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The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



KNOCKING DOWN NO. 1

Terrell Bell and the Hokies stunned top-ranked Duke for their biggest win of the season on a day when ESPN College GameDay came to Blacksburg

VT **WHAT'S INSIDE:** Jeff Allen has overcome a lot and is playing the best basketball of his career VT



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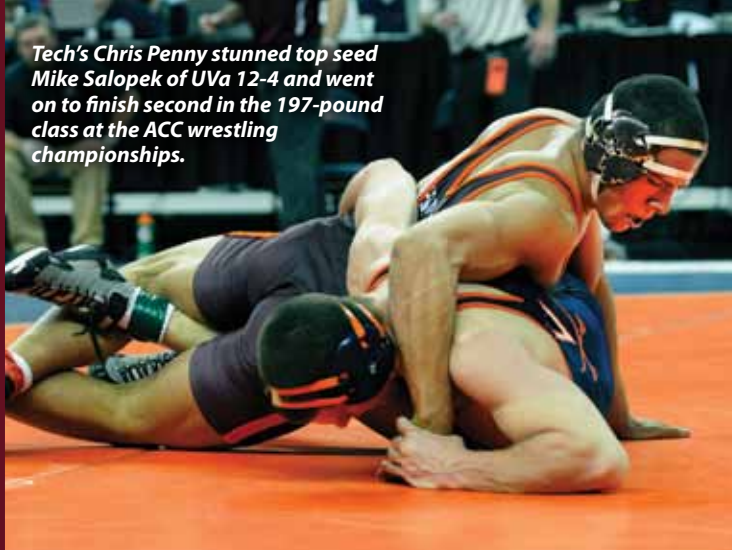
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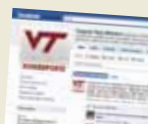
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On the Web...

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UPCOMING EVENT PROMOTIONS

MARCH

19 Baseball vs. North Carolina 1:00 p.m.
Free Tote Bags to First 500 Fans
Bring Your 'A' Game
– Free Hot Dogs with an 'A' graded assignment!

26 Lacrosse vs. Old Dominion 1:00 p.m.
Free Drawstring Bags to First 100 Fans!
Post-game Mini Skills Clinic and Autograph Session!

27 Softball vs. Boston College 1:00 p.m.
Post-game Ice Cream Social and Autograph Session!

APRIL

1 Men's Tennis vs. North Carolina 2:30 p.m.
Free VT T-shirts to First 50 Fans!

2 Baseball vs. Virginia 2:00 p.m.
Free VT/Coke T-shirts to first 250 Fans!

10 Women's Tennis vs. NC State 1:00 p.m.
USTA Kids Day – Free Snacks and Post-match Clinic!

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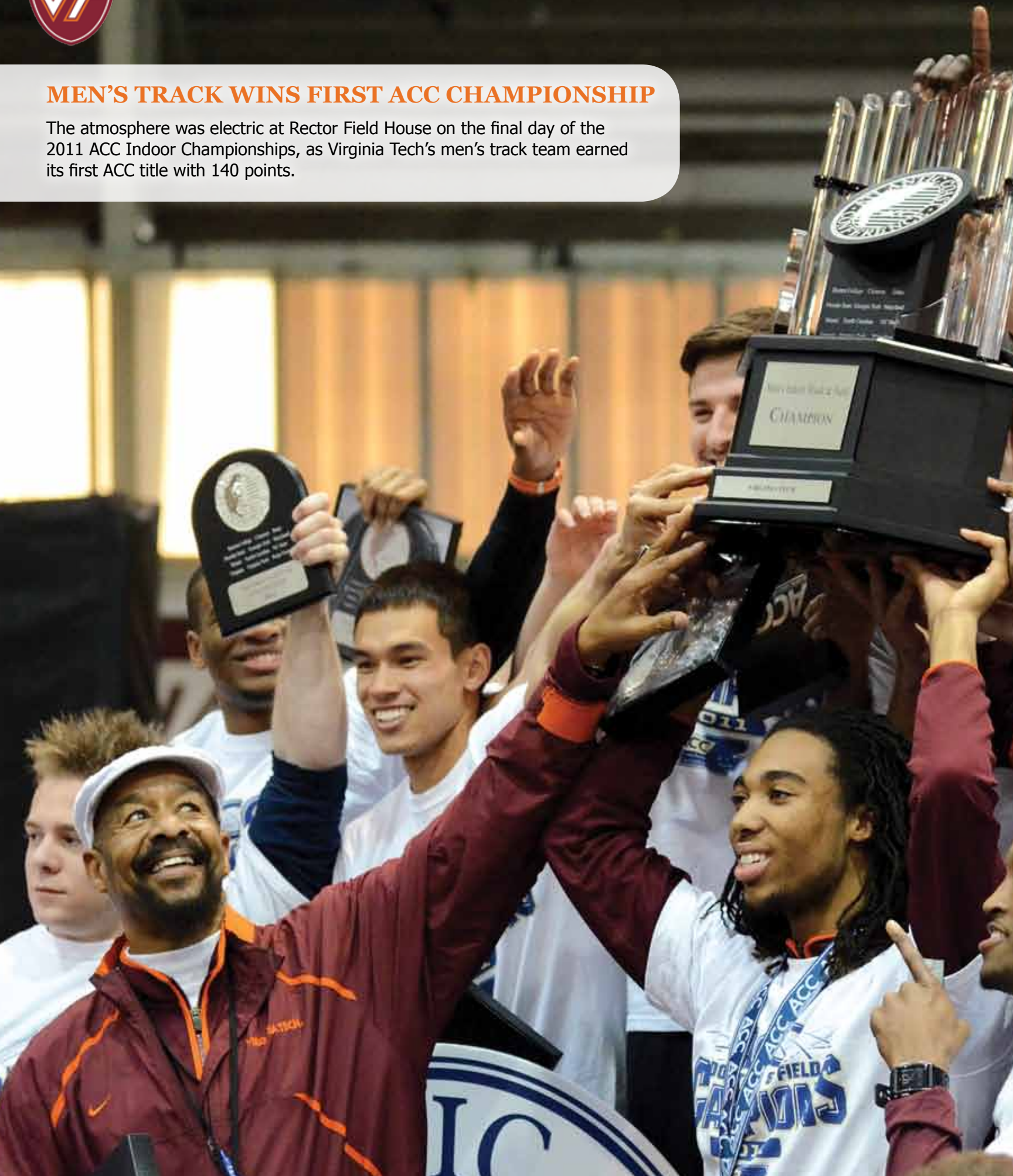
Upcoming Hokies AllAccess Events

Fri., March 18	Baseball vs. North Carolina	5:30 p.m.
Sat., March 19	Baseball vs. North Carolina	2:00 p.m.
Sun., March 20	Baseball vs. North Carolina	1:00 p.m.
Wed., March 23	Softball vs. Cornell (DH)	5:00 p.m.
Sat., March 26	Lacrosse vs. Old Dominion	1:00 p.m.
Tue., March 29	Baseball vs. Radford	5:30 p.m.



MEN'S TRACK WINS FIRST ACC CHAMPIONSHIP

The atmosphere was electric at Rector Field House on the final day of the 2011 ACC Indoor Championships, as Virginia Tech's men's track team earned its first ACC title with 140 points.





THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"It's great to know that the Hokie community is behind me on and off the track. The Hokie Club makes me even more proud to represent Virginia Tech."

Jackie Merrick - Senior - Track & Field

"The experience here at Virginia Tech is and was amazing. When I first came from Germany, I did not know what to expect from the entire student-athlete experience. Through this opportunity, I broadened my horizons immensely."

Matthias Treft - Junior - Track & Field



Donor Files

Natalie & Joe Kelly

Current Hokie Club level:

Platinum Hokies; Caldwell Society Members

Hokie Club member since:

1987 (Natalie has been a Hokie Club Rep since 1989)

Currently resides:

Springfield, Va.

Family:

Daughter - Nancy Ambert

Granddaughter - Melina Ambert

Grandson - Miguel "Champ" Ambert

Graduation year:

Natalie - 1974 - Elementary Education

Joe - Penn State, 1973 (we have since "Hokified" him)



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

A: We love being part of the Hokie Nation! It is always great to be with and meet other Hokies whether we are in Blacksburg, in Northern Virginia or traveling. So many times, we will be somewhere and run into someone wearing a Hokie cap or shirt and strike up a conversation about the Hokies, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, and on and on. We find much to discuss on those occasions and have made many new friends along the way, based on the common denominator of being Hokies.

We are already bringing the grandkids into the Hokie Nation, too - they love coming to the football games and the tailgates. They have lots of Hokie t-shirts, sweatshirts and hats that they like to wear - and they love to see the Hokie Bird.

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

A: We always try to arrive at least three hours before the game to set up our tailgate (tents, tables, Hokie chairs, food and drinks). We usually have a food theme for each tailgate. For noon games, the theme is "Breakfast." One of our tailgate regulars has perfected the omelet in the bag. Each year, we have one game where the theme is "Fryer Luck" - we will have two turkey fryers going and everyone brings something to throw in and fry up. It's amazing all of the different things we have brought to fry! The last game of the year is our "Gumbo" tailgate. The same tailgater who makes the omelets also makes the most fabulous Gumbo - and brings that to the last tailgate each year. Along with food themes, we usually have a wine theme - each week, we designate one red and one white wine as the wine of the tailgate. Everyone brings their favorite bottle of that particular wine and we have a wine tasting.

Q: How did you become so involved with the NOVA Hokie Club? Do you recommend getting involved as a rep to others?

A: I (Natalie) became involved in the Hokie Club as a way to bring the local alumni chapter and Hokie Clubs together in the Northern Virginia area. Being a Hokie Rep is a great way to keep in touch with what's going on in Blacksburg and a great way to get to know other Hokies in your area and keep them in touch, too. I highly recommend it to anyone who loves Virginia Tech athletics.

Q: Virginia Tech athletics has undertaken tremendous facilities growth and renovations. Do you have a favorite project?

A: We like the work done in the South End Zone - We usually end up there at halftime to get our snacks and drinks. It's light and airy there and a good place to meet up with some of our Hokie friends to discuss how the game is going.

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

A: Frank Beamer and our favorite memory of Coach Beamer will be watching him raise a national championship trophy.

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

A: Angela Tincher, and my favorite memory of her is watching her pitch as the Hokie women beat the USA National Team. She pitched her heart out in that game!

Hokie Club enters into Social Media with Facebook & Twitter

The Hokie Club has entered into the world of social media by creating a Facebook Fan page and a Twitter account. As social media has grown into everyone's everyday life, we decided that Facebook and Twitter would be great ways for us to reach our members.

"We are always looking for ways to reach our Hokie Club members and introduce ourselves to potential members. Facebook and Twitter are two great opportunities for us," said Lu Merritt, Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics. "We want all of our Hokie Club members to get involved, so 'Like' us on Facebook and 'Follow' us on Twitter. And remember, tell your friends, family and fellow Hokies about us as well."



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Follow us on Twitter, go to www.twitter.com/hokieclub



26th Annual Hokie Celebration

The Blacksburg Hokie Club and Virginia Tech Athletic Fund would like to thank Custom Catering, Top of the Stairs, Bull & Bones Brewhaus & Grill, P.K.'s and West End Market for their major sponsorship of this year's Hokie Celebration. They would also like to thank the following sponsors for their support of this year's Hokie Celebration!



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NEWS & NOTES

**GAMEDAY COMMENTATOR SPEAKS
HIGHLY OF TECH SHOWING**

As all of Hokie Nation knows by now, Cassell Coliseum served as the setting for ESPN *College GameDay* on Feb. 26 before the Hokies' game with No. 1 Duke that evening. Nearly 3,200 students and fans showed up for *GameDay*, which made its first basketball appearance in Blacksburg, and the impact of those 3,200 was felt by Rece Davis, who serves as the host of the studio crew (a group that includes Hubert Davis, Digger Phelps, Bobby Knight and Jay Bilas).

Davis was impressed with the passion shown by those in attendance.

"There's a great deal of passion for the entire university," Davis said. "We've seen that over the years through the tragic events and through the events that are worth celebrating, like the great football program that Frank's [Beamer] put together here and the great basketball program that Seth's [Greenberg] put together.

"This is a student body that's very proud of their university. They love to support their teams, and they've created a great, great environment for our show. That was as loud and as energetic and intense as any place we've been in seven years on the road."

DAVIS SETS VERTICAL JUMP MARK

Virginia Tech's football team underwent strength and conditioning testing conducted by Mike Gentry and his staff the week before spring break (March 7-11), and receiver Marcus Davis broke the all-time vertical jump mark.

Davis, a rising redshirt junior from Virginia Beach, Va., recorded a 44-inch vertical jump. That broke the 14-year record of 43.5 inches held by former rover Pierson Prioleau.

Three other players recorded top-10 marks on the all-time list in certain categories. In the power clean, offensive lineman David Wang posted a 380-pound lift, while offensive line-

man Jaymes Brooks recorded a 375-pound lift. Those numbers rank seventh and ninth, respectively, on the all-time list. Also, offensive lineman Winston Painter had a 465-pound bench press, a lift that ranks ninth all time.

Seven position records fell, including Davis' vertical jump, which sets the standard for receivers. Josh Oglesby's 361-pound push jerk rates as the new mark for tailbacks, snapping former tailback Ken Oxendine's record. James Gayle's 366-pound power clean is now the new record for a defensive end, besting Nathaniel Adibi's old mark.

In the front squat, four position records fell. Painter's 485-pound lift is the new standard for guards, while Derrick Hopkins' 485-pound lift is the new mark for defensive tackles. D.J. Coles' 450-pound lift and David Wilson's 445-pound lift ranks as new records for receivers and tailbacks, respectively.

2011 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Location
Sept. 3	Appalachian State	Lane Stadium
Sept. 10	at East Carolina	Greenville, N.C.
Sept. 17	Arkansas State	Lane Stadium
Sept. 24	at Marshall	Huntington, W.Va.
Oct. 1	Clemson	Lane Stadium
Oct. 8	Miami	Lane Stadium
Oct. 15	at Wake Forest	Winston-Salem, N.C.
Oct. 22	Boston College	Lane Stadium
Oct. 29	at Duke	Durham, N.C.
Nov. 10	at Georgia Tech	Atlanta, Ga.
Nov. 17	North Carolina	Lane Stadium
Nov. 26	at Virginia	Charlottesville, Va.

The Atlantic Coast Conference released its 2011 football schedule, and defending champion Virginia Tech's 12-game slate features six home games and two Thursday night games (one at home vs. North Carolina, one at Georgia Tech).

Tech opens the season Sept. 3 against Appalachian State at Lane Stadium, starting the first of four straight non-conference games. The Hokies open league play Oct. 1 at home against Clemson.

Six of the teams on Tech's schedule played in bowl games a year ago.

ACC FALL ALL-ACADEMIC TEAMS

In February, the ACC announced its All-Academic teams for the various fall sports, and Virginia Tech placed five football players, three cross country performers, three women's soccer players, two volleyball performers and one men's soccer player on the team.

To be eligible for consideration, a student-athlete must have earned a 3.00 grade-point average for the previous semester and maintained a 3.00 cumulative average during the academic career.

Football

John Graves (psychology, sociology)
Beau Warren (psychology, sociology)
Danny Coale (finance)
Chris Drager (human nutrition, foods & exercise)
David Wilson (university studies)

Cross Country

Sammy Dow (human nutrition, foods & exercise)
Chris Walizer (finance)
Jason Cusack (industrial design)


Men's soccer

Koen Oost (biology)

Women's soccer

Jennifer Harvey (chemistry)
Brittany Michels (university studies)
Dayle Colpitts (biology)

Volleyball

Cara Baarendse (human development)
Jennifer Wiker (finance) 



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DOWDELL FINALLY ACHIEVES LIFELONG DREAM — TO PLAY IN THE NBA

We're going to stop the presses here and report that we've found the happiest dude in America.

But this shouldn't come as a surprise because this guy always walked around with a smile on his face.

Former Virginia Tech basketball stand-out Zabian Dowdell sounded overjoyed in a recent conversation following his signing of a contract with the NBA's Phoenix Suns for the remainder of the season. On Jan. 9, he inked a 10-day contract, as allowed per league rules, and then on Jan. 27, he signed another 10-day deal. League rules require a team to sign a player for the remainder of the season after the second 10-day contract ends, or release the player outright. The Suns chose the former.

"It's about time," Dowdell said of finally making it to the NBA. "I'm very excited. It's a situation where I'm happy to be here, but at the same time, I need to keep the same approach and do the same things I've been doing. I don't want to let myself get complacent. I need to stay focused and continue to work."

That doesn't figure to be a problem for Dowdell, who started his quest to play in the NBA right after his senior season at Tech. Despite being a first-team All-ACC player after averaging 18 points a game and leading the Hokies to an NCAA Tournament victory that year, Dowdell found himself crushed on draft night when every NBA team passed on him.

That began his tumultuous path to

the NBA. He played for the Seattle Supersonics' summer league team shortly afterward, and then after not being picked up by the Supersonics, he wound up in France, where he played for a year (2007-08). The following year, he played in Italy, averaging 19.5 points a game for his Italian team. In 2009-10, he played for the Suns' summer league team, but he got caught up in the numbers game, and the Suns cut him. So he played in Spain.

Last summer, he played for the Suns' summer league team, and he received an invitation to training camp again. The Suns cut him again in October, but rather than sign a \$750,000 deal in Europe, he decided to take \$13,000 from the Tulsa 66ers of the NBA's Development League because it kept him in the States and in the eyes of NBA execs.

"Man, no one grows up saying his dreams are to play in the French League," Dowdell said. "Playing in the NBA was my dream growing up. I guess I was like any other kid. But for me, the NBA was the ultimate goal.

"I felt I was close to making the team [in October]. Playing in the Development League allowed other teams to see me as well. Others thought I could play. Looking back, it was a great decision."

Dowdell took advantage of those 10-day contracts. He was the first to practice and the last to leave. After practices, he placed folding chairs on the court to use as screeners, while running through the Suns'

plays. He accepted his role, which was to back up future Hall of Famer Steve Nash and Aaron Brooks. He became the team's biggest cheerleader during games, and he played well when he got playing time.


"I think I ran the team well and showed them I could play," Dowdell said. "They can rely on me to give Steve some rest.

"That's what a back-up's job is. You run and control the second unit, and our goal [as a unit] is to keep a lead or increase it. That's what they look for in back-ups."

Dowdell loves his teammates, which also include Vince Carter, who needed Dowdell about the Tar Heels' victory over the Hokies in early January. He loves traveling in the team's private jet and staying at the best hotels, though he added, "We traveled good at Tech, too."

He also loves the city, and recently moved into an apartment. In his spare time, he texts former Tech teammate and best friend Jamon Gordon, who now plays in Greece.

He sometimes watches NBA TV, catching old all-star games and dunk contests. He'll see Carter throw down a resounding dunk or Nash make a no-look pass, and he realizes he's on the same court as them.

"There were definitely moments when I thought this might not happen," Dowdell said. "I thought I was talented enough, but so many other things go into it. You've got to be in the right place at the right time. You've got to stick with it, and that's what I've done." 



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WITH RECENT STAFF SHAKE-UP, BEAMER SHOWS HE'S NOT AFRAID TO MAKE BOLD CHANGES

Fifteen months ago, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak had probably never heard of Facebook. He likely had no idea what Twitter was, how it worked or how new social media platforms were growing in popularity worldwide.

Why would he care? He'd been the president of a country with a population of about 80 million people for 30 years. It was one of the region's most stable countries, too.

But in a country where 50 percent of the population is under 25 years of age (per United Nation's data), on-line communication – and not Mubarak – was the real king.

As we know, 18 days after it started, Egypt's revolution was over and leaders of that country's uprising credited Facebook and other forms of on-line communication for their victory.

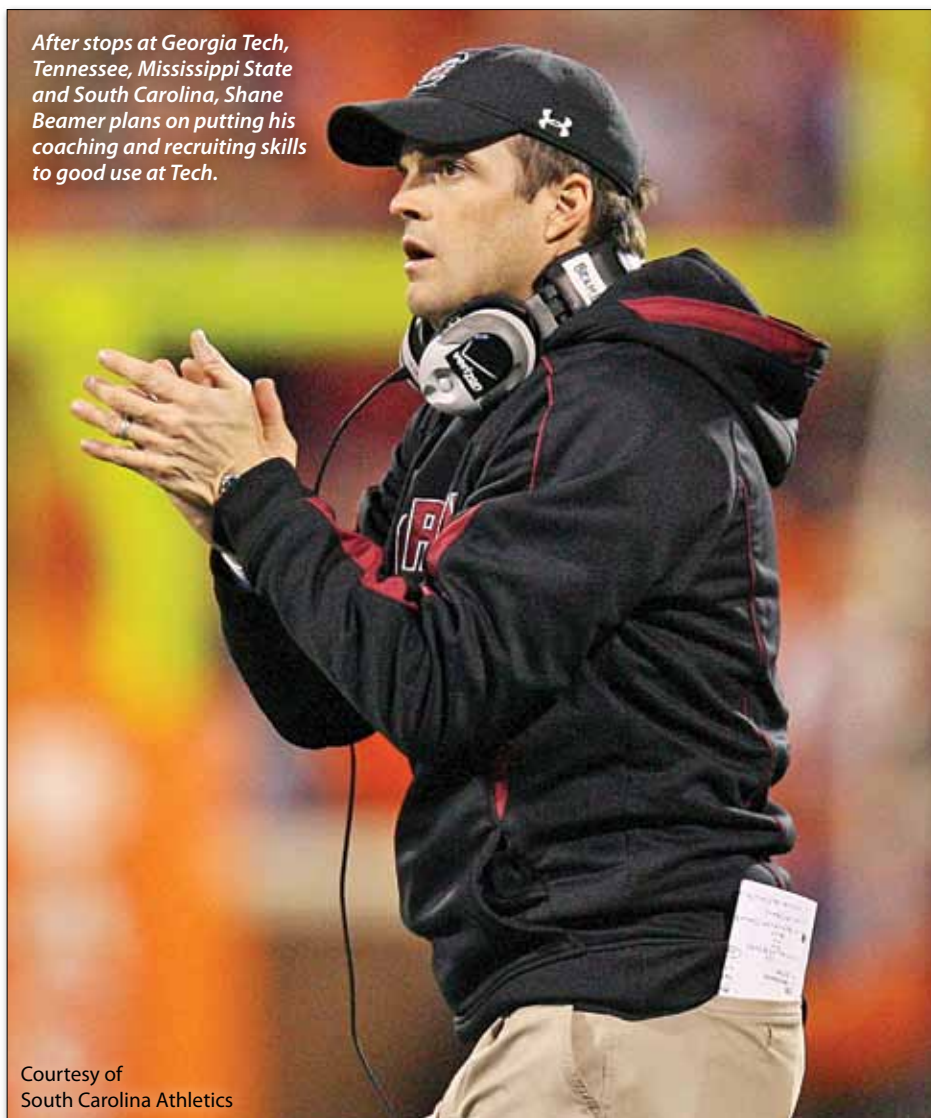
Now, if you're under 25, or have kids of that age, this isn't groundbreaking news to you. The days of high school girls and boys talking on the telephone are long over. In fact, the days of even responding to e-mails have vanished, having disappeared like a one-hit-wonder from way back in ... oh say, 2006 (Daniel Powter, anyone?)

Of course, every major college football prospect who is still in high school is under the age of 25, which translates into 100 percent of the target population for college football recruiters.

(You knew that eventually this story would get around to football, especially Virginia Tech football and recruiting, right?)

At Tech, recruiting has been darn good dur-

After stops at Georgia Tech, Tennessee, Mississippi State and South Carolina, Shane Beamer plans on putting his coaching and recruiting skills to good use at Tech.



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ing the Frank Beamer-era. It's been exceptional, in fact.

That's why Virginia Tech has appeared in 18 straight bowls and has built a stack of 10-win seasons that is now seven deep. The Hokies have dominated the ACC since joining in 2004 to the tune of a 49-11 conference record and four ACC championship rings. The 2011 Hokies became the first ACC team in 11 years to finish league play unbeaten.

But somewhere along the line, whether during the 2009 opener against Alabama or following the 2011 Orange Bowl loss to Stanford, or sitting at his lake house in Georgia, Beamer realized that while his program has sensational players, it needs more of them – bigger linemen, faster linebackers, better players.

And while Tech has a great message to pitch to recruits, it needed to adjust the methods of delivering that message.

Beamer did not have to make the most sweeping changes since 1992 when he totally over-hauled his staff and their responsibilities last month. His program was solid, his roster was loaded and he was comfortable with his assistants. Why make any changes? Things seemed great.

Mubarak probably felt the same way.

This January, Beamer's gut told him the time was right for the biggest staff shake-up in 19 years and he made it happen.

Staff-wise, Beamer brought in son Shane from South Carolina, where he was the recruiting coordinator, and ex-player Cornell Brown, who had been an assistant with Calgary in the Canadian Football League. He retained longtime assistants Billy Hite, who will serve as special assistant to the head coach, and Jim Cavanaugh, who is now director of recruiting and high school relations.

Recruiting-wise, he put Bryan Stinespring back in Virginia Beach, where he previously had been an excellent recruiter, assigned Richmond and northern Georgia to Shane and put Brown in Lynchburg and central Virginia.

Responsibility-wise, on game days, quarterbacks coach Mike O'Cain will now call the plays, and Stinespring will assist Curt Newsome with offensive line.

And while that might make a difference, the focus of all these changes was recruiting and the image of Tech's staff. It got a lot younger, and Beamer hopes better.

That brings me back to social media and its influence in recruiting.

"Huge," Shane Beamer said. "Texting was big three years ago, but it was unlimited and you felt if you weren't texting, someone else was. Thankfully, texting is now outlawed."

Taking its place are Twitter and Facebook. "Twitter and Facebook have taken over," the younger Beamer said. "There are a lot of kids that are only into Facebook. You don't get a response on e-mail back-and-forth, but Facebook, they will."

And that's part of the way Shane and the other South Carolina coaches, including former Tech assistant Lorenzo "Whammy" Ward, signed another highly rated recruiting class that included Jadaveon Clowney, a defensive end considered the nation's top recruit.

Being an effective recruiter in the ACC "is the same as in the SEC," Beamer said. "You have to really work it. It's not just November through signing day. It's year round. It's every day for 365 days. You have to be detailed and find the people who are close to the person making the decision. But you really have to work at it."

And you have to be engaged in how the

high school classes of 2011 and beyond are communicating.

"Three years ago, I had to teach my dad how to check the voicemail on his cell phone," Shane said. "Now, he'll have his own Facebook page."

The recruiting pitches are the same: Frank Beamer is the nation's third-winningest coach. The Hokies had the second-highest graduation rate of any school in the top 25 last year. The locker room and lounge are brand new. Every game has been sold out since 1988. Tech puts dozens in the NFL.

But the way that information is being delivered to this generation has totally evolved in just five years.


"If you're only using the phone on your desk to recruit, you might as well be using a carrier pigeon," one assistant told me.

Of course, it takes more than Facebook and Twitter to recruit players and win games. The Hokies are lucky that Cavanaugh, one of the league's most effective recruiters, will be on staff. And the younger Beamer is fortunate that Hite will be around as well. They've seen it all over the years, battling rivals on the field – and on the recruiting trail.

But the bigger message Frank Beamer sent to his staff – and anyone else who was paying attention – is that he's not content, not satisfied and was willing to make some hard choices to improve his program.

In a way, Tech's staff now looks more like an SEC staff, no? The staff has a highly skilled veteran as director of recruiting and a legendary aid now serving as assistant to the head coach. You don't see much of that in the ACC. In fact, you don't see it at all. But in the SEC, it's somewhat common.

The makeup of his staff looks much different, and how it's delivering its message has changed in a big way in just a few weeks.

Hokie fans are eager to see the results. 



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Now, here are a couple of questions that we've received from Tech alums and fans over the past few months, with responses from Tim Parker, senior assistant AD for compliance:

Q: *I was reading Inside Hokie Sports' recruiting issue and noticed that, when most prospects come on an official visit, a current member of the team serves as the host. Is this a way for a current team member to make a little extra money?*

- Dave in Blacksburg, Va.

TP: "No. The host does receive a stipend of \$30 a day for each day of the visit (official visits are limited to 48 hours), but this money is intended to cover the costs of entertaining the prospect and his/her parents or legal guardians, excluding the costs of meals and admission to campus athletics events.

"Also, the host can be provided with an additional \$15 a day if he/she hosts two prospects at the same time. None of these funds can be used to purchase souvenirs such as T-shirts or other school-related items."

Q: *In the last issue of Inside Hokie Sports, I read where a coach can e-mail a prospect as many times as he or she wants using Facebook, but that a coach cannot write on that prospect's "wall." What's the big deal?*

- Marc in Philadelphia, Pa.

TP: "Facebook, like most forms of social media, is creating new NCAA issues to be interpreted, and everyone in

athletics is forced to deal with a constantly evolving situation. The "wall" is considered a public forum, and therefore, a posting there by an athletics department staff member violates NCAA rules related to publicizing the recruiting process. It's the same as if a coach directly comments to a newspaper or a television station about a prospect. That's not permissible. Coaches have been caught posting photos on prospects' walls, and that's impermissible as well.

"Fans also have to be careful when using Facebook to attempt to influence prospects. Two years ago, N.C. State's compliance department sent a cease-and-desist letter ordering a fan to shut down a Facebook page titled: 'John Wall, Please Come To N.C. State.'"


"The intent of these regulations is sincere. To the degree that it can, the NCAA membership wants to keep the recruiting process from becoming overly burdensome on the prospects and keep it from being waged in public. Without restrictions on social media postings, Facebook would be just another high-tech avenue for fans and coaches to subvert that process.

"Basically, college coaches can send e-mail messages to prospects through the 'message' function of Facebook. That's the extent of permissible Facebook activity."

Q: *You made mention of the Ohio State situation a few issues back, with the five players being suspended the first five games of this upcoming season. But doesn't Terrelle Pryor have to repay some money as well? What if he can't?*

- Katy in Blacksburg, Va.

TP: "Yes, he does. According to media reports, Pryor has to repay \$2,500. That money gets sent to a charity of the student-athlete's choice. A student-athlete who can't repay the money immediately may enter into a formal repayment plan, which must be completed prior to the time that his/her eligibility is exhausted. This is true for any repayment resulting from a Bylaw 16 (Student-Athlete Benefits) violation.

"Looking at a case closer to home, a Radford men's basketball player had been suspended for the first 21 games of this season for playing on a youth club team that included one or more professional players in his native France. In addition, he is responsible for repaying (also to charity) \$8,000 received from that team prior to enrolling at Radford. Unfortunately, the young man has not been unable to repay the entire amount, and so even though the original 21-game suspension has ended, he remains ineligible to compete because the option for entering into a formal repayment plan does not exist for this Bylaw 12 (Amateurism) violation." 



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DOUBLING UP

JEFF ALLEN DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK MUCH, BUT THIS MUCH IS SURE – HE'S LEARNED FROM HIS PAST AND BECOME A DOUBLE-DOUBLE MACHINE IN HIS SENIOR SEASON

The question came at head basketball coach Seth Greenberg like most others.

It came in the news conference following the Hokies' 102-77 win over Georgia Tech, a game in which Tech set a school record for points in an ACC game and a game in which star guard Malcolm Delaney netted a season-high 33 points.

"Do you think this team takes its cues from Malcolm?" a reporter asked.

Greenberg then provided a pretty direct answer.

"Honestly, I think it's Jeff Allen," he said.

That's a bold answer, considering Delaney's lengthy list of accomplishments, but it's probably true.

One can cite many reasons for the Hokies' success this season – Erick Green's insertion into the starting lineup after Dorenzo Hudson's injury, Delaney's consistently great efforts, the unsung contributions of Terrell Bell and Victor Davila, etc.

But Allen, the Hokies' top low-post presence, has played the best basketball of his tumultuous career.

The senior from Washington, D.C., set personal marks for double-doubles this season, including a stretch of seven consecutive spanning late January and early February. That marked the most consecutive double-doubles by a Tech player since at least 1978.

Not surprisingly, those also coincided with a streak in which the Hokies won 13 of 16 games.

"Our guys know that if Jeff Allen is into it and playing, then we've got a good chance of winning," Greenberg said. "That guy affects the game in a lot of ways. Now, obviously, our seniors, as a group, give us leadership. But when Jeff is playing, that's when

we're really good. When we're getting Jeff and keeping him engaged in the game and he's getting 15 shot attempts and snatching offensive rebounds and running the court, that's when we're really good."

Allen's efforts have been refreshing and rewarding for Greenberg and Hokie fans. He possesses that rare blend of talent and athleticism.

But getting to this point has been a journey – and at times, not a pleasant one – and getting him to open up about that journey wasn't easy.

In a recent interview, Allen said he considered teammate JT Thompson as one of his closest friends. So Thompson, always polite, agreed to spill the beans on his friend and video-game-playing cohort.

He politely fielded the obligatory questions about Allen's hoops exploits. But when asked his knowledge of Allen's hometown, his family, his past, etc., Thompson wanted to call a 30-second timeout.

"I guess I don't know as much about him as I thought," Thompson laughed.

Not many do. That's because Allen rarely opens up to anyone. Even after his tremendous performances on the court, he usually answers questions with a sentence, maybe two at best. Getting him to expand on his personal life is even a more daunting task, perhaps bordering on impossible.

Yet it goes far in helping people understand Allen.

The young man grew up in the crime-ridden Trinidad section of northeast Washington, D.C. He lived with his mother, grandmother and younger brother and sister, and he said that there was always something to do in the area.

Unfortunately, most of it was bad.

"Something like that," he said. "I really don't like to talk about it."

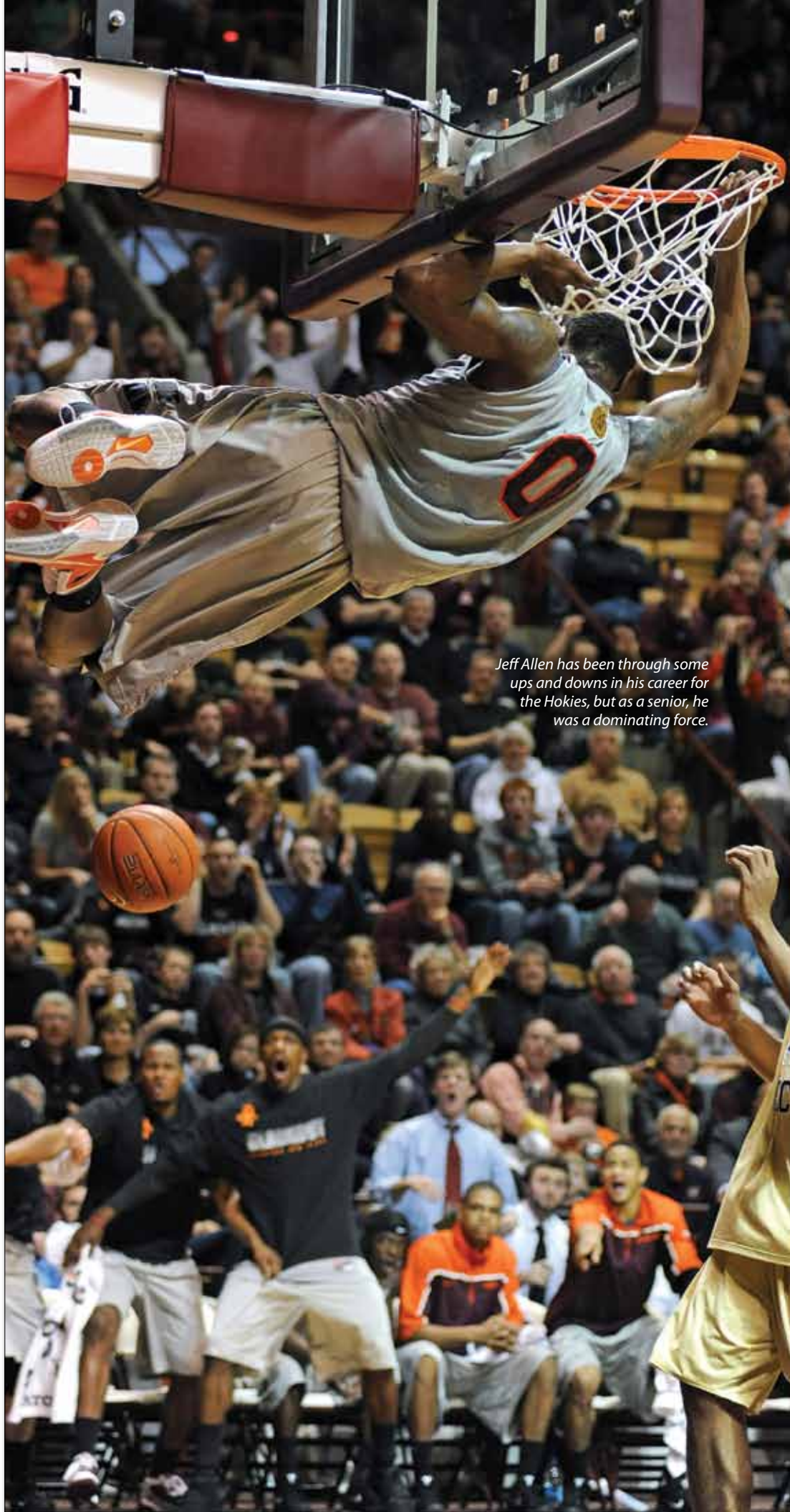
He also hedged on talking about his father, who wasn't around much. In fact, his father wasn't around at all during Allen's teenage years after being sent to jail when Allen was 12 years old.

His father remains there, though Allen refused to divulge any details as to why.

"We're cool now," Allen said. "He was in jail then. We talk now. We have a good relationship, but he's still in jail. He calls me when he can."

Without a father figure, Allen seemed destined to become a victim of the streets, like so many others. Fortunately, basketball offered him an assist.

He started playing as a young kid and became pretty good. Then he got noticed in middle school, and an AAU coach named Tony Langley invited him to join his squad.



Jeff Allen has been through some ups and downs in his career for the Hokies, but as a senior, he was a dominating force.

Langley became his mentor and probably saved his life in the process.

"He had seen me play in elementary school, and he talked to my mom," Allen said. "I started playing with him, and I got better. Instead of being out on the streets, I was playing basketball."

Langley ultimately steered him to DeMatha Catholic High School, a popular private boys' school in Maryland designed to prepare young men for college. It seemed like the perfect place, offering Allen a shot at a future. But he struggled under the school's strict guidelines, and he hated it there.

"It was an all-boys school, and it was a Catholic school," Allen said. "It was real strict.

"My grades were starting to drop. I guess my mom thought it was because I was at home [Washington, D.C.]. I wasn't really doing my homework and stuff. So I had to get away."

He spent two years there. Then, Langley and DeMatha basketball coach Mike Jones shepherded Allen to Oak Hill, a tiny boarding school – and basketball factory – in Mouth of Wilson, Va., near the North Carolina border for his senior season. Allen started on a team that could have

beaten most college teams.

Oak Hill's lineup featured Mike Beasley and Ty Lawson, two guys currently in the NBA. It also had former Maryland star Landon Milbourne, current Duke standout Nolan Smith and current Michigan player Anthony Wright.

Allen played well, and he enjoyed playing with such a star-studded cast despite the school's isolation from the world.

"There's not even a town, really," he said. "It's just Oak Hill and woods. We weren't there that much. Only after basketball season was over. But it was fun playing with those guys. It was competitive every day in practice."

Attracting the notice of college recruiters, he decided to take an official visit to Virginia Tech. He committed on the spot, citing the atmosphere and being close to his mom in D.C. It went unsaid that the shy, young man didn't want the attention that the recruiting process brought.

Allen, though, wound up at Hargrave Military Academy for a year first, shoring up his academic credentials before coming to Tech. Chatham, Va., served as a stopping point, and it featured a little more of a social scene than Oak Hill, though not by much.

"It was kind of the same, just a little more strict. It was alright," he said. "By then, I was just ready to get out of school."

Allen's first three years at Tech were a combination of dazzling displays of basketball sprinkled with an occasional burst of ugliness.

He recorded a double-double in his first collegiate game, scoring 19 points and grabbing 10 rebounds against Elon. That marked the first of 10 double-doubles that season, and as a freshman, he averaged a respectable 11.8 points and 7.6 rebounds per game.

But in a January game against Georgia Tech in Atlanta, he bumped official Zelton Steed after fouling out. That resulted in a two-game suspension, courtesy of the ACC office.

As a sophomore, he averaged 13.7 points and 8.4 rebounds per game. But again, an incident at Maryland marred a quality season. After fouling out, he made a derogatory gesture at a fan, and the television cameras caught it. Allen said the fan hurled a racial remark at him. His gesture, though, earned him a one-game suspension from Tech AD Jim Weaver.

Last season, Allen averaged 12 points

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and 7.4 rebounds per game. But in a Jan. 28 game against Virginia that season, he was ejected for a flagrant foul, albeit a questionable one.

For a guy who shuns attention, he's brought a lot of it on himself.

"Jeff really wishes he hadn't done those things," Thompson said. "He knows he shouldn't have done that stuff. He's often told me he wishes he could take them back. But you can't. You just have to learn from them and move forward."

"I've gotten older," Allen said. "All that stuff's in the past. I've changed since then. There are a lot of mistakes I made back then that I don't make now."

That certainly appears to be the case. In this, his senior season, his play stands nothing short of remarkable and warrants All-ACC recognition. He and Maryland's Jordan Williams were the only two players in the conference to average a double-double.

“Our guys know that if Jeff Allen is into it and playing, then we've got a good chance of winning. That guy affects the game in a lot of ways. Now, obviously, our seniors, as a group, give us leadership. But when Jeff is playing, that's when we're really good.”

– Seth Greenberg

Part of his success can be attributed to staying on the court for longer spells. Allen has fouled out of 20 games in his career, and it comes as no surprise that the Hokies are 4-16 in those games.

That includes five games this season, but all five came before Christmas. Once the calendar turned, he turned into a dominating force. In conference play, he averaged 15.2 points and 10.3 rebounds, robust numbers to say the least. He established a Tech record for rebounds in an ACC game with 19 in a loss at BC.

So yes, his success partly comes back to staying on the court. But it goes deeper. It gets back to maturity and learning from past mistakes.

"His focus is really, really good," Greenberg said. "His attention to detail is really good."

"He's just playing well. He's playing smart. He's moving his feet. He's like Pac-Man. He's gobbling up rebounds. He's just playing well."

"Jeff knows how important he is for this team, and that's why I think his maturity helped him out this year," Delaney said. "He knows he has to be on the floor and

doing what he's capable of doing for us to be an NCAA team and to get to our goals. He's been doing a good job with that, playing smarter. He's not committing the dumb fouls. He's staying on the court more. He's just playing how he's capable of playing."

His playing career will end with the end of Tech's postseason run. But his future remains up in the air.

Allen said he needed the summer to finish up coursework toward a degree in sociology. But he wants to get started on a professional basketball career, and there's another person to consider in the equation – Allen and his girlfriend have a daughter named Londyn, who turns 2 in May. He wants her to have a better life than his as a child.

"Hopefully, I'll make it to the pros," Allen said. "I want to play basketball somewhere. The NBA is my dream. If that doesn't work out, I want to play somewhere for money."

Based on numbers, Allen ranks as one of the best basketball players in Virginia Tech

JEFF ALLEN'S CAREER RANKINGS AT TECH (as of March 7)

SCORING

10. Ace Custis (1,706)
11. Wally Lancaster (1,696)
12. Bryant Matthews (1,656)
13. Bill Matthews (1,652)
14. Jeff Allen (1,648)

REBOUNDING

1. Chris Smith (1,508)
2. Bill Matthews (1,379)
3. Ace Custis (1,117)
4. Jeff Allen (1,072)

BLOCKED SHOTS

1. Roy Brow (251)
2. Jimmy Carruth (194)
3. Bobby Beecher (170)
4. Rolan Roberts (167)
5. Jeff Allen (149)

STEALS

1. Dell Curry (295)
2. Jamon Gordon (290)
3. Zabian Dowdell (241)
4. Jeff Allen (225)


history. He is the only active ACC player with more than 1,500 career points, 1,000 career rebounds and 200 career steals. He ranks in the top 15 in scoring at Tech and the top five in rebounding, steals and blocked shots (see chart).

Those are quite lofty numbers for a shy, young man who came to Tech

without any expectations. He just wanted to play a little basketball.

The only question that remains is how Jeff Allen will be remembered. Will Tech fans point to his transgressions? Or do they view him as one of the greatest Hokie players of all time.

Allen said one thing is for sure.

"I feel like I'll be remembered," he said. "Hopefully, in a good way." 

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ONE FOR THE AGES

ON A DAY WHEN ESPN'S *COLLEGE GAMEDAY* MAKES ITS FIRST TRIP TO BLACKSBURG FOR BASKETBALL, THE HOKIES STUN TOP-RANKED DUKE

Following the Hokies' stunning victory over Duke on Feb. 26, Tech head coach Seth Greenberg went home and enjoyed a muted celebration with his family by eating cheese and crackers and enjoying a glass of red wine.

For sure, there's nothing better than raising a toast to arguably the greatest day in Virginia Tech basketball history.

The day started with nearly 3,200 Tech students pouring into Cassell Coliseum to be a part of ESPN's *College GameDay*, which made its first visit to Blacksburg for basketball. The day then ended with that many students, and many more, storming the court following Tech's 64-60 triumph of the No. 1-ranked and defending national champion Blue Devils.

"We have great fans and to see them turn out [for *College GameDay*] was awe-

some," Greenberg said. "In the end, you've got to play the game, and the game was the culmination of a great day. This was a heckuva day. It was a great day for Virginia Tech."

"It feels great," Tech guard Malcolm Delaney said. "We've beaten No. 1 before [Wake Forest in 2009], but beating No. 1 at home, with *College GameDay* here ... this is probably the biggest game in our school history."

Tech's chances at pulling an upset took a dire turn midway through the second half. Some cold shooting – the Hokies scored two baskets in an eight-minute span – and steady play by Duke All-American Kyle Singler enabled the Blue Devils to open a six-point lead. Singler, who finished with 22 points, hit a 3-pointer with 11:08 left, and his two free throws with 7:44 to go

gave Duke a 53-47 bulge, its biggest lead of the game.

But with that raucous crowd behind them, Tech answered. Jeff Allen buried a 3-pointer with 6:30 left, and that shot started a game-ending 17-7 run for Tech.

"Some of the guys on the team have been in this situation before," Allen said. "We've been down. You take hits. We might have dropped our heads. Today, we didn't drop our heads. They hit us with a shot, and we punched right back."

"The crowd," Tech guard Erick Green said as to how Tech came back. "The crowd got us into it. Coach told us some things, and we listened and dug in. It paid off."

Tech got contributions from everyone down the stretch. Victor Davila's monster follow dunk pulled the Hokies to within 55-52, and then Terrell Bell made the most

important 3-pointer of his life, tying the game at 55 with 4:40 remaining, and the crowd erupted.

Down the stretch, Delaney made arguably the biggest shot of the game. Tech led 59-57, and with the shot clock running down, Delaney drilled a 3-pointer with 2:01 left to push the lead back to five.

It was Delaney's first and only 3-pointer of the game.


"I promised them [his teammates] I was going to get them one," Delaney said. "I couldn't hit a shot, but I was still confident."

In the waning seconds – actually with 21.8 seconds to go – Allen hit the second of two free throws to give Tech a 63-60 lead. Duke called a timeout with 12.7 seconds left to set up a final play, but Seth Curry fumbled the ball away, and Allen corralled it.

Curry fouled him with under two seconds left, and Allen made the first of two free throws to account for the final margin. It marked the last of his 18 points, and he also grabbed 15 rebounds.

Once the final horn sounded, fans flooded the court.

"The feeling is unbelievable," said Green, who finished with 11 points. "I can't explain it. I've got so much going through my mind now and so much excitement going through me ... it's just a dream come true. To pick off No. 1 Duke, I just can't explain it right now."

"This group, to see them grow and to have this moment, you feel really good for them," Greenberg said. "These kids have been through so much, and they haven't gotten that reward. We had the grandest of stages. You don't get any bigger than the stage we played on tonight. To see them grow and learn to trust each other, to me, that's really rewarding." 



Malcolm Delaney had 11 points, seven rebounds and four assists in Tech's win over Duke, as the Hokies beat a No. 1 team for the second time in three seasons.

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CASSELL MOMENTS: FAN RESPONSES

In the February issue of *Inside Hokie Sports*, we ran a story on the 50th anniversary of Cassell Coliseum, and within that story, listed the top 10 moments in the Cassell's history. The staff posted the story on hokiesports.com as well as the Virginia Tech athletics Facebook page. Here are some of the responses, which came through e-mail and Facebook:

Jimmy Robertson's take on the Duke win: Obviously, the top-10 list was put together before the Hokies' victory over No. 1 Duke on Feb. 26. Most of you rated it No. 1. Given the crowd, the ESPN cameras, Duke's ranking, the thrilling ending and that the Blue Devils are the defending national champions, I'd certainly rank this game in the top five.

On the recent win over No. 1 Duke

"I think it is in the top 5 ... Beating UNC a few years ago, the last second 3 vs. New Mexico State to send VT to the NIT final four in 1995, and the 141-133 double OT win vs. So. Miss. in 1988 when VT was down 19 ... Beating Memphis in 1983 would round the top 5 ... Tech was only a 4-point dog in the past game."

– Dave Pair via Facebook

On the Feb. 1, 1986 win, vs. No. 2 Memphis State

"I was @ that game! A great game!"

– Eric Hollenbach via Facebook

"I was there, too. The Cassell was rockin'! Good call for #1."

– Jim Tomlinson via Facebook

"The win over Purdue just after we beat Duke on the road in Dec., 1966, has to be up there near the top 10. That was greatest team of all time. Made the final eight."

– Bill Neal via Facebook

Jimmy Robertson's response: "Bill, actually, I never considered this game, and that's an oversight on my part. Dave Smith, our longtime assistant AD for athletics communications and resident encyclopedia of Tech sports, agreed with you, which goes a long way with me. Tech beat Purdue in front of 11,500 fans at Cassell – to this day, the largest crowd ever at the Coliseum. At the time, it was the largest crowd ever to watch a basketball game in the state of Virginia."

"I was a member of the 1977-81 team. It was 1977 and we were playing Syracuse. They may have ranked 13th at the time. We totally destroyed them 87-71. It was the loudest that Cassell was in my four years."


– David Bennett via e-mail.

Jimmy Robertson's response: "David, I looked at this game closely. It was probably No. 11, to be honest."

On the Jan. 13, 2007 game vs. No. 1 UNC

"I'm in that crowd somewhere. This is #1 to me, but I'm partial."

– Ryan Adams via Facebook

Jimmy Robertson's response: "Ryan, I considered it as the No. 1. But most longtime Tech fans would disagree. Tech jumped out to a huge lead in this game, and then held on, so it didn't have the drama of some of the other great wins." 

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Monet Tellier (31) had one of the best rookie seasons for the Hokies, scoring 240 points.

A SEASON OF UPS AND DOWNS ENDS AT ACC TOURNAMENT

In a tournament that saw five upsets, including No. 6 seed North Carolina making the ACC Tournament championship game, No. 12 Virginia Tech could not pull off an upset of its own and ended its season with a loss to No. 5 seed Georgia Tech on March 3 in Greensboro, N.C.

It was an up and down year for the Hokies, who won their first four games and then used a comeback for the ages to put together another four-game winning streak that culminated with the winning of the 2010 Hilton Garden Hokie Classic, giving the team its 17th Hokie Classic title in 21 years.

Trailing by as many as 17 in the first half and facing a 15-point deficit at the break, Tech scored 55 second-half points to register

a 74-68 victory over Vanderbilt, which also marked its first win over an SEC school since 2004 and the biggest win of the season.

There could have been a reason for the momentous comeback, as head coach Beth Dunkenberg explained in her postgame press conference afterward.

"Our players played this game and we coached this game inspired. Oreanna Crews was 100 years old when she passed away on Christmas Eve and she was our honorary coach every year," she said. "We dedicated this tournament, and in particular, this game to Coach Crews and we were very pleased. I know she is smiling from up above and this one was for her."

TELLIER MAKES IMPRESSIVE START

One of the catalysts of that impressive run was freshman Monet Tellier, who scored a season-high 23 points in the comeback and earned MVP honors for the Classic. The Charlotte, N.C., native also scored 23 against the Wolfpack and finished the season third on the team in scoring with 240 points.

Putting that number into perspective, Hokies third all-time leading scorer, Ieva Kublina (2000-04), tallied 242 points during her rookie campaign, while the fourth-leading scorer, Jenny Root (1991-95), scored 239 points. Only seven of the 22 1,000-point scorers in Hokie his-

tory scored more than Tellier's output this season.

"We talked about who wanted to step up and score and we needed people to be ready to knock down shots, whether it's man or zone and [Monet] really led the way," Dunkenberger said of Tellier's performance against Vanderbilt. "She gave us great energy, and that is one of the reasons I recruited her. I love the fire in her, and we fed off of it."

HARRISON POISED FOR SENIOR SEASON

Speaking of 1,000-point scorers, junior Shanel Harrison led the Hokies this season with 354 points and 159 rebounds, marking the fourth straight season the team's leading scorer was also the top rebounder.

Harrison will enter her senior campaign with 780 points, needing just 220 to reach the 1,000-point plateau, while her 438 rebounds is 181 shy of reaching the top 10 all time at the school.

The Washington, D.C., product set her career high three times this past season, reaching a high of 27 at Boston College. She also improved her range this year, knocking down 26 3's opposed to just eight in her first two seasons.

DAVIS LEAVES HER MARK ON THE PROGRAM

Despite playing just three seasons in a Hokie uniform, departing senior Nikki Davis left her name in one career category, just missed another, and also finished this season in the top 10 all time in two categories.

Her 140 assists and 67 steals during the 2010-11 campaign now rank her seventh in those season categories, while her 318 career assists is 10th all time. She finished just two steals shy of the career mark, while her 1.94 steals per game is fourth all time among those in the top 10.

In the final regular-season stats, Davis was third in assists (4.7 per game) and seventh in steals (2.2) and assist to turnover ratio (1.4).

"To be honest with you, I probably need to take care of the ball a little bit more," Davis said earlier this season. "Seventh in the ACC isn't bad, but I've had a couple more turnovers than I'd like to have.

"I'm not really a stats person, but I wish that I would have been able to play all four years at one university and been


Nikki Davis departs as one of Tech's all-time leaders in assists and steals.

able to see how well I would have done statistically. It's an honor and it's great to be mentioned with those girls, but I really don't think about it too much. I just play."

TWO PICK UP WEEKLY ACC HONORS

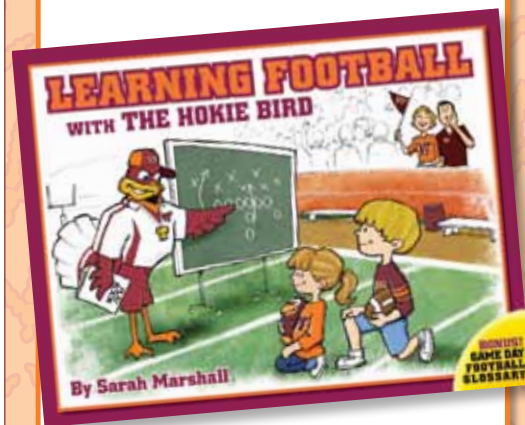
Since joining the Atlantic Coast Conference, Virginia Tech has been honored with just three weekly honors – one Player of the Week and two Rookie of the Week selections.

The Hokies almost doubled that output on Dec. 19, when Harrison and Tellier earned player and rookie honors, respectively, after a double overtime victory at William & Mary.

Harrison scored a then-career high of 25 points, which including hitting a game-tying 3 with 3.2 seconds left to force the first extra period. Tellier was selected as the rookie after notching her first career double-double with 14 points and 10 rebounds. 



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TRACK & FIELD

SPOTLIGHT

VAULTING TO THE TOP

THANKS TO A GREAT RELATIONSHIP WITH HER FATHER (AND COACH), KELLY PHILLIPS HAS BECOME ONE OF THE BEST POLE VAULTERS IN SCHOOL HISTORY



Bob Phillips desperately wanted his only child to become a pole vaulter as soon as his wife, Katherine, gave birth to a healthy girl.

And if more evidence is needed to prove this, then consider – the former Tech All-American pole vaulter, school record holder and Hall of Famer (inducted in 1999) strapped their daughter snugly into a car seat and hauled her off to practice mere months after her birth.

And that was just the beginning.

“I would say badgered would be more like it,” he softly laughed when asked if he encouraged his daughter to try pole vaulting.

Despite her father’s repeated attempts, Kelly Phillips took a while to become immersed in her father’s passion. Actually, it took more than awhile. It took a little more than 17 years, to be accurate. She remained stubbornly wedded to her own interests, mainly gymnastics. So much so that her parents all but buried their hopes that their daughter would follow in dad’s footsteps.

“I did not think she would ever do it,” Katherine said. “She’d been adamant about it for a long time. She thought it was too much of doing the same thing and how

could that be interesting?”

But her epiphany came shortly before she graduated from Blacksburg High School. She decided she wanted a change, and she approached her dad with an important question.

This wasn’t a conversation about what college to attend, or an advice-seeking consult about a boyfriend. She wanted to try pole vaulting and asked her dad for help.

Now, almost five years later, she’s an All-American. She’s a two-time ACC champion. She’s a school record holder.

And she could well be the best pole vaulter in the family.

Bob Phillips probably didn’t help his cause of getting his daughter to participate in the pole vault when he hung some rings up in the basement of the family’s home. Young kids love nothing better than grabbing onto and hanging off of – well, anything – and he realized his fate when he saw how much his daughter loved swinging off those rings.

“He asked me if I liked it and if I wanted to maybe try some gymnastics lessons,” Kelly said. “Of course, I was on board with that.”

This happened at the age of 5 or 6, and she came to love gymnastics about as much, maybe more, than her father loved pole vaulting. Her parents encouraged her to pursue it and took her to Roanoke once a week for practices. As she got older and better, her practices became more frequent, and the Phillips parents ended up hauling their daughter to Roanoke five or six times a week for practice.

“We became quite familiar with that stretch of Interstate 81,” Bob joked.

“I think the happiest moment of their lives was when I got my driver’s license,” Kelly laughed.

“Gymnastics appealed to my attention for detail, but I think what kept me in the sport was the fact that it challenged me, whether that meant learning a new skill, overcoming a fear or trying to perfect a routine. I loved being completely exhausted after hours of practice and gaining the satisfaction of finally getting up the nerve to do something that I was scared to death of.”

As she got older, though, she failed to see a future in gymnastics. Only 60-65 schools offer gymnastics as a varsity sport, and only elite gymnasts receive the schol-



Bob Phillips and his daughter, current pole vaulter Kelly, can celebrate being the best to compete in the event at Tech. Bob set the school record of 17 feet, 3.75 inches in 1981 (left), while Kelly (right) set the school record of 14 feet, 1.25 inches in early February.

arship dough. Plus, she started to lose some of her zest for all that practicing.

"I had a lot of injuries, and once you get to be a certain age in that sport, it's hard to keep going," she said. "Mentally, four more years of it [in college] was hard to contemplate. It's really competitive and there are only like 60-65 programs, Division I, II and III. So even though I was an upper-level gymnast, you have to be really good to be competitive for scholarships, and I just wasn't quite at that level."

So then it hit her – why not try a different sport? Why not try the sport her dad had wanted her to try for the past 18 years?

After all, when her schedule allowed for it, she went to Tech's practices with her dad, who has served as the Hokies' volunteer coach in the event for the past 26 years, and she videotaped the vaulters for him. She also traveled with the team on occasions, so she was around the sport frequently and thus absorbed its intricacies.

At this point, in the spring of her senior year of high school, she had received her acceptance letter from Virginia Tech, and she decided to go to the school, following in the footsteps of her parents – who are both triple graduates of Tech (undergrad, master's and doctorate's). It made sense for her to walk-on to Tech's track and field program and take up

pole vaulting under the watchful eye of her dad.

Her dad's thoughts?

"Now you tell me," he said, laughing. "I told her we'd work on fundamentals over the summer and then she'd redshirt. I was a little surprised [at her decision], but she couldn't get interest from some of the better gymnastics programs. That's when she came and talked to me about vaulting."

"We had the whole summer to start practicing," Kelly said. "So my first day with the team wasn't my first actual day of vaulting. I spent that summer going through the process."

"I think it helped that I was in a familiar place. I had been around the program and around the campus. But it was still intimidating to be around all these people who had done it in high school and actually wondering if I was good enough."

It didn't take her long to erase those doubts.

Bob Phillips expected his daughter to be good in the pole vault. He knew her gymnastics background would transfer nicely to vaulting. She only needed to master some of the finer points of technique – and she did so rather quickly.

After redshirting her freshman year and

competing unattached in a few events (both indoor and outdoor), she burst onto the scene in stunning fashion when she won the ACC indoor title with a vault of 13 feet, 1.5 inches. Then, during the outdoor season, she finished sixth at the NCAA Championships, earning All-America honors with a vault of 13 feet, 5.25 inches.

In a little over a year, she had gone from a relative novice to an All-American.

"With the nature of the event, gymnastics really helps," Bob said. "Kids with a gymnastics background get off to faster starts. They're able to get to the first level quicker. I've had several gymnasts, and pole vaulting provides them with an opportunity to do something that takes advantage of their skills without the wear and tear on the body. It's a great opportunity for them."

Unfortunately for Kelly, injuries surfaced despite switching to a different sport. In October of her redshirt sophomore season, she tore a ligament in her wrist and underwent surgery. She started vaulting again in January, but at an outdoor regional meet later that spring, she felt it pop. She tore it again, and for the second time, underwent surgery.

Forced to wear a cast most of that summer, she missed out on valuable training time in both the summer and the fall. Last year, her redshirt junior year, wasn't what she wanted,

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TALKING POLE VAULTING WITH KELLY PHILLIPS

- "You get three attempts at every height. Three misses in a row, and you're out."
- "Most people don't realize how many poles you use in a meet. You usually progress through six or seven. A lot of times, you'll move up poles and raise your grip on the same pole."
- "The pole itself only weighs a pound or two, no more than three. It depends on if it's a girls' pole or a guys' pole. There's a difference. It's not as heavy as some people might think, though if you're running at full speed, it can feel like it."
- "You can break your pole. The first time for me was last year. I still have the pieces in my living room. It's a scary feeling. You don't realize what's happened until you've landed on your back in the pit. It doesn't happen often. There's definitely a lot of energy in those poles. When it breaks, all that energy goes into you. My hands were bruised for six weeks."
- "There are so many adjustments you have to make. You can move the bar closer to you or farther away from you. After every jump, you check your step, and you decide what changes to make in terms of pole and grip and standard. You have to try and be consistent with your jumps, so that those changes translate into a higher jump."
- "The progression is preset before the meet. The coaches actually set the progression, and then you can choose to come in wherever you want. If the bar starts at 12 feet and you don't want to come in until 13 feet, you can pass the first two heights. You can pass at any point during the meet. But if you have three misses in a row, then you're out."
- "Outdoors, you have to think about the wind. There gets to be a certain point when they'll call it. If you have a 40-mph headwind, they'll call it. Other than that, you compete. You don't compete in the rain."
- "A tailwind is the best, when the wind is coming from behind you. With a headwind, it's more mental because it feels like you're going really slow. Crosswinds are my least favorite because it feels like it's pushing your pole. It's scary sometimes."
- "I think the one trait all pole vaulters have is being fearless. I think you have to be a little crazy to do that. I think being mentally tough is the biggest trait. It's such a crazy event, and it takes a special kind of person to do it. You have to have, whether you show it or not, a little bit of that inside of you."



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though she finished fourth at the ACC Indoor Championships and sixth at the conference's outdoor meet.

"You'd think jumping that high as a freshman ... the rest of your career would escalate from there," she said. "Then I had all these injuries. Every time I thought I was better, I wasn't. Every time I thought my technique was coming together, it just ... I can't even put into words how much of a struggle it's been the past two and a half years."

That's really been the only trying time between her and her father – the coach and the student-athlete. Bob wanted her to take a cautious approach with her rehab, but Kelly, headstrong and ever the competitor, wanted to get back to the track as soon as possible.

"Different kids have different levels of pain tolerance," he said. "And hers is high. We had to set limits."

They never sparred on the issue, though. In fact, they haven't sparred on much of anything. Their relationship extends beyond father/daughter and coach/athlete. They're best friends, respecting the other's viewpoints.

That makes for a happy mother, too. Katherine Phillips never has been placed in the role of mediator.

"It's not my position," Katherine said. "She's an adult, and he's an adult. I've told her that it's up to her to interact with her coach."

"But Bob does a good job of separating his roles [as a father and coach], and Kelly's not combative. They have a respectful relationship. I like it that he's her coach. He's a good coach."

"Surprisingly easy would be the best way to describe it," Kelly said of her relationship with dad/coach. "The past couple of years have been hard because of injuries. There's been more 'dad' than 'coach', which is natural. I really respect him for how he conducts himself toward me and how he's really neutral. I don't see any sense of favoritism, and I think you could ask anyone on the team and they'd tell you he was completely objective."

Kelly Phillips' two years of injuries, pain and rehab became just a memory on Feb. 5. At the Virginia Tech Elite Meet, everything came together for her, as she vaulted to a new school record and qualified for the NCAA Championships.

She set a personal record and a school record when she cleared 13 feet, 11.75 inches on her third and final attempt, which won the event. Then she decided to raise the bar to the NCAA qualifying

mark, and she cleared 14 feet, 1.25 inches on her second attempt. She became just the seventh vaulter in the nation to clear that mark, and she ranks sixth in the nation.

"I'm so emotional. It's ridiculous," she said. "I can't even believe that it happened."

"I thought it [the bar] was going to fall because I hit it just a little bit. It wasn't a perfect jump, but I guess I'd saved up enough bar luck over the past three years."

"That was a good day," Bob said. "She had a great week of practice and a great warm-up. She was rock steady. It was just good to see that smile on her face."

Kelly has lots of reasons to smile. She recently won her second ACC indoor crown. She'll be heading to the NCAA Championships, and then the outdoor season begins. She's in perfect position to attain more All-America honors.

After that – who knows? A terrific student double majoring in biology and human nutrition, foods and exercise, she's been applying to medical schools, with hopes of pursuing a career as an orthopedic surgeon.

"I don't know. I'm getting rejected a lot," she said. "So if I have to take a year off, then I'd love to keep training."

She admits she harbors thoughts of securing a spot in the U.S. Olympic Trials scheduled early next year in Eugene, Ore. It took a vault of 14 feet, 11 inches to make the Olympic team, and her coach thinks she can vault higher than her personal record.

"If her wrist continues to improve and she trains hard and trains smart, there's a possibility she could make the Trials," Bob said. "I think she could jump high 14s, maybe even 15."

"You don't get that chance very often, and I feel like I might regret it if I didn't take the opportunity to at least try," Kelly said. "I don't know. It's an option."


At the least now, she can sit at the dinner table and debate her dad over who's the best pole vaulter in the family. Bob qualified for the NCAAs four times, and he also competed for the U.S. team against Great Britain in 1984. He participated at the U.S. Olympic Trials that same year.

But Kelly – who was 11 years old when she attended her father's Hall of Fame induction – is amassing her own list of impressive accomplishments.

"She's clearly the best," Bob said.

"I think he's got me beat," Kelly said.

Truthfully, that's the only argument between them over the past four and a half years.

And knowing these two, you get the feeling that either would be happy to lose it. 

TRACK & FIELD

INDOOR
ACC CHAMPIONSHIP

TECH MEN TAKE ACC TRACK & FIELD CROWN

THE HOKIES' DEPTH SHOWS AS THEY END FLORIDA STATE'S DOMINANCE

Dave Cianelli and the Virginia Tech men's track and field team had been knocking on the door of an ACC title only to be inhospitably turned away every time.

This time around, they just decided to knock it down.

The Hokies ended Florida State's eight-year reign of dominance in men's track and field by throwing, vaulting and running away with the ACC crown at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships held at Rector Field House on the Hokies' campus.

The title marked Tech's first team title since 2000 when it won the last of four straight Atlantic 10 crowns, and it marked Tech's first ACC crown in men's track and field. The Hokies blew away the league's bunch, amassing 140 points – the most points scored in the championship meet since 2006 – and easily distancing itself from Florida State, which finished second with 98 points.

"It feels good," said Cianelli, Tech's director of track and field and cross country. "It's been a five- or six-year process of building the men's side. The women have had success at the ACC level (four titles), but the men ... it's taken us a while to get to where we could challenge.

"The last couple of years, we've been close. But this team, I knew they'd have an excellent chance if everyone stayed healthy. The kids were really focused. From day one, they've worked hard. Florida State has been the standard bearer in our conference for so long, and to beat them, you've got to have a very, very good group."

As usual, Tech dominated in the throwing events and in pole vaulting, while also getting contributions in other events. For the meet, the Hokie men finished with just three individual titles, but showed depth as a team, getting points from several sources.

Tech got huge contributions from its throwers, as Alexander Ziegler led a 1-2-3 finish in the weight throw for the Hokies. Ziegler won his second straight ACC crown in the weight throw with a toss of 70 feet, 4.5 inches. Marcel Lomnický and Denis Mahmic came in second and third, respectively, for the Hokies.

In the pole vault, Tech's Stephan Munz claimed gold, with a vault of 17 feet, 9 inches, and the Hokies claimed four of



Alexander Ziegler (middle, with the maroon jacket), Marcel Lomnický (right) and Denis Mahmic (left) celebrated with throws coach Greg Jack after the Hokies took the top three spots in the weight throw event at the ACC Indoor Championships. Behind them, Tech captured the men's title with 140 points.

the top five spots in the event. Hunter Hall, Yavgeniy Olhovskiy and Joe Davis finished third, fourth and fifth, respectively.

Tech's other individual winner was Michael Hammond, who claimed gold in the mile run. He ran it in a time of 4:07.47.


However, the Hokies won the meet because of the performances of some of their unsung heroes. For example, Hasheem Halim and David Wilson came in second and third in the triple jump, while Chris Walizer finished fourth in the mile. Ronnie Black earned bronze in the high jump, while Jeff Artis-Gray and Halim finished third and seventh in the long jump. Nick McLaughlin came in third in the 800-meter run, and Will Mulherin garnered a silver medal in the 3,000.

All of those performances earned valuable points toward the team total.

"The throws and the vault have been strong for us, but now, we're able to pick up points in other areas, and at a meet like this,

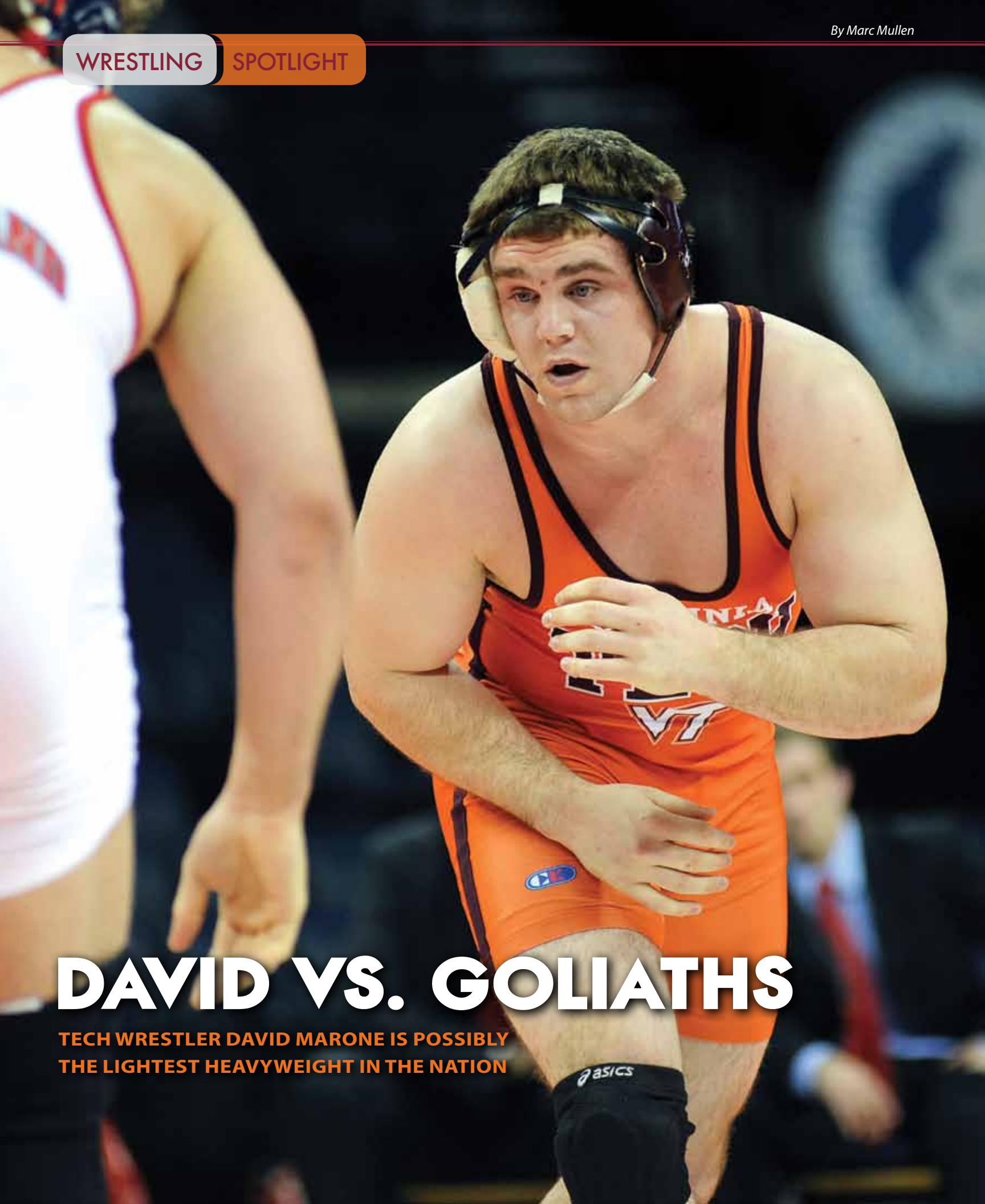
that's what enables you to be successful," Cianelli said. "We're balanced, and that made us a better conference team.

"It's about recruiting better talent and better athletes and kids who fit into our program – and getting more of them. That's what we've been able to do. We've been good at the national level for a while, but the conference level is different. You have to have more depth and balance. Winning a conference title ... everyone has to contribute. That's what makes the difference. That's what will give you success."

On the women's side, Tech finished fourth behind Clemson, Florida State and North Carolina, and the Hokies claimed two individual titles. Kelly Phillips won the pole vault at a height of 13 feet, 11.25 inches, and Samira Burkhardt won the shot put with a throw of 52 feet, 1.25 inches. Phillips, already an NCAA qualifier after a school-record vault at the VT Elite Meet, claimed the second ACC crown of her career. 

WRESTLING

SPOTLIGHT



DAVID VS. GOLIATHS

TECH WRESTLER DAVID MARONE IS POSSIBLY THE LIGHTEST HEAVYWEIGHT IN THE NATION

David Marone is unlike any other Virginia Tech wrestler on this year's squad.

While his teammates minimize their intake during the season to maintain their ideal weight for competition, Marone eats as much as he wants when he wants, no matter what the scales will tell him later.

Is Marone out for the season due to injury? No, that was during his junior year when a shoulder injury sidelined him for the most of the year.

Had he given up this season because he didn't recover to top form and someone has taken his starting job? Hardly, he has been penned in as the Hokies' heavyweight starter all season long.

So, what makes him special? Well, the redshirt junior could be the lightest heavyweight in the nation, tipping the scales at a svelte 230 pounds in a weight class that maxes out at 285 pounds.

"I am definitely small for a heavyweight. There is no doubt about that," Marone said. "But at the same time, I can move a lot better and do some things that a normal heavyweight can't do.

"I'm probably in a lot better shape than most, which helps, too. It's a benefit for me to be in really good shape, especially if I can force a scramble with a heavyweight that just gets them exhausted.

"So if I can force a lot of action in the first period, they're not used to that because most heavyweights are just used to wrestling the heavyweight game. So I don't think I am at a disadvantage at all, and I also don't make excuses for myself. What I lack in size, I certainly make up for in other places."

Originally brought to Blacksburg as a 197-pounder, the then-freshman was asked by the coaches to bump up in weight class



David Marone was undefeated in ACC dual matches this season and finished second in the heavyweight class at the ACC Championships.

Bud Foster's Lunch Pail Defense Foundation



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due to some recruiting issues that left Tech without a heavyweight.

At the time, Marone just wanted to please his coaches, get out on the mat and compete for Virginia Tech. He credits a lot of his early success – an 18-11 mark and a second-place finish at the 2008 ACC Championships – to head coach Kevin Dresser.

“The thing about wrestling for Dresser is that he always wants more from you and expects more from you, and in essence, you expect more from yourself,” Marone said. “So was I happy with the way it finished out? Yeah, but I wanted to qualify for nationals. I wasn’t satisfied with not making it to the NAAs.”

The Broomfield, Colo., native was the top seed in his weight class heading into the 2011 ACC Championships. However, Maryland’s Spencer Myers upset the Hokie, 3-2, in the second tiebreaker of overtime.

It was also the Terrapins who ended Tech’s bid to win its first ACC team title. Maryland finished with 94.5 points, 12 ahead of the Hokies, who were the regular-season champions.

Still, Marone should get an at-large bid to the NCAA Championships and keep the opportunity of pursuing his goal of becoming an All-American.

“I’m not going to be happy with anything

less,” he said. “If you look at rankings, I shouldn’t be [an All-American], but I don’t pay attention to that. I’ve lost to some good guys this year in some close matches, and I don’t think I would lose to them again. I am finally healthy, I am starting to peak, and my goal is to be an All-American.”

If he does get the NCAA invite, it will be the second time he has qualified for wrestling’s version of the Big Dance. As a sophomore, Marone finished 3-2 in St. Louis in 2009, advancing to the round of 12, and he was one win shy of being an All-American.

“I didn’t qualify as a freshman for the NCAA Tournament, but I went and watched, and that got me motivated to make it [as a participant],” Marone said. “So the next year when I qualified, it was such a great experience.

“You are out there wrestling in front of all those people, against the best wrestlers in the country, and I might have psyched myself out because I didn’t wrestle well in my first match. But I was able to come back and win three in a row before losing in the round of 12.


“But just being able to be out there and getting wins under my belt at the national level proved that I could compete with anyone.”

Virginia Tech, as a team, also proved it could compete with anyone in the nation earlier this year when the Hokies finished second to No. 1 Cornell in the NWCA National Duals, cited as Marone’s highlight of his career, so far, as he was quick to mention.

“National duals this year was pretty exciting,” he said. “To see how much we have progressed in my four years here. To finish second and to beat (No. 2) Oklahoma State and (No. 4) Wisconsin and wrestle No. 1 Cornell was a really awesome experience. That, and wrestling at nationals, but I know I have a couple more of those left in me.”

But before you think he has it pretty good, Marone does point out that he, like his teammates, does sacrifice for his sport as well. His home state of Colorado is renowned for its ski resorts, and Marone enjoys the outdoor activities his state has to offer.

“I love wake boarding and boating, just being out on the water,” he said. “Before I got to college I used to snowboard a lot, too, but now that I’m wrestling, I haven’t done that in a while.”

If he doesn’t get the NCAA invitation, the redshirt junior still has another season to accomplish his goals while sacrificing for his sport. 

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TC56419 (0510)

WRESTLING

ACC CHAMPIONSHIP

THREE TAKE ACC WRESTLING TITLES



Jarrod Garnett



Devin Carter



Jesse Dong

JARROD GARNETT, JESSE DONG AND DEVIN CARTER LEAD TECH TO A SECOND-PLACE FINISH AT THE ACC CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Virginia Tech wrestling team saw a bid for its first conference championship come up short, as the Hokies finished behind Maryland and in second place at the ACC Championships held March 5 in Charlottesville, Va.

Disappointed in the outcome, Tech still managed to tie for its best showing at the league's meet. The Hokies finished second in 2005 and third in both 2009 and 2010.

Three Hokies managed to take individual crowns in their respective weight classes.

Jarrod Garnett, who received a bye in the quarterfinal round, claimed the title at 125 pounds after beating fifth seed Mike Moreno of N.C. State 5-0 in the semifinals and then taking second seed Matt Snyder of UVa 6-4 in the championship bout. The title marked Garnett's second ACC crown.

Jesse Dong also won his second consecutive ACC title. At 157 pounds, the

top-seeded Dong recorded a fall of Duke's Ryan Harding in the quarterfinals and then disposed of N.C. State's Colton Palmer 6-1 in the semifinals. In the championship match, he downed Maryland's Kyle John 6-3.


Tech's third title came at 133 pounds, where freshman Devin Carter continued his amazing season. Carter, the top seed who got a bye in the quarterfinals, recorded a fall of North Carolina's Pat Owens in the semis and then destroyed Joe Spisak of Virginia 19-4 in the championship.

Things fell apart for the Hokies, who qualified six for the championship round, after Dong's victory at 157. Pete Yates lost at 165 pounds to top-seeded John Asper of Maryland, falling 9-3 in the championship bout. Chris Penny fell to second-seeded Zac Bennett of North Carolina 9-4 at 197 pounds, and in the heavyweight division, top-seeded David Marone dropped a heart-

breaker to third-seeded Spencer Myers of Maryland 3-2 in the first tiebreaker.

Also, it was a disappointing meet for 141-pound Chris Diaz. The senior, who earned All-America honors last season at the NCAA Championships, dropped his opening match to fifth-seed Nick Nelson of Virginia. He then lost to Nelson again in the third-place match, thus he ended up fourth in the championships.

Overall, Tech qualified four wrestlers automatically for the upcoming NCAA Championships. Garnett, Carter, Dong and Yates are assured of making the trip to Philadelphia for the March 17-19 event. Diaz, Marone and Brian Stephens, who finished third at 149 pounds, could earn at-large bids.

Maryland won the title with 94.5 points, outdistancing Tech's 82.5 points. Maryland finished with five individual champions, as well as a runner-up. 



TEEING OFF

VIRGINIA TECH'S GOLF TEAM OPENS THE SPRING PORTION OF ITS SEASON WITH DESIGNS ON PLAYING IN AN NCAA REGIONAL AT ITS HOME COURSE – THE PETE DYE RIVER COURSE

For every collegiate golf tournament, just five players participate in that tournament, so eight golfers should be plenty for a college program's roster.

But Virginia Tech head coach Jay Hardwick was beginning to doubt that.

The Hokies opened their 2011 spring season by playing in the Puerto Rico Classic in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Feb. 20-22, and they did so with only five healthy golfers.

That number didn't include Marshall Bailey, a senior who qualified for the NCAA Championships a year ago as an individual. Bailey participated in Puerto Rico despite suffering a foot injury shortly

before Christmas. He slipped on the deck of his family's home in Fincastle, Va., and damaged the tendon sheath and nerves in his foot.

Doctors originally thought Bailey had torn the tendon – an injury that would have cost him the spring season – but a Christmas Eve surgery revealed no damage to the tendon.

With Bailey hurting, Aaron Eckstein already out (left hand injury), and Jacob Everts redshirting while being treated for pre-type 1 diabetes, the Hokies suddenly found themselves low on healthy bodies.

"We've got Aaron out and Jacob, who is redshirting," Hardwick said. "If Marshall

had been out [for the season], we'd have been down to five players, so we'd have been in a pinch. We were in a very dangerous situation. Right now, we're working hard to get Aaron healthy. We need him. He's got the ability to shoot a very low number, and that's what you need to win tournaments."

Though not quite 100 percent healthy, Bailey still fired an impressive 7-under-par score to finish in a tie for fourth place in Puerto Rico – the best finish of his career. As a team, the Hokies finished in fifth place in an absolutely loaded field. The Classic featured nine of the top 15 teams

in the country, including No. 1 Oklahoma State according to the *Golfweek*/Sagarin ratings. Tech started the season at No. 53.

The Hokies, though, were optimistic following the tournament, and for good reason. A year ago, they finished 12th in Puerto Rico and yet scrambled back to play well the rest of the spring, qualifying as a No. 11 seed at the Notre Dame regional.

Part of their confidence also stems from having five starters returning and another part of it from having played well in the fall. The Hokies never finished lower than ninth in five tournaments in the fall and finished in third twice. They ended the fall with a third-place finish at the UNCG Bridgestone Invitational in Greensboro, N.C., shooting 22-under-par as a team.

"I was happy with the way we finished the fall," Hardwick said. "We had some bright spots, but we didn't play as consistently as I would have liked.

"Yet we never had a bad tournament. We never finished worse than ninth, and we had two thirds [third-place finishes]. We were in third in the last tournament [UNCG Bridgestone Invitational] and shot 22-under. We had four kids in the top 20 and shot 12 rounds of par or better, so all those were encouraging things for us."

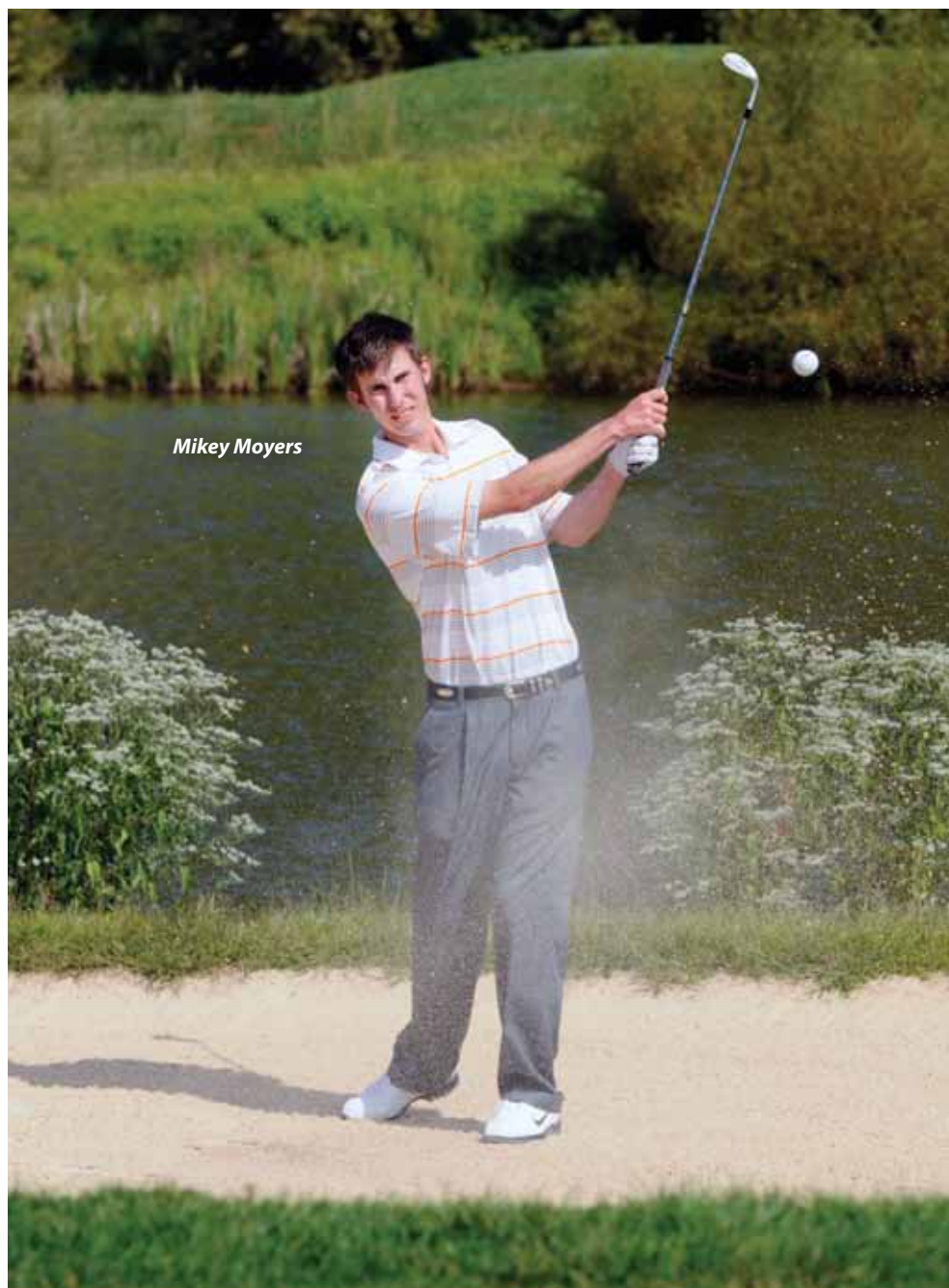
Bailey, a senior, headlines the group. Tech's lone NCAA qualifier, he paced the Hokies in the fall with three top-20 finishes, including a fifth-place finish at the Brickyard Intercollegiate held in Macon, Ga. Bailey shot 4-under-par in that tournament and finished the fall with a 71.4 scoring average. He never finished worse than 23rd in any tournament in the fall.

"Marshall's a quiet leader," Hardwick said. "Players know that when Marshall's in the lineup, he's going to put up a number that they're not going to have to worry about. Having the other players know that he's going to have a number out there is being a leader in its own right."

Mikey Moyers, a sophomore from Stanardsville, Va., won team MVP honors a year ago after an outstanding rookie campaign. Like Bailey, he recorded three top-20 finishes in the fall, including a top-five that came at UNCG Bridgestone Invitational. He shot 10-under-par in that tournament and possesses the type of talent to consistently shoot low scores. He led the team in scoring average (73.06) as a freshman.

"I think he's got a chance to be – and I told him, I put the pressure on him – the all-time scoring leader when he leaves," Hardwick said. "He's No. 2 right now behind [former Tech golfer] Brendon [de Jonge].

"There were three players to come out of Virginia that year – one went to Duke



Mikey Moyers

“ There were three players to come out of Virginia that year – one went to Duke (Brinson Paolini), one went to Wake (Evan Beck) and one went to Virginia Tech (Mikey Moyers). I told him [Moyers] that I thought we got the best player. I still do. He's got a lot of talent, and he's matured. ”

– Jay Hardwick

(Brinson Paolini), one went to Wake (Evan Beck) and one went to Virginia Tech (Moyers). I told him [Moyers] that I thought we got the best player. I still do. He's got a lot of talent, and he's matured."

The rest of Tech's roster includes steady guys with the ability to shoot low scores on any given day. Senior Garland Green recorded a top-20 finish this fall, while freshman Bryce Chalkley had two top-20 finishes, including a 12th-place finish

in his first collegiate tournament. Junior Blake Redmond finished tied for third on the team in scoring average at 73.2 following the fall season, and Marc MacDonald, a redshirt freshman, shot even par in his first tournament.

"I don't think anyone's not broken out," Hardwick said. "Blake probably has been the guy who has been right there. He's been very consistent. He's never going to cost you a golf tournament. If he could break out and

shoot those low 60s rounds, then he could be a sleeper.”

For Hardwick, though, the keys to this team’s success will be staying healthy and getting Eckstein, a senior and the team’s captain, back. Eckstein’s return would give the Hokies a deeper lineup to help them contend at the ACC Championships, where they finished eighth a year ago. His return would also enhance their chances at receiving one of the 53 at-large berths to the NCAA regionals, provided they don’t win the ACC crown.

The carrot for playing well comes in the form of playing at home for the regional. Tech’s home course, the Pete Dye River Course, will be the location for one of those regionals, and the Hokies, if they qualify, will be playing at the friendly confines on May 19-21.

It marks the first signature event for the course, which debuted at No. 18 among the best college campus courses by *Golfweek*. Only Duke’s home course came in higher among ACC schools.

“It’s a great opportunity to showcase Virginia Tech,” Hardwick said. “We’ve got a golf course that can stand up to any national championship course, and we’ve got a beautiful new clubhouse. This is an honor for Virginia Tech and for our Pete Dye River Course. Everyone’s committed to making it a great regional, and we’re hoping everyone will come out and watch it.” 

Marshall Bailey, one of three seniors on the squad, got the spring season started on a great note by finishing tied for fourth in Puerto Rico - the best finish of his career.



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GOLF

RIVER COURSE

PREPARING FOR THE NCAA EAST REGIONAL AT THE PETE DYE RIVER COURSE

AS TOLD BY JAY HARDWICK, TECH HEAD COACH AND DIRECTOR OF GOLF OPERATIONS

1 PREPARATIONS ON THE COURSE BEGAN LAST FALL

"Our superintendent [Mark Cote] started an intensive program late last fall, with heavy fertilization and working with the rough. We've aerified all the fairways in the fall and we've top-dressed the fairways. That's something courses never do, and we've done it twice. They've come through the winter well. They're firm, and they drain well. For a championship, you want fairways that are hard and fast. The fairways will be tighter than they normally are."

2 GOLFERS SHOULD PREPARE FOR LONG ROUGH AND QUICK GREENS

"We have to have the rough a minimum of 3 inches and green speeds have to be 11 to 11.5 [on the stimpmeter, a device that measures the speed of a green]. Right now, our speeds are about 9.5, which is a good speed for our members to play. You get 11 or 11.5, and that's quick."

"We're working on the roughs. We want them thick and consistent. Then they'll be taller, and we'll cut them. They'll be 3 inches,

maybe 3.5. The NCAA allows for 4, but I'm not sure about that. If we don't get a lot of rain and the golf course is hard and fast, and the green speeds are where we want, I don't think they can play that course. Three will be plenty enough of a test."

3 THE PETE DYE RIVER COURSE IS LONG

"The course is 7,685 yards. It's the longest golf course in the state, and it would be the longest course for any regional or national championship. I just don't think they'll play it at that, though I think it's a fair golf course at that. I hope they'll play it between 7,400-7,500 each day. I'm not sure they will. The set-up people may want it to play a little easier."

4 THE NCAA AND USGA SET UP THE COURSE FOR THE REGIONAL


"They'll send a tournament coordinator, and we'll work with them. We'll make some recommendations. We've got multiple tee boxes. We'll play some combination of black and maroon tees. I don't think we'll play all black or all maroon. I don't think we'll play any of the

whites. Our maroon tees are 7,088 yards, and our black tees are 7,685. We've got five tee boxes on every hole. It's a perfect course on every hole because you can do so much with it."

"We'll have the course ready on the 17th. They'll spend the day marking it. Then on Wednesday, that's the day for the practice round. Then on Thursday at 8, we'll start."

5 THE COURSE STAFF WANTS SPECTATORS

"We're hoping a lot of people come and watch. There is no charge. We need a lot of volunteers, too. We'll have walking scores with every group. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact the athletics department. We'll need over 100 volunteers. Spotters, scorers ... you name it."

"A couple of other things to note. There are 100 parking spaces where the trailers – the old clubhouse – used to be. The parking at the new clubhouse will be for the teams and the officials. We're looking at parking at auxiliary sites and maybe doing some shuttles. We're hoping people will come in groups and car pool, if they can." 



WHERE
ARE
THEY
NOW?

FIRST SHOT

FRANK ALVIS FOREVER MADE HIMSELF THE ANSWER TO A TRIVIA QUESTION WHEN HE SCORED THE FIRST POINTS AT CASSELL COLISEUM

Frank Alvis cemented himself into Virginia Tech history when he scored the first two points at Cassell Coliseum on a January night in 1962.

It's not a shabby accomplishment for a guy who actually never planned on going to college.

"I was going to enter the construction field, like my dad and brothers," Alvis said. "I told Coach [Bill] Matthews [a Tech assistant under head coach Chuck Noe] that I wasn't prepared for college. I only took the subjects in high school that I had to take. But he was persistent. He didn't let up, and my mother didn't either."

Matthews' tenacity – he went and watched Alvis play several times – paid off as Alvis signed with Tech in 1959 after a tremendous career at Athens High School in Athens, W.Va. The 5-foot-10 guard guided Athens to a state championship his junior season and averaged 29 points a game his senior year.

Most West Virginia kids end up going to West Virginia University, and the locals in Athens and Princeton tried to persuade Alvis to head to Morgantown. In fact, Rod Thorn's father, who served as the chief of police in Princeton, tried to convince Alvis to join Rod, an All-American, in Morgantown, but Alvis wanted to stay closer to home.

It also aided Tech's cause that the then West Virginia coach Fred Schaus turned Alvis off.

"He visited my home after my senior season was over," Alvis said. "He told me that guards were a dime a dozen. I told him he better go get a dozen of them then. That's when I made up my mind to go to Tech."

Alvis played on the freshman team in 1959-

Frank Alvis was recognized by the Tech athletics department at a game in 2006 for scoring the first two points at Cassell Coliseum.

60, and then he spent three years on a loaded varsity squad that included talented players like Bucky Keller, Lee Melear and Howard Pardue – all three of whom were eventually inducted into the Tech Sports Hall of Fame. That group went 47-25 in three seasons.

Alvis spent most of his time dishing the ball to those guys, while also serving as the team's top defender. He enjoyed the occasional big scoring game, but his biggest claim to fame came when he scored on a jumper the first points at Cassell. Tech never trailed in beating Alabama, 91-67.

"The tip came to me, and I guess my man got lost in the shuffle," Alvis said of his basket. "I dribbled to about the free-throw line and took the shot.

"It was no big deal when it happened. It's only become a big issue now. I had a sportswriter from Galax [Va.] call me to do a story a few years after I left, and I told him I scored the first basket in Cassell Coliseum. After I told him, I bet I had no less than 10 people come up to me and say, 'You're the man who scored the first basket in Cassell Coliseum.'"

Alvis has been recognized ever since. A few years ago, his daughter asked if he had any old press clippings from his playing days, and she took those and organized them. She also framed his old No. 12 jersey. She even contacted the Tech athletics department for two tickets that she wanted to put in his Christmas stocking.

A department official told her that the games were sold out. She then told that person that her dad was the first person to score a basket in Cassell Coliseum. That led to her receiving tickets and to Alvis being recognized at a 2006 game.

But he said there were other great moments in his career, too. In his junior season, Tech beat Kentucky in Lexington, Ky., in the season opener, handing legendary coach Adolph Rupp his lone season-opening loss in 42 years of coaching. Tech won that game 80-77, and Alvis' defense on Cotton Nash turned out to be the difference.

"I was a 5-11 guard guarding a 6-4 All-American," Alvis said. "My only advantage was quickness, and I was able to draw four charges on him. He sat on the bench for most of the third quarter."

In Alvis' senior season, Tech knocked off another great program – North Carolina. He and his teammates defeated a Tar Heel team coached by Dean Smith in double overtime at Carmichael Auditorium.

Alvis also relayed some tales. One time, the team was flying to Jacksonville, Fla., to

play in a tournament, and Noe unexpectedly had the pilot land in South Carolina.

"He had a brainstorm about a change in our defense," Alvis said. "They [Florida] had a 6-11 center who played mostly in the high post. So Coach Noe had the plane land in South Carolina, and we practiced at a high school in the middle of the night. It worked because we won the game and the tournament."

Despite not being prepared academically for college, Alvis did well in the classroom during his days at Tech. He graduated from Tech in 1964 with a degree in distributive education.

Following graduation, he took a teaching job at Fries High School, now a middle school, in Grayson County, Va. He also coached basketball there.

He stayed at Fries for a year. While in the hospital recovering from pneumonia, he received a visit from the superintendent of schools in neighboring Carroll County and he told Alvis his marketing teacher at the high school had left. He offered Alvis a job for a year, so Alvis took it – and never left.


He also drives a school bus, something he continues to do after retiring following a 30-year career in teaching, most of that in Carroll County.

"I started driving my second year in Carroll County," he said. "They had trouble getting drivers, and it paid more than coaching, so I stayed with it. I also train drivers, too.

"This is my 45th year of driving a school bus. I enjoyed the kids, and it pays a little more now. When I started, I made \$6.25 a day."

He and his wife, Gladys, whom he married before taking the job in Carroll County, have two children and four grandchildren. He and his family occasionally get back for games, and he came back to Blacksburg recently, as the athletics department recognized the 1961-62 team as part of the 50th anniversary of the opening of Cassell.

"It was great," Alvis said. "I hadn't seen Howard [Pardue] or Lee [Melear] in 50 years. I came up to Blacksburg when Coach Noe was inducted in the Hall of Fame, but only me, Chris Smith and John Wetzel were able to make it, so I hadn't seen those other guys.

"I had lost touch with Tech after Don DeVoe left [in 1976], and the basketball team struggled there for a while. Then Frank Beamer came along, and we started following football. But my whole family now ... we're all excited about Tech these days." 

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BASEBALL EXTRA

BILLY WAGNER



Former Major League pitcher Billy Wagner spoke to Tech's team and to Hokie fans at the baseball program's annual "Baseball Night."

WAGNER DRAWS RECORD CROWD

IN THE FOURTH ANNUAL BASEBALL NIGHT IN BLACKSBURG, MLB VETERAN BILLY WAGNER FELT RIGHT AT HOME

Featured guest Billy Wagner must have felt right at home at this year's Baseball Night in Blacksburg held February 12 in the west side stadium club of Lane Stadium.

Wagner, a 16-year veteran of Major League Baseball, is a Tannersville, Va., native and graduated from Tazewell High School, which is roughly a two-hour drive from the Virginia Tech campus.

It wasn't the proximity that would have made the seven-time MLB All-Star feel at home, but the number of guests in attendance, who listened to him speak for almost an hour in a Q&A session moderated by Mike Burnop.

Tannersville's population, estimated by Wagner, is 360, which was close to the attendance drawn for the fourth annual Baseball Night, a record crowd, to see the

former Ferrum left-handed pitcher, who said answering one question:

"I'm glad I wasn't a Hokie, even though Coach [Chuck] Hartman did everything he could to get me into the school. I just couldn't get past the SATs, and I had to battle my entire career with grades. It was my fault I didn't come here.

"But if I was at Virginia Tech, I wouldn't have met my wife Sarah. Her and Erik [Robinson] helped me get through school. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be where I am today. That is why we have created the 2nd Chance Learning Center, a place where kids who need a little extra guidance can get it."

Among the many topics discussed during the Q&A, which included his favorite manager [Bobby Cox], his dealings with

the media ["you're under the microscope"], and an anecdote about former Hokie pitcher Mike Williams, was a story about the closer's best teammate.

"Moises Alou was a real teammate," he said. "He would give you the confidence that you needed to do your job."

Then he told a story about when he was injured and had to get surgery, and Alou was the first one there when he woke up and would be there whenever Wagner needed him. He then directed the final piece of the story to the team.

"Moises was a real leader, and sometimes he did things that maybe put himself on an island, calling people out," Wagner said. "But in baseball you need to know that your teammates need you as much as you need them, and he made

sure everyone knew that.”

One of the interesting parts of the evening, for those who don't know, was when Wagner explained whom his inspiration was and letting those in attendance know he wasn't a natural lefty.

“God is my inspiration,” he said. “He gave me a lightning bolt in my left arm. I am a natural righty, but I've broken it twice. I do everything with my right hand except throw a baseball 100 miles per hour.”

But what hit Wagner the most and drew a huge applause afterward was when he answered the question regarding his greatest memory as a professional.

“I would have to say my entire 16-year career in a nutshell,” he said. “I came from a small town and I was able to do it. So many times I was on the mound and I was so nervous out there. There was never a time I said to myself ‘Oh, I got this!’”

“I was out there representing my family, my high school and my college. I was very passionate when I pitched.

“I came from a small town of 360 people in southwest Virginia, and I played at Ferrum College. I was 5-foot-8 and 135 pounds coming out of high school, throwing 84 miles per hour. I wasn't a pro prospect.


“So, my whole career ... [Wagner choked



Fans who attended the “Baseball Night” not only got to hear Billy Wagner speak, but also could bid on any number of items at the auction beforehand.

up at this point] ... was a blessing.”

Wagner, who compiled a 47-40 record in his 16 years with a 2.31 ERA in 853 games, struck out 1,196 batters and registered 422 saves (one of just five pitchers ever). He closed the door completely that night in terms of his plans on returning to the Atlanta Braves for one more season.

“I'm totally content with not playing baseball,” Wagner told reporters during a 15-minute interview session with the local media. “I love watching it. I love talking about it. If I miss anything, it would be some of the guys I played with and actually competing on the field, but other than that, you can keep it.” 

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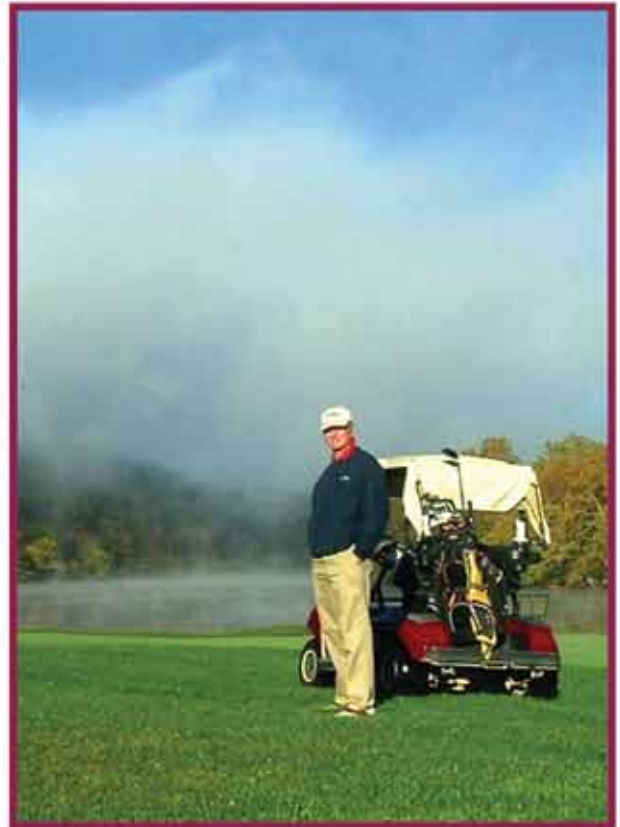


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PUBLIC WELCOME



Packed house, ESPN audience witness thriller

By Chris Colston

(Reprinted from Vol. 12, No. 29 edition of the Hokie Huddler)

Travis Jackson's ESPN *SportsCenter* highlight goes something like this ...

It's the final seconds of the NIT quarterfinals, and the game's tied. I'm not even supposed to be in the game, but Shawn Smith has fouled out. So I'm hangin' around the 3-point line, and I'm open. I'm cool. And when Ace Custis passes me the ball with 3.4 seconds left to play, I shoot. The ball goes up soft as a feather and slides through the net. The cords dance back and forth as though caressed by a gentle wind. The ball's in there. It's good. And as the buzzer goes off, 9,523 Hokie fans mob me.

Meanwhile, back in Peterstown, W.Va., my grandmother is having one of her spells. Yeah. That's my *SportsCenter* highlight.

Jackson's trey with 1.9 seconds left gave Virginia Tech a 64-61 win and sent the Hokies packing for



Travis Jackson (center) was swarmed by Tech fans after he hit the game-winning 3-pointer to lift the Hokies over New Mexico State in a 1995 NIT game at Cassell Coliseum.

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fungible (adj.)
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New York City. The victory kept alive this strange phenomenon: a trip to Madison Square Garden every 11 years for Tech. The Hokies won the NIT Championship in 1973 on Bobby Stevens' last-second shot, 92-91. They made it to the NIT's final four in 1984, losing to Michigan 78-75.

"All year long, we've been in position to win at the buzzer, but this is the one that counted," Custis said. "If the game had gone into overtime, there's no telling what would've happened."

Jackson's shot – he took it with 3.4 seconds left, and it went through with 1.9 seconds to play – turned Cassell Coliseum into a mob scene. "We didn't have anything drawn up," Jackson said. "Ace made a great pass, and I just took the shot. I like to shoot from there, and it felt good leaving my hands."

New Mexico State (25-10) was out of timeouts, so it pushed the ball up the floor. Troy Brewer missed a prayer 3-pointer, and the place went bonkers. ESPN's cameras captured the action, with Bob Carpenter doing play-by-play and Larry Conley the analysis.

"You always see people rushing the floor on TV," Custis said. "We thought that might happen when we beat Tulane, but it didn't. So this is one of the best feelings

I've ever had. I got under a pile of people on the floor, and let me tell ya, that pile was getting pretty heavy."

Tech (23-10) led by 19 at halftime and as many as 20 in the second half, but the Aggies stepped up their defensive pressure to close the gap. The Hokies shot just 27.6 percent from the field after intermission. "We didn't shoot well, and all of the sudden, we were giving up nine million offensive rebounds and dribble penetration," Tech head coach Bill Foster said. "That game got close, and all of a sudden, there's a question who wants to shoot the ball [for us]."

After a David Jackson leaner rimmed out, NMSU's Brewer tied the game at 61 with 13 seconds left. Instead of calling a timeout, Foster opted to let his players play.


"We've called timeouts three times in the short seconds, and it hasn't panned out for us," Foster said. "The timeouts haven't been good for us psychologically. And we might not have gotten the ball inbound against this team. They might have gotten a steal and won."

Before passing it to Jackson, it appeared Custis could have taken the shot himself. "I saw there were four seconds on the clock," Custis said. "I saw Travis and let

him shoot so I could get the rebound. If I took the shot, he was too far away to get the rebound. The worst thing that would happen was the game would go into overtime."

Ironically, Jackson wouldn't have been in the game to be the hero unless Shawn Smith had fouled out with 3:05 to play.

"If Smitty hadn't fouled out, Travis wouldn't have been in," Foster said.

It just must have been fate. 



March 31, 1995



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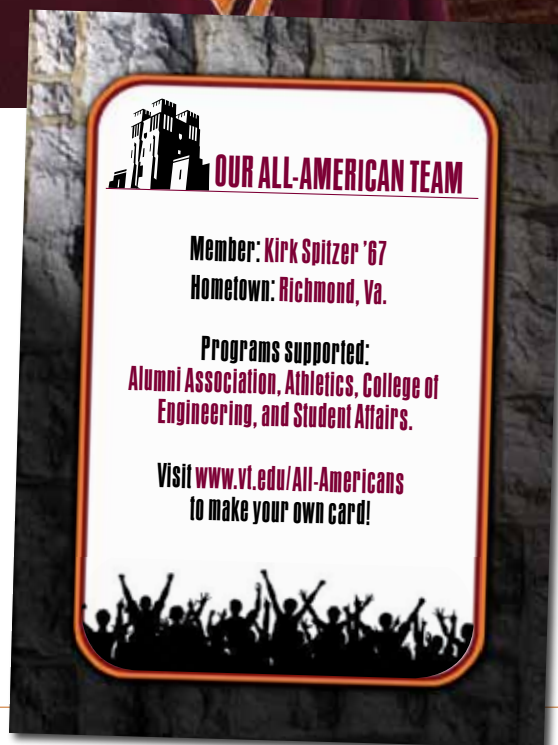


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