golfweek/Sagarin Performance Index.

The Hokies opened their spring slate at the end of February in Puerto Rico. The weather

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TECH PUTS IN BID TO HOST 2011 REGIONAL

The Virginia Tech athletics department put in a bid to hold the 2011 NCAA East Regional at the Pete Dye River Course of Virginia Tech. The regional would be held at some point in May of that year. Tech officials should find out later this summer whether they won the bid.

The Hokies' home course continues to earn accolades. It received a 4.5 star rating from readers of *Golf Digest* in their "Best Places to Play" poll for 2008-09. That tied for the highest ranking in a four-state area (Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee).

A new \$5.5 million clubhouse is currently being constructed on the property and should be finished later this year. The building site is perched on a 70-foot rock cliff above the New River and will feature "Hokie Stone" and an elevated patio in excess of 4,000 square feet to take in the views of the course, the river and the mountains.

there marked a stark contrast to what they had seen in Blacksburg since November. The team only got a handful of rounds in at their home Pete Dye River Course of Virginia Tech, though they got in plenty of work at their practice facility.

"It's been the coldest snap I've seen from mid-November until now since I've been here," Hardwick said. "We've had the least snow, but the coldest weather."

"You'd like to get time on the course. Fortunately, with our team practice facility, that has made quite a difference. We can be under the shelter. It's not totally enclosed, but it helps. Now when it was bitterly cold, we'd bring the guys inside two at a time to the indoor facility and hit indoors. It's quite a plus to have that team facility."

"I wish we'd had better weather. But that's OK. We're looking forward to the season."


The Hokies came out of the fall in great shape as far as qualifying for the NCAA regionals under the sport's complex qualification system. So this spring, they take full aim at winning the ACC championship – a feat they accomplished in 2007 (co-champions with Georgia Tech).

The road won't be easy, however. Five ACC teams are ranked in the top 23 and nine are in the top 60. Ten of the 11 ACC teams that play men's golf qualified for the NCAAs last season.

"I feel good with this team," Hardwick said. "I think everyone can contribute and we've gotten better every week. We'll look to continue to do that and try to peak for the ACC and the NCAA Championships."

Certainly, this team has got a lot of pieces. Weaver gives them a legitimate standout and the roster, though young, is experienced and deep. Hardwick knows how to coach – he's won seven conference coach of the year awards in addition to a host of other awards and honors – and Sharp, his assistant, serves more in a co-head coach role and provides impressive credentials. Sharp, Tech's all-time leading scorer, won at every level during his playing days and also holds undergraduate and master's degrees from Tech, giving him instant credibility, both academically and athletically, among the players.

With that in mind, Hardwick is looking for low numbers from his team this spring.

After all, he's well aware that low numbers often add up to multiple victories. 

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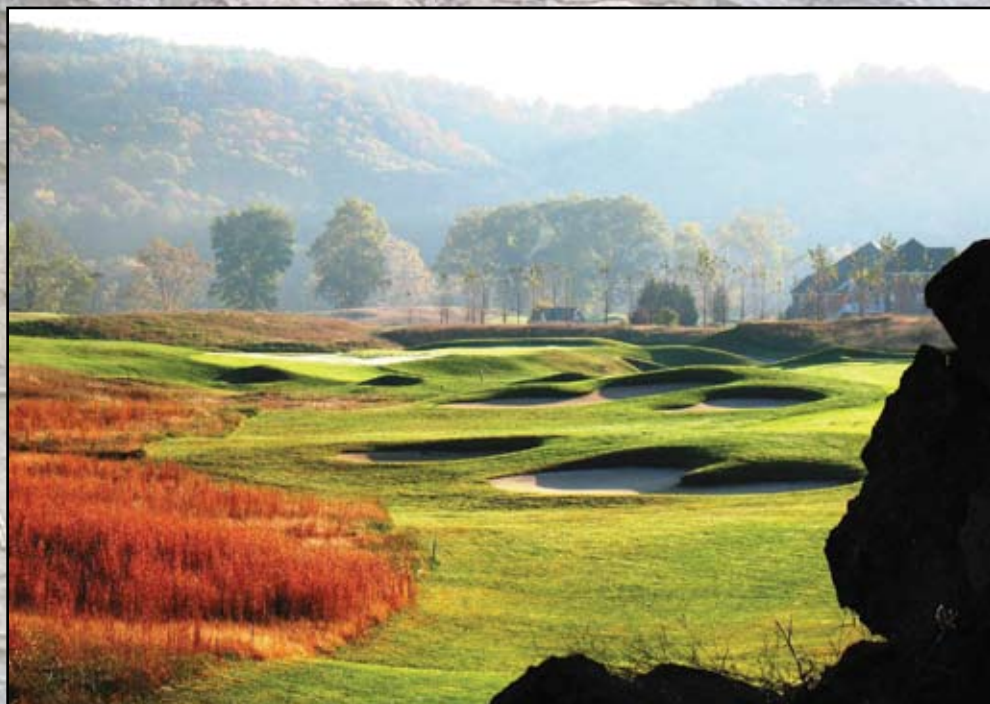


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GOLF GIVING BACK

For quite some time, members of the Virginia Tech golf team had wanted to visit a hospital for children, and finally, last spring, they got their wish.

The team and coaching staff took a day away from the course and visited the Shriners Hospital for Children in Greenville, S.C. They took posters of the team's ACC Championship, Virginia Tech bumper stickers, and brochures for every child at the hospital. They visited every room, and in all, interacted with more than 100 kids.


"Our kids just loved doing that," Tech coach Jay Hardwick said. "That's one of those things that they'll never forget. All of our teams here at Virginia Tech do things like this and that's what makes this a special place."



Members of Tech's golf team enjoyed a visit to a children's hospital in Greenville, S.C., last spring.



"Virginia Tech did more than complete a community service project," said Melissa Bayles, Public Relations Specialist for the Shriners Hospitals for Children. "They brought smiles and happiness to our patients. Even if for just a few minutes, they helped the kids forget about their pain."

"As an employee, it was touching to see how well the golfers interacted with our patients. They weren't afraid to get close to the kids, even visiting the ones in isolation. For those patients, the memory of the team's visit will last a lifetime." 

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TOUCHING THE WALL

H2OKIE LOOKS BACK ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND FORWARD TO FUTURE, AS SWIMMING CAREER COMES TO A CLOSE

By Matt Kovatch

Sara Smith



Have you ever been stricken with mononucleosis? If so, think back to that dreadful time and how terrible you felt. If not, imagine the worst case of strep throat that you can dream of. Imagine your throat and neck glands being so painful that you couldn't eat, and imagine your tonsils being so swollen that you had to be put on a steroid to counteract it. Imagine your spleen being so enlarged that you weren't allowed to exercise or lift weights for fear of it rupturing.

Got it? Now imagine being an All-American swimmer with all of those symptoms, and being pulled from the water and the sport that has made you who you are.

Well, Virginia Tech senior Sara Smith doesn't have to imagine that – she's lived it.

The freestyle sprinter is currently putting the finishing touches on a decorated career in Blacksburg – she recently captured individual titles and set ACC records in both the 50- and 100-yard freestyle events to lead the Hokie women to a third-place team finish at the conference meet, their best ACC finish ever.

But just one year ago, Smith was still recovering from a brutal bout with mono that might have caused most student-athletes to take a redshirt year. But the driven and competitive Smith never considered it.

"It happened early enough in the season that I thought I could still have a decent postseason," said Smith, who eventually won the 50 and 100 free events at ACCs that year as well. "But it was a tough year, to say the least.

"My entire fall season was a wash. I was out of the water for a month, and [for an elite swimmer like Smith] missing just one week of swimming can ruin your next two months. I still ended up doing well by the end of the season, but when I would go to a three-day meet, I could only swim well for the first day – I was so tired by the end of the meet."

The McGaheysville, Va., native did go on to capture those two titles and then eventually made the semifinals of the 50 free at the U.S. Olympic Trials over the summer. Interestingly, Ned Skinner, Tech's head swimming and diving coach, said the battle with mono may have helped her reach her full potential.

"In some ways, I think it was good that she had it," Skinner said. "Any time you feel like your career could end or you see how fragile things are, I think it helps put things in perspective. Once she was able to put [the mono] behind her for good around last April, she really catapulted to another level. It set her up for what has proven to be a spectacular senior year."

Being a short-distance sprinter, Smith was hampered by the fact that mono didn't allow her to lift weights, which is what she derives much of her power and explosion from. But being a sprinter also helped her to get back to normal faster, as her endurance didn't have to be quite as high as it

would have been had she been training for a 200- or 500- yard event.

Regardless, she echoed Skinner's thoughts.

"This year, I've been healthy for the whole season," Smith said. "It's something that you definitely take for granted, but being healthy for an entire year makes a huge difference. I've been able to train harder and longer than I ever have. Normally, by the third or fourth day of a meet, I'm just done. I don't swim as well, I get sloppy and I'm tired. But at ACCs this year, even up to my last event, I still swam in top form. I just feel stronger. I don't "die" in my races, as compared to last year when it was a struggle just to finish a 100 freestyle."

Smith was an All-American in 2007 and is a five-time ACC champion, but that's not all she's accomplished in her time at Tech. She's also a three-time member of the All-ACC academic team, and in 2008, she was named the conference's inaugural women's swimming scholar-athlete of the year.

"I look at my swimming and my academics, and I've done very well for myself," Smith said, while reflecting back on all of her accomplishments. "My life is swimming and school. I want to have the highest GPA that I can. I work hard. I'm competitive by nature and I don't like being beat."

Judging by her 3.8 GPA in biology and all of the school records she's broken, Smith hasn't been beaten very often. That's because she says she sets small goals for herself every

week, whether it's getting an 'A' in class or recording a faster time in practice.

One of her most recent goals, and not a small one by any means, was to get into the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. It's a goal that she recently found out she did not achieve. She was denied admission, and ironically, it was likely because she spent so much time achieving her other goals.

"It's incredibly competitive," Smith said about getting accepted to the vet school, of which there are less than 30 in the entire country. "I think the average GPA of the incoming class at the vet school was around a 3.4 or a 3.5. I have a 3.8, so it's obviously not my GPA. I think it's because I didn't have enough overall working and clinical experience. But I can't get that experience because I swim year-round."

Smith isn't complaining about the vet school's selection process – she understands why they would easily take a person with years of working experience over a person with six weeks worth like herself. But she says it's hard for those making the decision to see the whole picture based on an application and an interview.

It takes countless hours to be as good as Smith at what she does, both in the pool and in the classroom. In fact, she says the longest break she's taken since the sixth grade has been about one month, a month last summer

that she used to work in a veterinary clinic.

"People who aren't in the athletics world probably don't keep up with how much athletes work, how many classes they are forced to miss, and how much time and effort they put into their sports," Smith said. "I think people who aren't in that world don't understand or don't see the fact that I swim year-round, and that I haven't had the opportunity to gain the experience I need."

It's sort of a catch-22, but in hindsight, would Smith trade in some of those gold medals for some internship experience?

"Absolutely not," she said without hesitation. "It's tough that I didn't get in [to vet school], but I don't regret anything."

Ever the optimist, Skinner said he has told Smith that she can still attain that goal.

"The way I look at it, she didn't get in on the first try," he explained. "That vet school is very selective and prestigious, but that doesn't mean she couldn't ultimately get in. If she puts somewhat of a level of closure on her swimming career over the next six months and really gets some of that practical experience, she would be a magnificent candidate for that school or any vet school. If what she's missing is practical experience, then if she puts her mind to it, I know she could satisfy those needs. She just has to acknowledge that there are some areas of her résumé that she has to tighten up."

What comes next for Smith remains to be

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Sara Smith



ming through the summer to see if I can make the World University Games or some national team. We'll see how that meet goes and see where it positions me. I definitely won't swim another three years until the next Olympic trials – that's too much."

Whatever Smith chooses to do, Skinner gives her his vote of confidence.

"Sara has another whole world ahead of her as a veterinary or medical student," he said. "Because of that, I don't think she'll keep on swimming, but if she did, I really think she'd keep improving. Whatever she does, she has a bright future." 

seen. Getting into vet school would have certainly ended her swimming career, but now her options have opened up a bit more. Will she continue to train once the NCAA's are through?

"I get asked that by everyone, and I have trouble answering it," Smith admitted. "My focus right now is on getting through the college season. After the NCAA championships [on March 19-21], I will reevaluate what I want to do, and decide whether or not I want to continue swim-

ACC WOMEN'S SWIMMING AND DIVING CHAMPIONSHIPS VIRGINIA TECH'S MEDALISTS

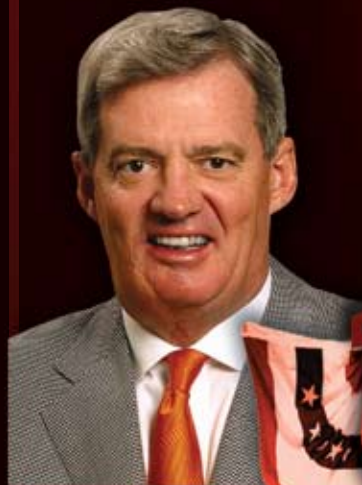
Name	Medal	Event
Sara Smith	Gold	50 freestyle
Sara Smith	Gold	100 freestyle
Erika Hajnal	Silver	500 freestyle
Jordan McHorney, Jessica Earl, Megan Newell & Sara Smith	Silver	200 medley relay
Steffi Drechsel, Sarah Losinger, Megan Newell & Sara Smith	Silver	400 medley relay
Steffi Drechsel, Sara Smith, Jordan McHorney & Megan Newell	Silver	400 freestyle relay
Sara Smith	Bronze	100 butterfly
Erika Hajnal	Bronze	400 IM
Erika Hajnal	Bronze	1650 freestyle
Sara Smith, Steffi Drechsel, Jordan McHorney & Megan Newell	Bronze	200 freestyle relay

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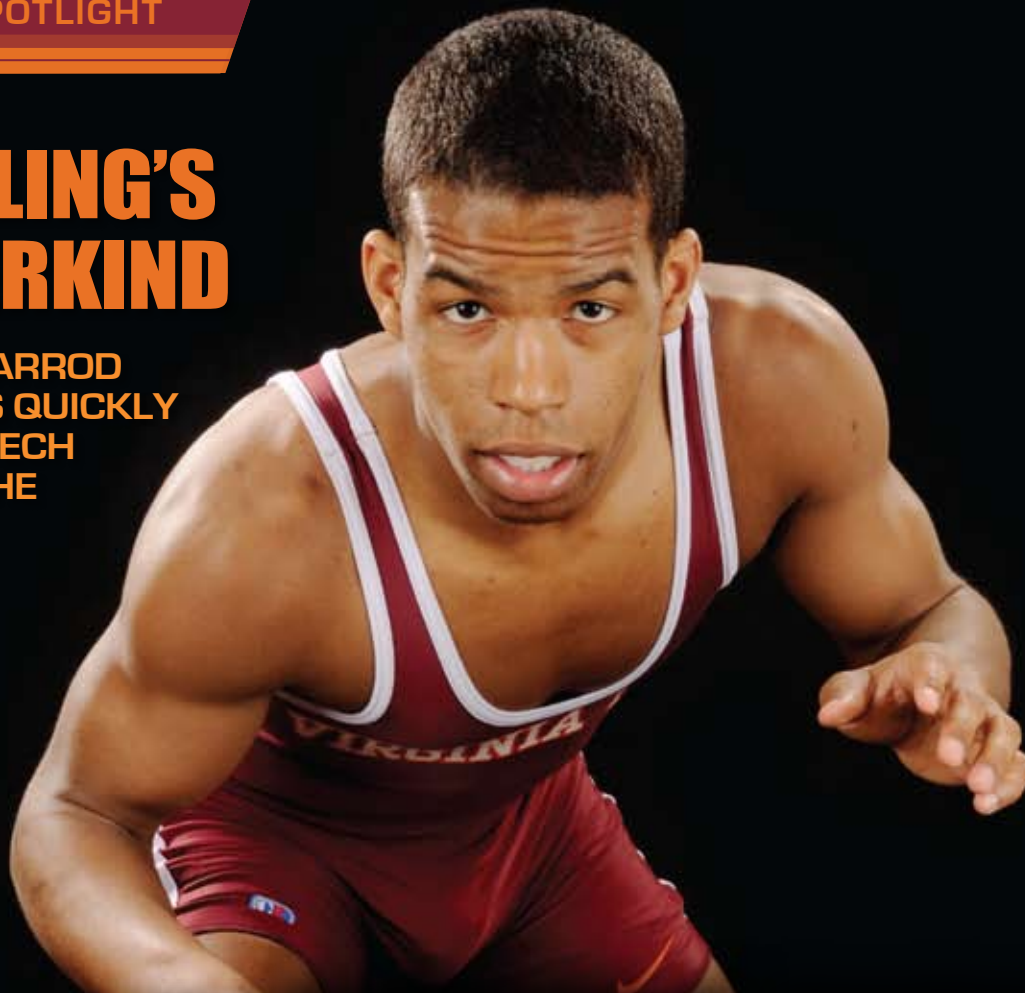
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WRESTLING'S WUNDERKIND

FRESHMAN JARROD GARNETT HAS QUICKLY GONE FROM TECH BACKUP TO THE ACC'S BEST

By Matt Kovatch



Eight pounds.

No, it's not the sequel to Will Smith's latest movie, *Seven Pounds*.

But it is one of the main themes in Jarrod Garnett's real-life story, one in which a true freshman at Virginia Tech sweeps the wrestling world by storm with his rapid ascension to the top.

Garnett wrestles in the 125-pound weight class for the Hokies, who finished the regular season ranked 14th in the nation with a 20-2 overall record and an unblemished mark in the ACC. Though he was recruited as a 133-pounder, the rookie from Newark, Del., was asked to make the move to 125 upon his arrival in Blacksburg, something that took him some time to adjust to.

"I actually never even thought I'd be able to make 125 again," admitted the talented rookie, who actually has the digits '133' in his e-mail address because that's what he thought his wrestling weight would be back when he had to set up his 'vt.edu' account. "I hadn't wrestled at that weight since my junior year of high school – it had been about two years since I actually made that weight."

Eight pounds might not sound like all that much, but we've all seen how quickly the tonnage can pack on after a Thanksgiving meal or during the dormant months of winter. Plus, Garnett is a strapping young man, and

dropping weight is normally the opposite of what a growing 18-year-old is trying to do.

"It really took a lot of discipline and hard work to make sure I kept my weight down," he said. "I've gotten pretty good at it. It took me about a month or so to get adjusted to it, but once it actually started happening and I was able to control it, it has become a lot easier."

Like anyone trying to lose weight, Garnett had to watch what and how much he ate, but a big part of the process was controlling his fluid intake.

"It's very important for wrestlers to stay hydrated because we exert so much energy and we sweat so much during practice," Garnett explained. "But you can't drink too much because water weight puts body weight on you really fast without you knowing it. You can't come into practice being too heavy because you end of having a lot of problems."

It was a fine line monitoring how much to drink, but Garnett says he's found the right combination of water, Crystal Light, Propel, Gatorade and Powerade. But why the change in weight classes? After all, Garnett was projected as a 133-pounder in high school.

For one, head coach Kevin Dresser envisioned him more as a 125 when he finally saw him step through the door in Blacksburg. Also, Tech didn't yet have a solidified wrestler

at that spot and there was a transfer, sophomore Will Livingston, coming in who looked better suited to work at 133.

But once Garnett finally made his desired weight, there was another obstacle to overcome – a promising Pennsylvania freshman in Brock LiVorio. The two essentially faced off for the starting position at Tech's intra-squad wrestle-offs in late October, and LiVorio came out victorious, relegating Garnett to backup duty.

"It was weird how that played out," Garnett recalled of what basically served as a tryout. "I felt like I wasn't too prepared for it – I don't know why. It was kind of a wakeup call for me, so in a way, it was kind of good that it happened to me even though it was bad at the same time."

Dresser agrees with the notion that Garnett was not yet ready, as the freshman alluded to. The Tech head coach says that his staff's biggest struggle with Garnett is getting him into the street-fighting mentality that elite wrestlers need to possess.

"In our sport, you have to like brutality to a certain degree – when the whistle blows, it's a seven-minute fistfight with rules," Dresser explained. "When Jarrod is ready to rock and he's got that scowl on his face, he messes people up. But his weakness right now is that he's probably just a little too nice."

Jarrod Garnett finished the regular season ranked No. 14 in the nation at the 125-pound weight class.



“But I think it comes with confidence. He’s definitely got a mean streak in him – it’s just been tough to pull it out of him consistently. I think that as he gets older, it’s going to get easier – he’s going to walk onto the mat and think he’s the man. Right now, he isn’t quite sure if he’s the man yet.”

Luckily for Garnett, he got a chance to redeem himself not long after his loss to LiVorio. The Hokies competed in N.C. State’s Wolfpack Open on Nov. 8 to start the fall tournament season, and that’s the day that Garnett started to become ‘the man.’

The nation’s 12th-ranked 125-pounder, as well as the ACC’s top-ranked grappler in the weight class, were in Garnett’s bracket. He dusted them both, as well as his other three opponents, to sweep through the tournament and win the weight class in his first collegiate competition.

A little over a week later at Tech’s Hokie Open, Garnett wound up colliding with a familiar foe – LiVorio – in the 125-pound bracket. He avenged his previous loss, and two weeks after that, according to Garnett, LiVorio’s weight “started getting out of control.”

Soon thereafter, LiVorio became the starter at 133, and the 125 slot belonged to Garnett. All he’s done since then is go on to accumulate a 35-5 regular-season record, a 5-0 mark in the ACC, and an individual national ranking of No. 14. He was the favorite in his weight class going into the ACC championships on March 7, and he admitted that he’s had to stop once in a while to pinch himself in regards to his meteoric rise.


“It was kind of unexpected,” Garnett admitted of his early success. “I knew I’d do fairly well, but not quite as well as I’ve done, and as fast as I’ve done it. Of all the ranked

guys that I’ve beaten, probably half of them came in the beginning of the season. Not many true freshmen even get a chance to try to knock off top-ranked guys – most of them redshirt. I’ve had some great opportunities and it’s been an exciting experience.”

Even Dresser, the man who recruited Garnett, didn’t see it coming.

“Ability-wise, I knew he was good,” Dresser said. “He’s so athletic and explosive and strong. He can pick guys up and throw them down. But I didn’t think he would be able to make that jump from high school to college as quickly as he has. It’s been all about getting him into that frame of mind.”

No matter how Garnett fares at the ACC meet (this issue went to print before the outcome was known) or how he does at the NCAA Championships on March 19-21, he has certainly had a freshman campaign to remember. They sky is the limit for the wrestling wunderkind, especially if he develops that pit bull mentality that Dresser so greatly desires.

It’s rare for a coach to admit that he wants one of his athletes to become cocky, so to speak, but with Garnett, there’s probably not much to worry about even if he does. Despite his brisk climb to the top, it won’t be hard for him to forget his humble beginnings as a 133-pound newbie. Besides, it’s right there in his e-mail address. 

THE FANTASTIC FOUR

Jarrod Garnett isn’t the only freshman making a huge impact with the Hokies – there are three more rookies in the starting lineup for Tech. Head coach Kevin Dresser on:



JESSE DONG

(157 pounds, Westerville, Ohio)

“Jesse is the most consistent guy we’ve got in the room in terms of effort. He brings it every day whether he’s in practice or in competition.”



BROCK LIVORIO

(133 pounds, Irwin, Pa.)

“Brock probably has the weakest wrestling background of the three, but he’s a great athlete and he’s a really hard worker. He just needs to catch up on the wrestling side of things, and that’s probably why he hasn’t done quite as well as the others.”



PETE YATES

(149 pounds, Conyers, Ga.)

“Pete might have the potential to be the best of the four. He’s a little bit harder to get going than Jesse, but he’s another guy who brings it every day in practice. He probably wrestles harder than anybody we’ve got when the whistle blows.”

FEBRUARY KIND TO BASEBALL SQUAD AS TECH GETS OFF TO 8-1 START

By Matt Kovatch



Junior catcher Anthony Sosnoskie became the first Hokie to win ACC player of the week honors since 2006 when he was honored after the season's opening week.

Seem a little early for a baseball update? Well it might be, considering the rain/snow storm that washed out many games on the East coast during the first week of March. Virginia Tech saw two of its games called off, though one has been rescheduled for late April.

Before that storm ever arrived, however, the Hokies were able to fit in nine games since the season began on Feb. 20, and they emerged victorious in eight of them. The 8-1 record was the best start for the Hokies since the 1992 squad went 10-0-1 to open a season in which they finished 34-17.

Granted, the wins didn't come against the toughest of opponents. Four of the five opponents had losing records in 2008 – Bucknell made the NCAA Tournament and knocked off Florida State – but then again, so did the Hokies. But wins are wins, and head coach Pete Hughes will take them wherever he can find them.

“As a coach, I don't feel great about being 8-1 considering how we've played in certain stretches, but we're not in a position to apologize for beating anybody at this stage in the growth of our program,” he said. “There's nothing like winning as far as building team morale and confidence. But nonetheless, if we are going to get to where we want to go in the ACC, we've got to play better than we have.”

The Hokies started off like gangbusters,

out-scoring their opponents at the Courtyard by Marriott Classic during the first weekend by a margin of 57-19 to begin the season 4-0 for the first time since 1993. The Hokies' 21 runs against UNC Asheville were the most for a Tech baseball squad in a season opener since another 21-4 victory, that one at High Point on Feb. 27, 1988. Tech's output against UNCA marked the most runs in any game for the Hokies since a 22-7 decision against Campbell in Blacksburg during the 2003 season, and the Hokies scored in double figures in the first four games for the first time since 1992.

Things got a little closer in the second week as the bats cooled off, but the fielding and pitching shored things up to where the Hokies could secure a pair of tight wins over Bucknell.

“We've won some close games,” Hughes said. “We've made some mistakes but still won games that I don't think we would have won two years ago. That's why you schedule pre-conference games. It's so you can iron out some mistakes, hopefully win while you're doing it, and then get ready for the ACC level of play.”

“I look at the second game of the double-header with Bucknell and I see that we had no errors and allowed just one walk. That's a 180-degree turn from last year. If we can do that more often, we'll have a chance.”

Starting pitching looking solid

Tech's starting pitchers have looked good in the early going, and the pitching staff's earned run average was at 2.89 following the first nine contests. Compare that to the 5.06 ERA that Tech held through the first nine games of 2008, and things are looking up.

“I like our starting pitching a lot,” Hughes said. “It makes for a very competitive staff when you have Rhett Ballard, Justin Wright, Sean McDermott, Matt Price, Marc Zecchino and Josh Wymer all ready to go – those are six quality arms. And then the best arm, Jesse Hahn, is at the back of the pen as the closer. The starters have been very good.”

The biggest surprise of the bunch is probably Zecchino, a redshirt freshman who underwent Tommy John surgery last February, but who made his debut with six solid innings of three-hit, five-strikeout work against East Tennessee State on Feb. 24.

“I can't believe how efficient and polished he is just one year off of that surgery,” Hughes said of Zecchino. “Most guys don't get their feel back until a year and a half, so I knock on wood. He's got command, he's got life – what a bonus for us. Honestly, I wasn't counting on him at all, but now we just have that much more depth.”

Those five punch-outs were just a small number of the 95 strikeouts that Tech's staff accumulated over the season's first nine games (as compared to 61 in 2008), and the Hokies

have also cut down on their free passes. After allowing a combined 50 walks and hit batsmen through nine contests in 2008, the 2009 staff trimmed that number to 38.

"I like strikeouts because that means our guys have 'stuff,' and it also puts less pressure on your defense," Hughes said. "But what I look at is walks. If you give up hits but have no walks, that means you're throwing it over the plate and you trust your stuff. Make someone earn their way on base. Those walks and hit-by-pitches - we've cut them down considerably and that was our goal."

Sosnoskie earns rare honor

When catcher Anthony Sosnoskie posted a .643 batting average, a 1.429 slugging percentage and a .750 on-base percentage over the season's opening weekend, he did more than simply earn MVP honors of the Courtyard by Marriott Classic. He was also named the ACC's player of the week, in addition to being included as one of 12 national players of the week by RecruitingCloser.com, a Web site that covers college baseball with the objective of educating high school players and parents about the recruiting process.

The Front Royal, Va., native tallied three home runs, two doubles, seven runs scored, seven RBIs and six bases on balls to become the first Hokie to win player of the week honors since Bryan Thomas did so in February of 2006.

"All he does is work hard, come to the park every day and get better," Hughes said of Sosnoskie. "He deserves every accolade he gets. He's a workaholic and he's self-made. Nothing ever bothers him. It doesn't matter who he is playing against, where he is, what day it is or what the conditions are. He comes to work, he's consistent, and he cares about winning at Virginia Tech. It was great to see him get that award."

Ryan lost for the year


It was learned on March 4 that starting center fielder and team captain Sean Ryan was lost for the remainder of the season with a broken hamate bone in his left hand. He underwent season-ending surgery on March 6 to remove a piece of the bone.

"That's a tough loss because Sean was our most experienced player in the ACC," Hughes said. "He was really starting to have some success - he was hitting .450 and was really starting to feel good about himself. He could defend gap-to-gap in the outfield, and he gave us speed in the top of the order. We're just lucky that the outfield is our deep-est position."

The hamate is a hook-shaped bone at the base of the fourth and fifth metacarpals in the palm of the hand. When broken, pain

is aggravated by gripping, so swinging a bat was going to be a tough task for the senior from Ashburn, Va.

Ryan suffered the injury while swinging through a pitch in the East Tennessee State game on Feb. 24. He sat out the next four games (aside from pinch-running duty in the third Bucknell game) before the fracture was confirmed.

Ryan started the season's first four games and had racked up nine hits, nine runs scored, six runs batted in and four doubles. He will likely gain a fifth-year of eligibility should he choose to apply for it. 

2009 BASEBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time/Result
Courtyard by Marriott Classic		
Feb. 20	vs. UNC Asheville #	W, 21-4
21	at Wofford (DH)	W, 14-10
		W, 10-2
22	at USC Upstate	W, 12-3
24	EAST TENNESSEE STATE	L, 3-7
25	EAST TENNESSEE STATE	W, 10-2
Hawthorn Suites Hokie Invitational		
27	BUCKNELL (DH)	W, 10-4
		W, 2-1
	BUCKNELL	W, 10-7
Mar. 6	at Duke *	3 p.m.
7	at Duke *	2 p.m.
8	at Duke *	1 p.m.
9	BRYANT UNIVERSITY	3 p.m.
10	at Radford	3 p.m.
13	NORTH CAROLINA *	3 p.m.
14	NORTH CAROLINA *	2 p.m.
15	NORTH CAROLINA *	1 p.m.
17	VMI	5:30 p.m.
18	VMI	5:30 p.m.
20	GEORGIA TECH *	5:30 p.m.
21	GEORGIA TECH *	5:30 p.m.
22	GEORGIA TECH *	1 p.m.
24	USC UPSTATE	5:30 p.m.
25	VCU	5:30 p.m.
27	at NC State *	6:30 p.m.
28	at NC State *	2 p.m.
29	at NC State *	1:30 p.m.
31	at James Madison	3 p.m.
Apr. 3	WAKE FOREST *	5:30 p.m.
4	WAKE FOREST *	1 p.m.
5	WAKE FOREST *	1 p.m.
7	GARDNER-WEBB	5:30 p.m.
8	JAMES MADISON	5:30 p.m.
10	at Maryland *	7 p.m.
11	at Maryland *	4 p.m.
12	at Maryland *	1 p.m.
15	at High Point	6 p.m.
17	CLEMSON *	5:30 p.m.
18	CLEMSON *	5:30 p.m.
19	CLEMSON *	1 p.m.
21	WILLIAM & MARY	5:30 p.m.
22	at Liberty	3 p.m.
24	at Miami *	7 p.m.
25	at Miami *	7 p.m.
26	at Miami *	1 p.m.
28	HIGH POINT	5:30 p.m.
29	RADFORD	5:30 p.m.
May 1	at Florida State *	6 p.m.
2	at Florida State *	6 p.m.
3	at Florida State *	1 p.m.
5	LIBERTY	7 p.m.
10	DELAWARE STATE (DH)	Noon
14	VIRGINIA *	5:30 p.m.
15	VIRGINIA *	5:30 p.m.
16	VIRGINIA *	1 p.m.
May 20-24	ACC Championships at Durham, N.C.	

*ACC game; # - in Spartanburg, S.C. - Home games in CAPS

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TECH MEN RUN AND VAULT THEIR WAY TO SECOND AT ACC INDOOR MEET

INJURIES PREVENT THREE-PEAT FOR WOMEN'S SQUAD

By Jimmy Robertson



Adam Witt aided Tech's cause by easily winning the 800-meter run.

Walking out of Rector Field House following the 2009 ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships, Dave Cianelli could have felt disappointment over the performance of Tech's battered women's team or glee at the Hokies' surprising finish on the men's side.

He took the glass half full approach.

"It was a phenomenal meet from top to bottom," Tech's director of track and field said. "We had nine individual ACC champions and the men getting second is incredible."

"The women, considering who we had healthy, did the best they could do. We were just too nicked up with injuries and didn't have the depth. When we get to outdoors, hopefully we will be at full strength and make another run at an ACC title."

After finishing ninth at last year's indoor meet and sixth two years ago, the Tech men stunned the league by racing to a second-place finish. They used a combination of the ever steady and consistently great performances from the vaulters and throwers and the surprising running by the distance runners and sprinters to rack up 98.5 points – their best performance since leaving the Atlantic 10 Conference. Florida State took home the men's team title with 125 points.

"We did a lot more than people expected us to do," Tech senior Billy Berlin said. "We've got a real young sprint team and our distance runners are young. The vaulters are always consistent. They're awesome and the same with the throwers. But the distance team and the sprints were the question marks and we really came through."

Berlin played a large role in that, winning his first ACC title on the final day of the meet. The Midlothian, Va., native won the mile run in 4:03.69, holding off Florida State's Dan Roberts by a hundredth of a second in the closest finish of the meet.

"All I wanted to do was win," he said. "I have been thinking about it for weeks. It feels phenomenal. It is everything I thought it would be. It brought my parents to tears and almost brought me to tears."

Another distance runner, Adam Witt, added to the Hokies' point total on the final day. Witt, a sophomore from Winchester, Va., simply dusted the field in the 800-meter run in a career-best time of 1:50.74. He was second going into the final lap, but he blew past UNC's Adam Smith with 200 meters left and won by two seconds.

"It was a fast time," he said. "I expected it to be a slower race. I thought it would be a sit-and-kick finals. But they went out hard and I hung with them the whole way. I never gave up."

As expected, the Tech men dominated the pole vault competition and the weight throw. Yavgeniy Olhovskiy tied the ACC record in the pole vault with a mark of 18 feet, 0.5 inch to win the event, with Tech's Hunter Hall finishing second and Jared Jodon finishing tied for third. They accounted for 23.5 of Tech's 98.5 points.

In the weight throw, Tech sophomore Marcel Lomnický shocked the field by winning, with the Hokies' Matej Muza coming in second. Lomnický, a Croatia native, just enrolled at

Tech for the spring semester and only started competing in the weight throw two weeks ago, but tossed it 68 feet, 7 inches to win the crown. He shattered his personal best by five inches.

"The hammer throw [an outdoor event] is my specialty," Lomnický said. "I have pretty good technique in hammer throw, which is very similar to [the weight throw]. Maybe that's why I've picked up the weight throw so quickly."

"I want to be better. I'm glad I won, but I wanted to throw over 22 meters, so maybe the NCAAs will be good for me"

The Hokies also got points from others. Nick Vaughn and Keith Ricks finished fifth and sixth, respectively, in the 200-meter dash; Igor Misljenovic came in fifth in the shot put; Hasheem Halim was third in the triple jump; and Paul LaPenna and William Mulherin finished fourth and seventh, respectively, in the 3,000-meter run.

The Tech women's team had some dominating performances as well, but the Hokies saw their overall reign of dominance – they had won back-to-back ACC indoor titles – come to an end more because of injuries than the competition.

The queen of the women's team – Olympian Queen Harrison – did not participate in the meet because of a hamstring injury and her loss almost certainly cost Tech points in the 60-meter hurdles and the 400. After all, she had already qualified for the NCAA indoor meet in the 60 hurdles.

"It was hard not to have both of us out there at the same time," Tech's Kristi Castlin

said. "She's such a big contributor to our team. We give each other confidence and help each other stay calm and relaxed. It hurt that she couldn't run, but I feel better knowing that she didn't run just for the safety of her leg. Everybody loves indoor, but outdoor is the big thing. She'll be ready."

Harrison wasn't the only one out. The Tech women's team also missed Tasmin Fanning, the talented distance runner who sat out with a foot injury. Fanning was the defending ACC indoor champion in the 3,000 meters and finished third at the NCAAs Cross Country Championships back in the fall.

Even without those two, the Tech women still finished in fourth place with 83.33 points behind Florida State, North Carolina and Clemson. Like the men, they dominated in the pole vault and in distance running, while also getting a couple of great performances from two sprinters.

Castlin handled things in her specialty, winning the women's 60-meter hurdles for the first time in her career. The junior from Douglasville, Ga., finished with a time of 8.03 seconds, which tied an ACC record.

It was a sweet victory for Castlin, who finished second in this event in each of the past two ACC Indoor Championships and who also finished second at the NCAA Indoor Championships last year.

"Finally. I was second two years in a row," said Castlin, who has qualified for the NCAAs in the event. "Throughout the season, and the meets in the past that we've had, I've been trying to work on technique, form, different things like that. I really haven't been concentrating on just running fast. This weekend, I just let everything out that I had learned throughout the season. I just let it all hang out and I'm just having fun."

Another sprinter, Asia Washington, pulled off the surprise of

the meet for the Tech women, winning the 400-meter run. Washington, a junior from Piscataway, N.J., normally specializes in longer distances, but recently switched to the 400 – one of Harrison's specialties. Running the event for just the third time, Washington finished with a time of 54.18 seconds for her first ACC individual crown.

"We knew one of our teammates was down," Washington said. "I told her and I told my coaches that I would go out there and make a


difference and I did that."

Tech also got a huge weekend out of distance runner Natalie Sherbak, who won the 5,000-meter run and finished second in the 3,000. Sherbak, a senior from Virginia Beach, pulled away from a group of three other runners with about four laps to go and cruised to victory in the 5,000, winning in a time of 16:23.51. She finished second in the 3,000 behind UNC's Brie Feltnagle in 9:29.61.

And like the Tech men, the women dominated in the pole vault and weight throw events. In the pole vault, freshman Abby Schaffer stepped up with a first-place effort. The Easton, Pa., native vaulted 13 feet, 5.25 inches to capture the gold medal. Sophomore Kelly Phillips cleared her season-best of 13 feet, 1.5 inches to tie for second.

Sophomore Dorotea Habazin took first place in the weight throw for the Hokies. The Zagreb, Croatia native set a personal record for the fourth consecutive meet with a toss of 64 feet, 2.5 inches to win her first indoor conference crown.

Other strong performances for the women came from Erika Schroeder, who finished fifth in the shot put, and Ogechi Nwaneri, who was third in the 60-meter dash and eighth in the 200.

Several members of Tech's track and field teams have qualified for the NCAA Championships, either provisionally or automatically, and will be participating in that meet on March 13-14 in College Station, Texas. The Tech women tied for 10th at the NCAA indoor meet a year ago, the best finish in school history. 

Abby Schaeffer took the gold in the pole vaulting event as a freshman.

TECH'S ACC INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONS

MEN


- Billy Berlin** (mile run, 4:03.69)
- Ryan Witt** (800, 1:50.74)
- Marcel Lomnicky** (weight throw, 68 feet, 7 inches)
- Yavgeniy Olhovskiy** (pole vault, 18 feet, .5 inch)

WOMEN

- Kristi Castlin** (60 hurdles, 8.03)
- Asia Washington** (400, 54.18)
- Abby Schaffer** (pole vault, 13 feet, 5.25 inches)
- Dorotea Habazin** (weight throw, 64 feet, 2.5 inches)
- Natalie Sherbak** (5,000, 16:23.51)

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Guarding the Cassell

CATCHING UP WITH THE COLISEUM'S HEAD MAN *By Matt Kovatch*

If you've ever wandered around Cassell Coliseum early in the morning or late at night, chances are you've seen **Kent Sheets** patrolling the premises. As the facilities manager for Cassell, as well as the adjoining Jamerson Athletic Center and Merryman Center, Sheets is responsible for overseeing everything that happens in those buildings on a daily basis.

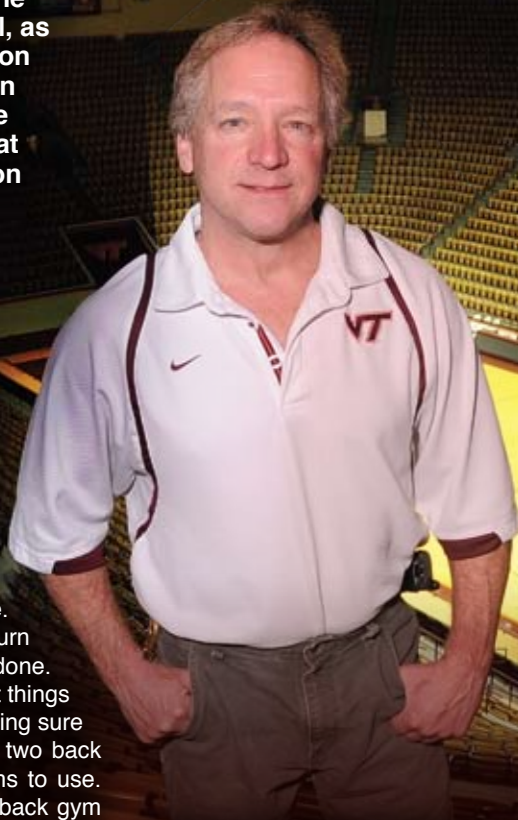
What all do you have to keep track of?

"On a game day, I make sure the clocks and microphones are set up and that everything is ready to go when the game starts. When the game is over, I break everything down, and I try to see that the Coliseum looks as good after the game as it did before the game. Then I take care of any trash and turn the lights out when everybody's done. Then I'm back in the morning to get things ready for the next day. I'm just making sure that the gyms (main floor and the two back gyms) are in good shape for teams to use. Volleyball's been practicing in the back gym at 8:30 a.m., so I need to make sure that's ready to go since the cheerleaders use it to warm up on game nights.

"Away from game stuff, I put together the practice schedules for all the sports so that they don't conflict with each other. People will call me if there are lights out or if there is a plumbing issue. I'll either fix it or call the physical plant and arrange for it to be fixed. There are a number of things in the three buildings that could go wrong. There's always a door that needs to be fixed, or it could be too hot in a certain area of the building. It could even be as simple as replacing the flags outside or putting them at half-mast."

What if a dunk shattered the backboard?

"Nooooo – don't say that. My biggest worry is that something like that would happen, but it's all planned out if it does. For example, not too long ago, the south shot clock went out for no apparent reason. It turned out to just be a bad wiring connection somewhere and it's working now, but now we're prepared to reroute another line back up there if it happens again. We've got backup shot clocks and backboards and controllers for the scorer's table. We have electricians who



work here for televised games in case there are systems that get overloaded. It's mainly just anticipating a worst-case scenario and being ready to go. What if somebody throws up on the floor? That actually happened in a game last year that was on TV, and it took them like 10 minutes to get it cleaned up! I got a call the next morning about what we would do the next time it happened, so now we have a mop, bucket and sanitizer waiting right there just in case."

What happens when a TV crew from ESPN comes to visit?

"Well, they don't clean up after themselves very well – all their tape is lying around everywhere. Once the game is over, they're just like a whirlwind getting out of here. But they do realize that they'll be back a handful of times per year, so they want to make sure they're on your good side. They're actually very easy to work with."

How did you get the job?

"It's kind of a funny story how I got hired. I once was a carpenter building the upper part of the east side of Lane Stadium in 1979, so I'd been in town before. Then I lived in Alaska for 21 years and I worked for a summer

league baseball team called the Mat-Su Miners. We had to have our field worked on and we called up a guy who just so happened to be from Blacksburg. He came up to help redo the field and I got to know him. He was a ticket taker at Lane Stadium and said he could get me a job as an usher, so when I moved down in 2005, I also asked if there were any construction jobs. I ended up working on the stadium crew and I also helped at volleyball and basketball games, so that's how I was tied in here until this job came open. If I never had volunteered with that baseball team in Alaska, I would never be right here in Cassell Coliseum."

What makes your job unique and/or rewarding?

"When people think of athletic teams, they normally think of the players and who is scoring the points, but I work very closely with all of the coaches and they are great to work with. I'm just so impressed with how eager they are to help you. I wouldn't have expected that coming into the job cold, but that's really stuck out in my mind. They want to make sure that what they are doing is OK, and they're very appreciative and grateful of everything I do for them."

MEN'S SWIMMING AND DIVING PLACES FIFTH AT ACC CHAMPIONSHIPS *By Matt Kovatch*

SWIMMING AND DIVING

We already touched on the women's team's success in the piece about Sara Smith, but the H2Okie men fared pretty well at the ACC Championships, taking fifth place in the meet that ended on February 28.

Tech broke a total of 11 school records throughout the meet, with freshman Charlie Higgins rewriting three of them. His best performance came in the 100-yard backstroke, as the Weddington, N.C., native claimed second place in the event, as well as garnering an NCAA "A" cut time in the process. Higgins touched in with a time of 46.54 seconds in the preliminary race to set a new Tech record in the event. He then registered a time of 46.55 seconds in the finals, missing out on a first-place showing by only .14 seconds.

Higgins also helped Tech set a record while claiming third place in the 400-yard medley relay, joining with senior Ian deToll, junior Jonathan Huss and sophomore Stephen Hawkins to finish in 3:11.18.

Junior diver Mikey McDonald was a huge contributor as well, earning All-ACC honors with third-place finishes in both the 1-meter and platform events. He also finished fourth in the 3-meter dive.

MEN'S TENNIS

The men's tennis squad quietly put together a very impressive start to the dual-match season, going 7-2 through its first nine matches. The Hokies were ranked No. 31 in the nation when the month of March began, and that ranking might have been higher if Tech hadn't been forced to play the top-ranked team in the country twice in the season's first month.

Tech lost to then-No. 1 Ohio State during the campaign's opening weekend, but rattled off five straight victories before falling current to No. 1 Virginia on Feb. 27. The Hokies then bounced back with a 5-2 trouncing of No. 73 Maryland on March 1 to improve their ACC record to 2-1.

Junior Yoann Re has easily been the most impressive Hokie in the early going. After winning ACC Player of the Week honors for his upset of then-No. 6



Justin Kronauge of Ohio State in early February, he once again shocked the sixth-ranked player in the nation when he knocked off UVa's Dominic Inglot 7-5, 6-1. Re was undefeated at 9-0 at press time.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Since we checked in with the women's tennis team in the last issue, the Hokies have gone 3-2 to accumulate a 7-3 overall record and garner a No. 39 national ranking heading into the month of March. Their first ACC win came on March 1 with a 5-2 defeat of Maryland at home.

Individually, freshman Courtney Rauscher led the team with seven dual-match wins following the toppling of the Terps. Senior Jessica Brouwer and sophomore Holly Johnson had teamed up for a 7-1 mark as Tech's top doubles tandem.

LACROSSE

The Hokie lacrosse team began its 2009 campaign with four losses, including a 10-9

heartbreaker at Drexel in the season opener in which the Dragons scored the tying and go-ahead goals eight seconds apart in the final 1:30.


But Tech got in the win column with a 10-8 triumph on February 28 at home against George Mason, battling through a steady rain all game long. Senior Rachel Culp tallied a game-high four goals in the contest, but it was sophomore Allie Emala who came through with the game-winner with 3:52 remaining. Goalkeeper Kari Morrison made a season-high 16 saves in holding a Tech opponent to single-digit goals for the first time this season.

Culp and freshman Jessica Nonn were tied for team lead with nine goals apiece through five games.

SOFTBALL

The Tech softball team had a rough go of things in the season's early going, accumulating a 5-10 record after the first four weekends of play. After winning their first two games of the season-opening Chattanooga Challenge, the Hokies suffered a seven-game losing streak in which they were outscored 58-6.

Tech bounced back with a 3-2 mark at the Kickin' Chicken Classic in Conway, S.C., on Feb. 20-22 before escaping a brutal final weekend of February (they were supposed to play four top-20 teams, including No. 1 Alabama) with just one loss after rain washed four games off the schedule.

But the biggest loss of all may have been the season-ending injury to starting center fielder Richelle McGarva, who suffered a freak ankle injury during a base-running drill at practice in mid-February. McGarva was hitting .333 at the time of the injury, which was deemed a lateral dislocation that ruptured multiple ligaments and damaged several muscles. 

Congratulations Hokies!



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OLYMPIC SPORTS SCOREBOARD

*Indicates ACC contest; Home games in CAPS

OUTDOOR TRACK SCHEDULE

Date	Event	Location
Mar. 21	Miami Invitational	Coral Gables, Fla.
27-28	Raleigh Relays	Raleigh, N.C.
28	Weems Baskins Relays	Columbia, S.C.
Apr. 2-4	Texas Relays	Austin, Texas
3-4	Colonial Relays	Williamsburg, Va.
10-11	Sea Ray Relays	Knoxville, Tenn.
16-18	ACC Outdoor Championships	Coral Gables, Fla.
24-25	Penn Relays	Philadelphia, Pa.
30	Liberty Twilight	Lynchburg, Va.
May 2	Stanford Invitational	Palo Alto, Calif.
15-16	Georgia Tech Invitational	Atlanta, Ga.
17	North Carolina Elite	Chapel Hill, N.C.
29-30	NCAA Regional Championships	Greensboro, N.C.
Jun. 10-13	NCAA National Championships	Fayetteville, Ark.
24-28	USA Championships	Eugene, Ore.

WOMEN'S TENNIS SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time/Result
Feb. 8	at Ohio State	W, 4-3
14	DAVIDSON	W, 7-0
14	LIBERTY	W, 7-0
21	at Virginia Commonwealth	L, 1-6
27	at Boston College *	L, 3-4
Mar. 1	MARYLAND *	W, 5-2
5	at Winthrop	2 p.m.
12	at Tulane	TBA
15	at Virginia *	Noon
18	RICHMOND	2 p.m.
21	at Clemson *	11 a.m.
22	at Georgia Tech *	11 a.m.
28	MIAMI *	Noon
29	FLORIDA STATE *	11 a.m.
Apr. 4	at North Carolina *	11 a.m.
5	at Duke *	Noon
8	MARSHALL	2 p.m.
10	NC STATE *	2 p.m.
12	WAKE FOREST *	1 p.m.
16-19	at ACC Championships	All Day

MEN'S TENNIS SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time/Result
Feb. 7	at Penn State	W, 4-2
13	COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON	W, 7-0
13	ST. BONAVENTURE	W, 6-1
20	BOSTON COLLEGE *	W, 7-0
21	BROWN	W, 7-0
27	at Virginia *	L, 1-6
Mar. 1	at Maryland *	W, 5-2
6	LOUISVILLE	5 p.m.
13	at TCU	2 p.m.
15	at Baylor	6 p.m.
20	GEORGIA TECH *	2 p.m.
22	CLEMSON *	Noon
27	at Florida State *	5 p.m.
29	at Miami *	10 a.m.
Apr. 3	NORTH CAROLINA *	3 p.m.
5	DUKE *	1 p.m.
10	at NC State *	2:30 p.m.
11	at Wake Forest *	3 p.m.
16-19	at ACC Championships	All Day

2009 SOFTBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time/Result
Chattanooga Challenge		
Feb. 6	vs. Maine	W, 4-1
6	vs. Troy	W, 1-0
7	vs. Tennessee Tech	L, 0-15 (5 inn.)
7	at Chattanooga	L, 0-8 (6 inn.)
8	at Chattanooga	L, 4-5
Georgia State First Pitch Classic		
14	vs. Missouri	L, 0-10 (5 Inn.)
14	at Georgia State	L, 2-3
15	vs. Evansville	L, 0-9 (5 Inn.)
15	vs. Evansville	L, 0-8 (5 Inn.)
Kickin' Chicken Classic		
20	at Coastal Carolina	W, 7-1
20	vs. Maine	L, 1-4 (9 Inn.)
21	vs. Western Carolina	L, 3-4

21	vs. Appalachian State	W, 5-4 (8 Inn.)
22	at Coastal Carolina	W, 6-0
NFCA Leadoff Classic		
27	vs. Michigan	L, 0-6
27	vs. Alabama	Cancelled
28	vs. Southern Illinois	Cancelled
28	vs. DePaul	Cancelled
Mar. 1	vs. Illinois State	Cancelled
USF Under Armour Invitational		
6	vs. Lehigh	11 a.m.
6	vs. South Florida	4 p.m.
7	vs. Fordham	1 p.m.
11	at Lipscomb (DH)	2 p.m.
14	NC STATE (DH) *	Noon
15	NC STATE *	1 p.m.
21	GEORGIA TECH (DH) *	Noon
22	GEORGIA TECH *	1 p.m.

24	RADFORD (DH)	5 p.m.
28	at Virginia (DH) *	1 p.m.
29	at Virginia *	1 p.m.
31	at East Tennessee State	5 p.m.
Apr. 4	at Florida State (DH) *	4 p.m.
5	at Florida State *	1 p.m.
10	BOSTON COLLEGE *	6 p.m.
11	BOSTON COLLEGE (DH) *	Noon
15	at Liberty (DH)	2 p.m.
18	at North Carolina (DH) *	1 p.m.
19	at North Carolina *	1 p.m.
21	LONGWOOD (DH)	5 p.m.
25	MARYLAND (DH) *	Noon
26	MARYLAND *	1 p.m.
May 2	vs. Campbell	1 p.m.
2	at East Carolina	5 p.m.
3	at East Carolina	Noon
May 8-10	ACC Softball Championship	TBA

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