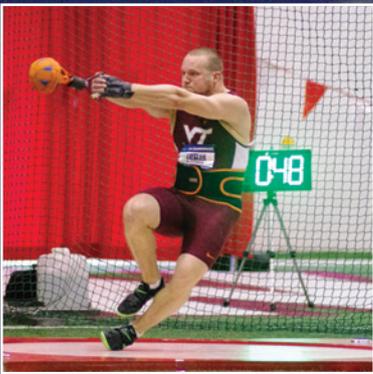


INSIDE

HOKIESPORTS

The Official Magazine of Virginia Tech Athletics



Alexander Ziegler won his third national title and track and field's 13th at the NCAA Championships



Dave Cianelli and the men's track and field team claimed the ACC's indoor championship over Florida State

CROWNING CHAMPIONS

Jarrold Garnett's title at 125 pounds was one of five won by the Hokies, who knocked off UVa to claim their first ACC wrestling crown

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster is excited about his group as spring ball approaches

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HOKIE SPORTS

UPCOMING FEATURE EVENTS

MARCH

SOFTBALL
MARCH 23 (DH) - NOON
VS. NC STATE - TECH SOFTBALL PARK
PINK OUT THE PARK; FREE T-SHIRTS/HATS

MEN'S TENNIS
MARCH 24 - 1PM
VS. DUKE - BURROWS-BURLESON
HOKIEBIRD EASTER EGG HUNT

LACROSSE
MARCH 30 - 2PM
VS. NORTH CAROLINA - THOMPSON FIELD
FREE PIZZA - AUTOGRAPH SESSION

BASEBALL
MARCH 29-31 (FRI/SAT/SUN)
VS. FLORIDA STATE - ENGLISH FIELD
ATTEND TO WIN ACC CHAMPIONSHIP TICKETS

APRIL

WOMEN'S TENNIS
APRIL 7 - 1PM
VS. WAKE FOREST - BURROWS-BURLESON
POST-MATCH AUTOGRAPH SESSION

BASEBALL
APRIL 12-14 (FRI/SAT/SUN)
VS. NORTH CAROLINA - ENGLISH FIELD
FRI: 80'S NIGHT, SUN: MINI-HELMET ICE CREAM

SOFTBALL
APRIL 20 (DH) - NOON
VS. FLORIDA STATE - TECH SOFTBALL PARK
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HOARDING TROPHIES

The Virginia Tech men's track and field team won the 2013 ACC Indoor Championships at Rector Field House and have now won the past three ACC track and field and cross country events (the ACC outdoor meet, the ACC cross country championships and the ACC indoor meet). Only one other ACC program has done this since 1986 - Florida State in 2009-10.





THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE



"I'm very thankful for the time I've had at Tech. Thanks for the support!"

RYAN HAGEN

Senior | Men's Track & Field/Cross Country

"Thank you so much for all your support. I will always remember my time at Tech."

SAMMY DOW

Redshirt Senior | Women's Track & Field/Cross Country





THE DONOR FILE

BRIAN V. WILSON

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL: PLATINUM HOKIE

HOKIE CLUB MEMBER SINCE: 1992

CURRENTLY RESIDES: ROANOKE, VA

WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE?
1979 (BUSINESS MANAGEMENT)

FAMILY:

WIFE - SHEILA (VT, CTRA, 1980)

SON - ASHTON (VT, FINANCE, 2007)

DAUGHTER - BRITNI (VT, FINANCE, 2011)



Q&A

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

A: We love everything about Virginia Tech and appreciate the fact that athletics provides exposure to the university like no other medium can. That exposure ultimately benefits and enhances all aspects of Virginia Tech.

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

A: Not for football, but all trips to Blacksburg for home basketball games have to start with a meal at Sharkey's on Main Street!

Q: You are involved with the Roanoke Valley Hokie Club as the Hokie Club president. How and why did you get involved and has it been a good experience for you?

A: I got involved in the Roanoke Valley

Hokie Club so that I could enhance my Hokie experience. That involvement has been all that I had hoped for and more. The camaraderie and spirit among my fellow Hokie Reps can't be beat. Being president also gives me a unique perspective of the intense devotion and commitment of Hokies everywhere.

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

A: The 1995 NIT championship team has to be my favorite. My son, Ashton, then just 8 years old, and I went to the Roanoke airport to meet the team when they arrived back from New York City. Ashton had his "Hokie Hankie" and had everyone on the team sign it. The most memorable, though, was Shawn Smith, who was carrying the championship trophy draped with the net from Madison Square Garden. When Ashton asked for his autograph, "Smitty"

looked down at him and asked him to hold the trophy. You should have seen the look on Ashton's face! We still have that autographed "Hokie Hankie."

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech student-athlete from another sport is (player's name) and my favorite memory of (player's name) is ...

A: Erick Green because of his composure under immense pressure and, specifically, his game against Wake Forest during which he broke the single-season scoring record. He will be greatly missed next year!

Q: How specifically has the Roanoke Valley Hokie Club contributed to the success of Virginia Tech athletics through the years?

A: During 2012, we became the first entity and the only Hokie Club to top the \$1 million mark in giving to the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund. We have supported both the general fund and many individual teams and projects.



HOKIE CLUB FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

To better serve our membership, we've compiled some of these questions, and we present them to you here for your benefit. If you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Hokie Club office, as we are more than happy to assist you.

How is the Virginia Tech Athletics Department funded?

The Virginia Tech Athletics Department receives no funding from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Therefore, it must operate solely on what monies that it generates. Self-supporting funds are generated from football and basketball season ticket revenue, conference and television rights revenue, and private support from Virginia Tech Athletic Fund (Hokie Club) members.

How will my contribution to the Hokie Club be used?

Donations to the Hokie Club are primarily used to provide scholarship aid to our 21 varsity sports programs. Funds are also used to support facility improvements and programmatic needs of the Virginia Tech Athletics Department. The Virginia Tech Foundation, which acts as the depository for the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund, is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization. Your gift is tax deductible as provided by law. We recommend you consult your tax advisor to determine how the tax laws may affect you.

Why should I give to the Hokie Club?

With approximately 500 student-athletes and the cost of both in- and out-of-state scholarships continuing to rise, every donation to the Hokie Club is important. Virginia Tech strives to offer our athletes the best support toward a quality education both on and off the field, and your support of the Hokie Club is essential.

In what ways can I give to the Hokie Club?

You can support the Hokie Club with gifts in a variety of ways. Tax-deductible gift options include cash, securities or real estate, gifts-in-kind, memorial gifts and planned or deferred gifts. Please note that Donor Advised Fund gifts are acceptable, but you

will NOT receive Hokie Club point priority credit for our membership.

What options do I have when setting up my payment schedule for my annual gift?

When making an annual gift, there are several ways you can set up your payment schedule. You can pay the full amount with cash or credit card via our online form. You may also set up Hokie Matic (monthly electronic transfer), Payroll Deduction (VT Employees) or Quarterly Payments.

What is "Hokie Matic?"

Hokie Matic is an electronic transfer option that allows a member to have his or her annual donation drafted with even payments on a monthly basis from a specified banking account, either checking or savings. Drafts will occur automatically on either the 15th or 30th of each month as specified by the member. Hokie Matic forms are available on our website, www.hokieclub.com.

What are matching gifts?

Many companies provide a matching gift program as a benefit to encourage employees to make charitable donations. Upon making this donation, the company will "match" the employee's original gift. The amount or percentage matched varies per company. To determine if you are eligible to make a matching gift and to receive a matching gift form, check with your employer. Note, matching gifts can not be processed for companies that prohibit gifts to Athletics.

What is the Hokie Club's point priority system?

The Hokie Club uses a standard formula called the point priority system to assign a rank to each member of the Hokie Club. The point priority system takes into account one's membership club level, current annual gift, cumulative giving history, consecutive years of membership, various involvement points, as well as season and postseason ticket orders.

What is my Anniversary Month?

When a person joins the Hokie Club by

making an annual donation (payment in full), he or she will be considered active for a 12-month period. At this time, the month joined will become his or her Anniversary Month. The Anniversary Month is used to track the person's giving and will be used as a reminder for membership renewal at the end of his or her 12-month period. Note: Payments made via Hokie Matic, Payroll Deduction (VT employees), and Quarterly Payments are set up on a calendar year schedule.

What is the Benefits Deadline, and how does it affect me?

To effectively utilize the point priority system, the Hokie Club has designated Dec. 31 of each year as the Benefits Deadline. Using the point priority system, the Hokie Club will rank all members and use that rank as of this date for all benefits for the upcoming year, including benefits for football season tickets and parking, basketball season tickets and parking, bowl game tickets, etc.

Does joining the Hokie Club automatically guarantee season tickets for football and basketball?

No, joining the Hokie Club does not in itself guarantee season tickets for football and men's and women's basketball. All benefits associated with these sports are based on your point priority rank. Your rank as of the Benefits Deadline is used for this purpose.

If I join the Hokie Club and order season tickets, what do I need to do to retain my location?

To retain your current season tickets for football, men's basketball, and women's basketball, you must be a Hokie Club member, your membership must be ACTIVE on the Benefits Deadline (Dec. 31), and you must maintain the giving level at which your season tickets were assigned. If your membership is INACTIVE or DOWNGRADED on the Benefits Deadline, your current season tickets will be moved. This policy was implemented during the reseating of Cassell Coliseum (2004) and Lane Stadium (2005).

Tech student-athletes make All-ACC Academic team

The ACC recently named its All-ACC Academic teams for this past fall's sports, and 14 Hokies made the team in their respective sports.

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.

The following Tech student-athletes were named:

Football

Michael Cole (biology)
Joey Phillips (curriculum and instruction)
David Wang (management)

Men's cross country

Will Mulherin (mechanical engineering)
Brayden Burleigh (university studies)

Women's cross country

Alex Watt (interior design)

Volleyball

Cara Baarendse (human development)
Jen Wiker (business administration)

Men's soccer

Daniel Lauretano (university studies)
Drew Ranahan (economics)
Kyle Renfro (history)

Women's soccer

Jazmine Reeves (management)
Shannon Mayrose (human development)
Ashley Meier (psychology)

Tech to use online system for 2013 football seat changes and parking choices

For the first time, Virginia Tech football season ticket holders will be required to make changes to their seat locations and to pick their parking locations electronically for an upcoming football season.

All seat improvements, new season ticket allocations and parking allocations for the upcoming season will be selected by using Ballena Technologies' online system. The Virginia Tech Athletic Fund (e.g. the Hokie Club) and the Virginia Tech Ticket Office used this same system during the re-seating of Lane Stadium last year.

The system offers season ticket holders the opportunity to see what seats and what parking spots are available (for those who qualify), and then the opportunity to select either or both. The Hokie Club will use the point priority system to determine the order for the selection process.

"Most of our Hokie Club members and season ticket holders used this system during the re-seating process, and the feedback was positive," said Lu Merritt, senior director of development for intercollegiate athletics. "Now we want to use this process to allow our members to see exactly what is available. In the past, they've had options, but may not have asked about them. Now, they're going to be able to see everything."

To participate in the process, all season ticket holders

must have renewed or ordered by the March 15 deadline. In early April, those who have renewed or ordered will receive a letter with their selection times. The process will begin in late April. Patrons will receive an email reminder seven days prior to the selection time; three days prior to the selection time and then the day of the selection time.

New season ticket holders must pick their seats during their selection times, and all those who qualify for parking must choose their spots during their selection times. Those who have renewed will have the option to change their seat locations during their selection times should they wish, but if they choose to remain in their same seats, they will not need to do anything.

"This really gives control of the tickets and the location to the customer," said Sandy Smith, Tech's assistant AD for ticketing services. "In the past, they'd write down any changes on the order form, and we would accommodate them as best we could. But now, they're not going to have to rely on us to interpret what they want. I think the majority of customers are going to appreciate that."

Smith expects the process to take the entire month of May and to conclude by the end of the first week of June. Season tickets will be mailed the first week of August.

Three Tech student-athletes earn postgraduate scholarships

Virginia Tech swimmer Laura Simon, track and field thrower Alexander Ziegler and javelin thrower Matthias Treff were three of 41 ACC student-athletes who were selected for the Weaver-James-Corrigan Award, including three who will receive the Thacker Award, as announced by ACC Commissioner John Swofford.

Each recipient will receive \$5,000 toward his or her graduate education. The 41 student-athletes will be honored at the annual ACC Postgraduate Luncheon presented by ESPN on April 17 in the Guilford Ballroom at the Sheraton Greensboro at the Four Seasons.

Upon further review ...

In the January issue, there was a mistake in the student life story about Courtney and Bailey Liddle. The article stated that the two sisters' mother is Nancy Liddle, and her name is actually Susan Liddle. We apologize to the Liddle family for the error.

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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Five to watch, as Hokies gear up for 2013 spring practice

For those tired of the doldrums of winter, for those tired of the varying degrees of cold, for those tired of words like "wind chill" and "jet stream," take heart. The first day of spring is March 20.

The lone exception is on Tech's campus in Blacksburg, where spring actually starts on March 27. This day marks the first day of spring football for the Hokies.

Tech begins spring drills with a new offensive coordinator for the first time in 11 years and a new receivers coach and offensive line coach for the first time in seven years. Given that, this spring is shaping up to be one of the most compelling in coach Frank Beamer's tenure.

But the attention will not be solely on the new coaches and their schemes and philosophies. Tech needs to replace, and in some cases, improve certain personnel, which means opportunities are available for all within the program.

Who will take advantage? Good question. Here are five players to watch as spring ball kicks off:

Mark Shuman - The Hokies lost both tackles off of last season's squad and new offensive line coach Jeff Grimes needs to replace those two. A top candidate is Shuman.

Shuman possesses the necessities to play a tackle spot. The rising redshirt junior stands 6-foot-7, weighs more than 300 pounds and displays good footwork. But in two years, Shuman has played in just five games. He's played just 50 snaps in his career.

Former line coach Curt Newsome wanted to see consistency match Shuman's potential, and you can be sure Grimes wants to see the same. These

15 spring practices provide Shuman a perfect opportunity to solidify himself as a starting tackle for the next two years.

Dadi Nicolas - There was a play in the second quarter of the Russell Athletic Bowl in which Rutgers quarterback Gary Nova completed a pass to Brandon Coleman that went for 43 yards. On that play, Tech defensive end Dadi Nicolas sprinted down the field to make the tackle.

That's what Nicolas can do. He relentlessly pursues.

Nicolas came to Tech as a raw, skinny kid. He's bigger and stronger, but he needs to get even bigger and stronger. His ability to run got him on the field more and more as last season went along, and he finished the season with a respectable 123 snaps, not a bad total for a redshirt freshman.

Hopefully, Nicolas gets to 230-240 pounds before spring practice starts. The size and strength would only add to his potential.

D.J. Coles - Tech's receiving positions are in a state of transition. Three seniors (Marcus Davis, Corey Fuller and Dyrell Roberts) left following the season, and Aaron Moorehead replaced Kevin Sherman as the receivers coach following Sherman's departure to Purdue.

Only two receivers return with any semblance of experience, and one of those is Coles, who missed last season with a knee injury. He caught 36 passes for 480 yards and three touchdowns two years ago, and the Hokies need that type of production and his leadership.

Demitri Knowles caught 19 passes last season. But the rest of Tech's scholarship receivers have

combined to catch three passes in their careers. That makes a healthy and productive Coles an imperative for Tech's offense this spring.

Tariq Edwards - Edwards played in seven games last season, but everyone who watched him knew he wasn't close to 100 percent (leg, knee). A year after recording 71 tackles, Edwards finished last season with just four - none solo.

Tech's defense is loaded, with eight starters back (nine if Antone Exum makes it back from a torn ACL). But Bruce Taylor graduated, leaving a void to be filled by Edwards.

The backer spot is a playmaking position in Tech's defense. Edwards knows how to make plays. Hopefully, he's healthy enough to resume doing just that this spring.

Any running back - This isn't meant to be sarcastic at all. Remember, a year ago, the Hokies played four tailbacks with only a modest amount of success. Tech simply needs more out of its running game in 2013.

Michael Holmes started the 2012 season opener against Georgia Tech. But in the final four games, he carried the ball one time and showed little of the power and speed he displayed last spring. He returns, along with Tony Gregory and J.C. Coleman.

Also, redshirt freshmen Trey Edmunds and Chris Mangus enter the picture. Edmunds ran a 4.37 in the 40-yard sprint in recent testing and weighs 215 pounds. Could he be the answer? Or what about Coleman, who ran a 4.37 as well, or Mangus, who ran a 4.42?

We'll find out about all these guys this spring. 



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Green's career got off to a slow start, but he ended it as ACC's Player of the Year

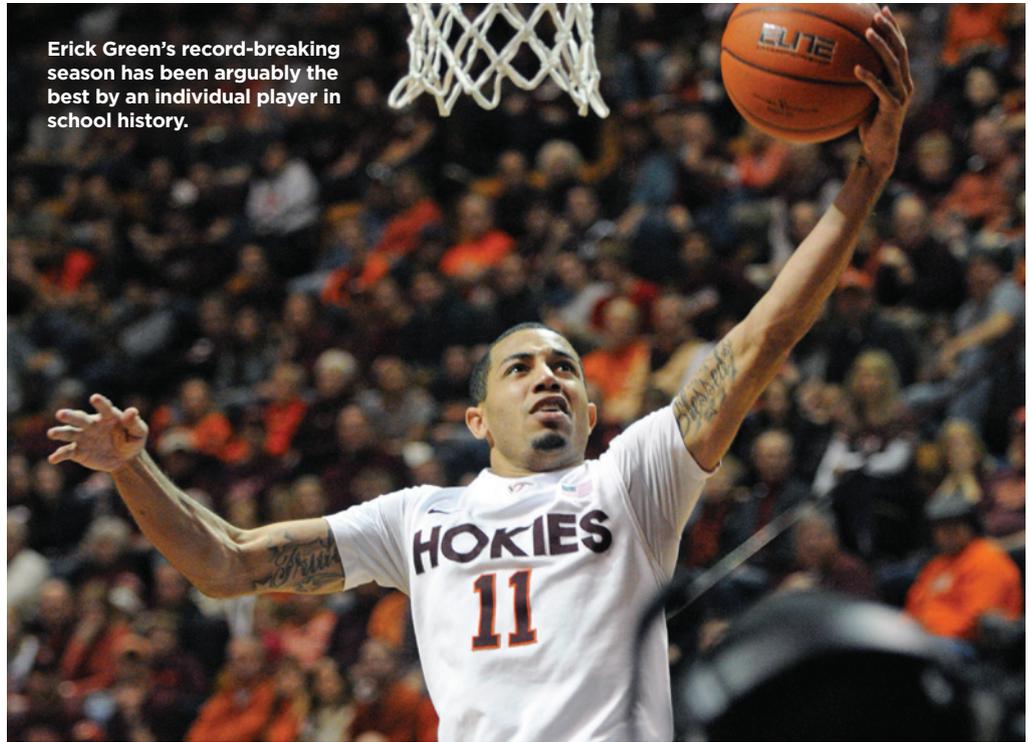
Virginia Tech senior guard Erick Green walked off the floor of Wake Forest's Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum. His team had suffered a 90-79 loss to the Demon Deacons in what would be in his final regular-season game as a Hokie. Yet as he walked off, he had concluded one of the most remarkable seasons in Virginia Tech basketball history.

He became the first player in school history to lead the nation in scoring and the first to be named the ACC Player of the Year. He became just the third Tech player – Bimbo Coles and Dell Curry are the others – to score at least 700 points in a single season, breaking Coles' single-season mark of 785 points. And he became just the third Tech player, joining Zabian Dowdell and Malcolm Delaney, to earn first-team All-ACC honors.

Green's story has been well chronicled over the past several years. His mom and dad are both rec coaches and pushed him to succeed. A tight, supportive family, one full of foster kids, includes a sister, Courtni, who plays basketball at Delaware.

So on the surface, it seemed like Green was destined for success. But in reality, his road to the top of both the ACC and NCAA scoring chart was anything but easy. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

Thirty-six months ago, Erick Green was miserable. He was frustrated. He was living in world of missed jump shots and self-doubt and some hard-to-swallow fan mail. Just three years



Erick Green's record-breaking season has been arguably the best by an individual player in school history.

ago, as a freshman, Green endured the slump of all slumps – eight weeks of shots clanging off the front of the rim, air balls and clunkers.

From January 23 until the end of the 2010 season, a span of 17 games over two months, Green – are you ready for this? – made just four shots in 39 attempts.

4 of 39.

He got to the free-throw line just twice in the final 12 games, too. For the season, he averaged just 2.6 points per game and shot 29.3 percent

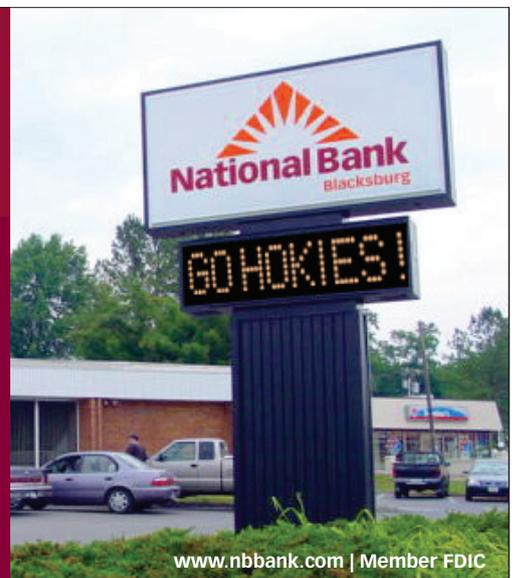
How hard was that?

“People really don't know,” Green said. “My freshman year, man, it was a struggle. It was really hard.”

Playing behind Malcolm Delaney, Green got

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his minutes, but his game didn't develop.

- o for 5 against UNC.
- o for 3 against Miami.
- o for 3 against Maryland.

During a five-week stretch, Green went nine games without a single field goal.

"At one point, he came off the floor with tears in his eyes," Tech coach James Johnson reflected. "He was so frustrated. He sat down and just stared at the floor. That was a tough time."

Green would get back to his dorm after those games, and it got worse.

"I got emails and stuff like that," he said. "People don't know how that took my confidence down to a different level. People were telling me I wasn't a Division I player and that I shouldn't be here at Tech."

On an Internet message board, Green read a posting that suggested Tech had wasted a scholarship on him.

"I was really upset when I read that," he said. "It is what it is. I tried not to let it get to me, but it was really motivation. I didn't let it break me down. It made me stronger. That motivated me to get better. But it was never easy."

Green worked on his game and improved as dramatically as any player in Tech history. Hours shooting in Tech's practice facility every morning paid off in a big way. He averaged 11.6 points per game a sophomore, 15.6 as a junior and more than 25 as a senior.

How many guys can make that much of an improvement in 36 months? From 2.6 points per game to averaging over 25 per game – in the ACC?

Not even Green expected to have such a great season.

"No, not at all," he said. "My honest goal was to get 18 points per game. My teammates have been

so great. Working out every morning has been the key. Getting shots up every morning. Now, every time I shoot the ball, I feel like it's going in.

Green produced this season even though every other team designed a defense to stop him – double-teaming, trapping and denying the ball. Yet at the end of the game, the ever-efficient Green delivered night after night.

"The season he had was exceptional," Johnson said. "It was amazing. Not just for our team, but the overall impact on the program and the university. Here's a young man who came in and averaged two points as a freshman. Just worked his butt off to be a complete player and put himself in position to be an All-ACC player."

For Johnson, Green represents the blueprint of the kind of players he wants and needs to recruit if Tech is to have success. While it would be great if Tech could sign elite guards like (former Duke guard) Kyrie Irving or (former Kentucky guard) Michael Kidd-Gilchrist, in reality, the Hokies and their success is going to hinge on the ability to recruit and develop players like Green.

"We want guys who take pride in being here at Virginia Tech," Johnson said. "They take pride in getting better and working on their game and staying four years. Get a degree and graduate and be a successful young man on and off the floor. For Green to work each year and get better and become one of the best players in the country, that's unbelievable for us."

Johnson hopes it will pay off in recruiting. Only time will tell.

"For our players in the program now to see that, and for me to be able to sell that to the young men we are recruiting to come into this program, it says a lot about him," Johnson said. "And in a way it says a lot about the young men we want to bring into the program. That's the kind person



Erick Green gave fans one last memory on senior night when he scored 29 points against Clemson.

and the kind of player we want."

So far, so good.

"We got a commitment from a young man who looked at Erick Green and said Erick was his favorite player in the NCAA," Johnson said. "He wants to pattern his career like Green."

Of course, not every player who works hard will eventually lead the nation in scoring. Not every kid is going to make 20,000 field goals during the offseason as Green did before his senior year. But he has shown a blueprint for the kind of success a kid can have if he puts in the hours and the work and the dedication.

We just witnessed one incredible season from this senior from Winchester, Va. We will miss him in a big way—as a player and a person. But his impact on Tech's program will last for many more years to come.



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Keeping up *with* Compliance

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

Q: What are your thoughts on the NCAA's recent decisions to let anything go when it comes to recruiting? Thanks, Sharon in Blacksburg.

TP: "To briefly recap, a series of NCAA amendments – most focused on recruiting – have been adopted that will reduce the size of the NCAA Manual by 25 pages through the elimination of several existing rules. From the perspective of many athletics administrators, the bulk of these rules were seen as unenforceable.

"For instance, limits on coaches calling recruits will be eliminated, restrictions on the types of written and electronic 'materials' that can be sent to a recruit will be eliminated, and texting will be allowed. These changes are scheduled to take effect at the end of the summer.

"Recently, however, there has been a great deal of backlash from the NCAA membership, and it now appears that some of the amendments are in jeopardy. If 75 or more Division I schools take issue with any of the pending amendments by formally indicating their desire to override prior to the March 20 deadline, one or more of the amendments may be revisited and/or rescinded."

Q: I saw where Texas got one of its best basketball players (Myck Kabongo) back after he was suspended for 23 games for accepting impermissible benefits. How does the NCAA determine the length of any

suspension? Thanks, James in Christiansburg.

TP: "In most cases involving impermissible benefits, players are usually suspended from three to 10 games and ordered to repay the amount of benefits received. Texas suspended the player (Kabongo) for 10 games once it was discovered that an agent had paid for him to travel to Cleveland last spring to work out with a professional trainer.

"However, the player provided inaccurate information to NCAA investigators, so he was suspended for the season.

"The player appealed the decision to the NCAA Committee on Student-Athlete Reinstatement, and the suspension was reduced to 23 games (including the 10-game suspension from Texas) and he was required to repay \$475 in impermissible benefits to a charity of his choice.

"There is an important lesson to be learned here for all student-athletes – be cooperative and truthful when talking with NCAA representatives. Harsh punishment waits for those who do not."

Q: Did you see where the USC baseball coach got fired just days before the season opener? I guess they were practicing too much. What are the limitations for team practices? I know you've addressed this in the past. Thanks, Brian in Christiansburg.

TP: "Yes, I saw that story. The issue there was that the coach knowingly violated the rules.

That's a definite 'no-no,' particularly when USC is already on probation.

"Teams are not allowed to practice more than 20 hours per week and four hours per day, and each team must take one day off per week. Practice includes an array of things, such as watching film and doing strength and conditioning activities. Basically, practice includes any coach/athlete interaction related to the sport that isn't voluntary."

Q: Just recently, Kentucky reported a secondary violation to the NCAA when Rod Strickland watched film with a player. Strickland is the assistant to the head coach, but isn't an assistant coach, so therefore, he can't do any coaching. Why doesn't the NCAA eliminate positions like these? This seems to be just a way of skirting the NCAA rules. Thanks, Scott in Blacksburg.

TP: "Your point is a valid one, and situations like the one at Kentucky have occurred. Really, though, this is more of an issue for athletics departments to resolve rather than the NCAA. The NCAA already limits basketball staffs to a head coach and three assistant coaches. Each athletics department has the discretion to add other positions within its programs, and those positions are required to abide by NCAA rules, one of which is no 'hands-on' coaching. It's up to the athletics departments to make sure these rules are followed." 



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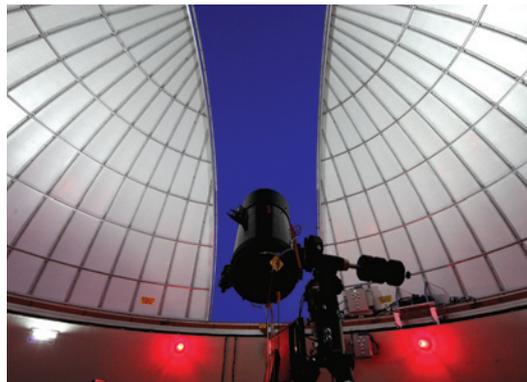
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Dadi Nicolas showed flashes of his athletic ability last fall, and the Tech coaching staff wants to see more of it this spring.



TECH “D” READY for SUCCESS

The Hokies return a lot of starters and hope to carry over their stellar play from the end of last season to this spring

by Jimmy Robertson

After a slow start to the 2012 season, the Virginia Tech defense played great in the second half of the campaign and finished as a top-20 defense nationally (18th in total defense) for the 12th time since Bud Foster took over as the defensive coordinator. Can that unit be as good or better next season? The process starts this spring, and Foster took time to answer a few questions before spring practice begins on March 27.

Q: When you look back at last year, what was the difference between the first half of the season and the second half?

BF: “We just went back and played our field people, meaning we played our whip (linebacker) and didn’t play as much nickel (defense). I felt like the first half of the year we were like we were two years ago. We were a hodgepodge group, and we really weren’t able to run our defense. We weren’t as pressure-oriented as we like to be or can be. Just all those things. I felt like we weren’t functioning like I know we can function, so we made a decision. We were going to play (Alonzo) Tweedy and Ronny Vandyke and run our defense. I wanted to run our pressures the way we ran

them the last half of the year, and we didn’t do that the first half of the year.

“So that was an issue, and we had revamped our secondary and that was an issue early on. They played so much better the second half of the season. The biggest area was our tackling (in the secondary). In the Pitt and the North Carolina games, we were in great fits, but we missed tackles on the perimeter. I thought the game slowed down for those guys, and they performed better.”

Q: With so many starters coming back, do you anticipate that second-half performance carrying over to this spring?

BF: “Yeah, I’ve got high expectations. I was disappointed in that I thought we had some guys who, because we were a top-10 defense the year before, thought we could show up and do it again. I was disappointed to be honest with you. I thought we could play harder and with more attitude, and we did down the stretch. But as a coach, I was disappointed from that standpoint. For the first time in a long time, we had to challenge their efforts a little bit, and that’s not going to be the case this year. If it is, they’re not

going to play. I felt like the kids felt like they were entitled because of their past success, but you’ve got to go out and earn it.”

Q: You lose Michael Cole (neck injury), who gave up football, and Antone Exum is out this spring (torn ACL) and may possibly miss some games. Who are some guys you’re watching in the secondary?

BF: “Let me say this – if anyone can get back, it would be Antone Exum. He’s kind of a freak physically, and he’s motivated. But at the same time, that injury opens the door for some other guys.

“I’m looking to see what Donovan Riley can do. He played last year on special teams, and he’ll know what the expectations are, but he’s got a lot of room to grow. Donaldven Manning, with the way he practiced in the spring, I thought he’d have more impact last fall. He had a disappointing freshman season in my eyes. We’ve also got Davion Tookes. Those are three guys we’re looking at for the field corner spot. Behind (Kyle) Fuller (at boundary corner), you’re looking at Brandon Facyon, who is a true freshman.

“The cupboard is not bare, but this is going to be a big spring for all those secondary guys. We need to develop some depth in our secondary. That’s always been one of our strengths, but we were a little thin last year when it was all said and done.

“Losing Mike hurts. I thought he would have been even better this year. He had the physical tools and make-up to be a good football player. It’s unfortunate for him, but we’ve got some guys who need to step up, and I think they will.”

Q: How important is this spring for Tariq Edwards, who will be replacing last year’s leader, Bruce Taylor?

BF: “The key guy this spring is Tariq Edwards. Obviously, two years ago, he was an all-star candidate and played that way. He had that stress fracture and had that rod inserted in his shin, and he never really recovered physically or mentally. But he’s a guy, if he can step up and get back to the level he played at two years ago ... that’s a playmaking spot. I think he’s a key guy.

“The other guy I’m excited about (at backer) is Deon Clarke. He was a little all over the place as a freshman. We tried to play him and then he got nicked up a little bit (and missed the rest of the

year), but he has a motor and a lot of potential.

“We’re also going to move Josh Trimble to whip and move Dahman McKinnon to backer, so he can battle at that backer spot. Josh was a guy you saw on special teams making plays in space and doing some of the things that we ask our whips to do. Watching him as opposed to McKinnon making plays in space, I just think he’s a better fit at whip and McKinnon can battle at backer. We’re just trying to put guys in places where we can maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses and help them be more productive.”

Q: J.R. Collins bounced back and forth from end to tackle a little last season. Where do you see him heading into this spring?

BF: “J.R. has been the most pleasant surprise in winter workouts. He would be one of the first ones to tell you that he thought he could show up (last year) and do what he did the year before. I love this kid to death. He was probably overweight last year. I didn’t see the quickness that I did the year before. He was disappointed in his play, and right now, he wants to go back and play defensive end for us. I think there is going to be a tremendous battle at that position between him and Corey Marshall. J.R. wants it. I see a

different kid, just in his demeanor, and he can graduate at the end of the semester. He’s changed his life.

“We’re going to look at getting our four best guys on the field. He and Corey have both played in there (at defensive tackle). It could be those two in there, but on the same side at some point. That’s a good problem to have when it’s all said and done.”

Q: For the second straight year, the front four should be a strength. Do you like what you have coming back?

BF: “I do, but again, I want a group that is going to be hungry. I thought that group got a late start last year. Part of that is the offenses we played early in the year (spread offenses), and we did some things with our ends that probably slowed them down. We’ve talked about what we’re looking to do this spring. Those offenses do some things to tie your ends up, but we can do some things. We just need to do them a little quicker.

“But I like our kids. When James Gayle is healthy and playing right, he’s an impact player. Tyrel Wilson is an outstanding player. We just did our cut-ups for last season, and the guy shows up

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a lot. I think you'll see big things from J.R., and Corey needs to be a little more consistent.

"After that, you've got a group of young guys that I'm really excited about. We're going to need Dadi Nicolas to step up, and you've seen the potential he has. He's a raw, talented kid. He can close on people and do things, but he's got to be consistent. Dewayne Alford is a kid that I'm really excited about. Matt Roth helped us on special teams, and I'm anxious to see Ken Ekanem. Jarontay Jones might be a defensive end or a defensive tackle. He showed some things in our (Monday) scrimmages (last fall).

"We've got a slew of guys there. We want to keep those returning starters sharp, but we want to get these younger guys better. We want to get a good evaluation to determine their futures."

Q: Whom among your young defensive tackles do you like?

BF: "Well, first, I really like how Luther Maddy played last year. When he's healthy, he's really effective, and I like Derrick Hopkins. Those two are our leaders in there.

"Kris Harley needs to be more consistent. He played last year and was inconsistent. That's the position up front where we need to create depth because, when we're good, we'll rotate guys there. But they've got to be able to perform.

"After those guys, it's wide open. The guy I've been impressed with is Nigel Williams He's explosive and plays with natural pad level. He can chase the ball. I'm anxious to see more of him. I'm also anxious to see Alston Smith and Woody Baron, and Justin Taylor is a kid who has gotten bigger. We've moved him inside, and this is a big spring for him.

"After Hopkins and Maddy, we've got to find a third, fourth and fifth guy. I'd like to see all of them take that next step."

Q: You were really impressed with Jack Tyler last year, weren't you?

BF: "He was probably our most consistent football player. He played hard. I don't know who does the stats up in the press box, but they probably short-changed him 100 hits. He's a football player.

"I think there will be a battle between Chase Williams and Devin Vandyke (behind Tyler). Chase has a great football IQ, but needs to play at a higher level and play faster. Devin is an athletic kid. That mike position is a leadership position, and he'll be that type of guy."

Q: Will you visit anyone this spring, and do you have any plans to tweak things?

BF: "We visited with Navy, but they primarily

wanted to talk to us. Charley (Wiles) and I went up there, and we talked about our pressure package. But I also talked to them about the 'Bone', too (Georgia Tech's offense). They're reluctant to give us a lot of information because of their ties to (Georgia Tech coach) Paul Johnson, and I understand that. But at the same time, I got a couple of little things.

"We're actually going to go visit Vanderbilt. Brent Pry, who was our GA here in the mid-1990s, is the co-coordinator down there. They were efficient on third down and run some of the stuff we run on third down. That's a place we can go and share ideas. I think they'll be open with us, and I'm curious to see what they're doing from a recruiting standpoint because they've obviously improved themselves. They do some things well in a league where they're a little overmatched.

"Also, Todd Grantham (former Tech player and coach and current Georgia defensive coordinator) and I have gone back and forth. I'm not looking to change things, but to just tweak a little bit. Maybe a pressure or a technique. People are wanting to pick us more than we pick them. Just finding a place to talk is a big thing now. Not everyone wants to be open about adjustments they do in certain formations, and that's what you want. But those places we've been are usually open for discussions." 



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Green's big season leads to accolades

by Jimmy Robertson

The final week of the 2012-13 regular season wasn't particularly kind to the Virginia Tech men's basketball team. The Hokies suffered two road losses and ended up as the No. 12 seed in the ACC Tournament.

But for Erick Green, the end of the regular season saw the accolades start pouring in.

After leading the nation in scoring for much of the season, Green saw all his hard work and efforts on the court rewarded, as he was named the ACC Player of the Year, according to the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association, a group of media members who cover ACC schools.

Green, a senior from Winchester, Va., became the first Virginia Tech player to be named the league's player of the year and the third to earn first-team All-ACC honors. Zabian Dowdell was a first-team selection following the 2006-07 season, while Malcolm Delaney earned first-team nods during the 2009-10 and 2010-11 seasons.

Green is just the third Tech men's basketball player to win a conference player of the year honor, joining Dell Curry (1986) and Bimbo Coles (1988). Both won Metro Conference player of the year honors.

"I am extremely proud of Erick," Tech coach James Johnson said. "This is an honor that is well deserved. This young man has put in numerous hours and has relentlessly worked on his game to put himself in this position. To have the respect of the media and for people to recognize what he has done for this team, in such a tough conference against very good players and very good coaches, says a lot about Erick as a player. Erick is a great kid on and off the floor, and the award couldn't come to a better person."

In addition, Green was named one of 15 finalists for the Wooden Award, which goes annually to the most outstanding player in college basketball.



C.J. Barksdale played well the final six games of the regular season, averaging more than 10 points and six rebounds per game in that stretch.

Green averaged 25.4 points per game during the regular season. He shot 48.2 percent from the floor and 39.2 percent from beyond the 3-point arc. He also averaged 4.1 rebounds and 3.9 assists per game.

Green's final regular-season game for Tech resembled what he had done nearly all of the season. He tied a career high with 35 points in a 90-79 loss at Wake Forest. In that game, he hit 9 of 18 from the floor, including 3 of 5 from beyond the 3-point arc.

Green's 35 points enabled him to break Coles' single-season scoring record. Coles scored 785

points during the 1989-90 season, but Green's 35 gave him 786 points for the regular season heading into the ACC Tournament.

"It hasn't even set in yet," Green said. "But it's a great feeling to have. It just shows that the hard work has paid off. It's dedication and hard work. Passing Bimbo, one of the greats, that's something I'll always remember. I'll always take it to my heart."

Green also moved into the top 10 in career scoring at Tech. He has scored more than 1,700 points.

In the Wake Forest game, Green hit 14 of 18

from the free-throw line. He finished the regular season connecting on 216 of his 256 free-throw attempts (81.5 percent). He led the nation both in free throws made and attempted.

RANKIN SETS CAREER HIGH AGAINST WAKE

Tech backup guard Marquis Rankin went into the regular-season finale having scored in double figures in just one game all season. But the sophomore scored a career-high 15 points against the Demon Deacons.

Rankin hit 7 of 10 from the floor and 1 of 3 from the free-throw line. He also grabbed two rebounds and played a season-high 32 minutes.

"Coach is always telling me to play with confidence and be aggressive," Rankin said. "So I just came out with a sense of urgency, and to be aggressive and to play with as much confidence as possible. I tried to make plays for my team."

WOOD WITH BIG GAME VERSUS N.C. STATE

On Feb. 16, the Hokies gave ACC preseason favorite N.C. State a run before falling 90-86 in overtime down in Raleigh, N.C.

For sure, the loss couldn't be pinned on freshman Marshall Wood, who enjoyed his best

game of the season. The 6-foot-8 forward scored 14 points and grabbed 16 rebounds for the first double-double of his career. He connected on 5 of 10 from the floor and hit 4 of 9 from beyond the 3-point arc. His points, rebounds and 3-pointers were all career highs.

Wood's double-double marked the Hokies' seventh of the season. Jarell Eddie and Cadarian Raines led the way with two double-doubles each, while Green, C.J. Barksdale and Wood accounted for the others.

Wood's 16 rebounds were the most by an ACC freshman in a game this season, and his 14 points were more than he had scored in the seven previous games combined since returning after missing seven games with a broken foot.

BARKSDALE SOLID DOWN THE STRETCH

There was little positive that came out of the Hokies' 88-56 loss to Duke at Cassell Coliseum on Feb. 21, but Barksdale's play certainly deserved mentioning.

In fact, starting with that Duke game, Barksdale played very well down the stretch for Tech. He scored in double figures in four of the final six regular-season games. Going into that streak, Barksdale had scored in double figures in back-to-back games just once this season.

Against Duke on Feb. 21, the 6-8 sophomore from Danville, Va., scored 14 points and grabbed eight rebounds. He hit all six of his shot attempts and both of his free-throw attempts in 21 minutes of action.

The performance marked his first double-figure performance since the Hokies' overtime win at Georgia Tech on Jan. 12 – a span of nine games. In fact, in the six games leading up to the Duke game, Barksdale had scored a total of just 10 points and hit just 6 of 17 from the floor.

"I just played within the game," Barksdale said after the game. "I let the game come to me. I tried not to force any shots, and when the opportunity came, I knocked the shots down."

In the Hokies' win over Florida State, he scored a career-high 17 points, hitting 4 of 6 from the floor and 9 of 11 from the free-throw line. He also grabbed nine rebounds. In the Hokies' loss at Miami, Barksdale scored 12 points, hitting 6 of 9 from the floor, and he grabbed seven rebounds. In the Hokies' victory over Clemson on senior night, he scored 14 points, hitting 4 of 7 from the floor, and he grabbed eight rebounds.

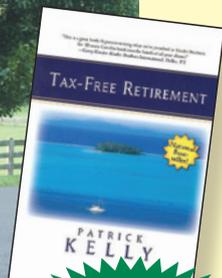
Barksdale averaged 10.8 points per game and shot 63.2 percent in that six-game span (24 of 38). He also shot 89.5 percent from the free-throw line (17 of 19) and averaged 6.2 rebounds per game. 

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Erick Green's daily routine of hitting 300 shots paid off big time this season, as he earned the ACC's Player of the Year honor.



Green scores great season

Thanks to a supportive family and an unmatched work ethic, Tech guard Erick Green puts together a season for the record books

by **Jimmy Robertson**

The text came early in the morning, roughly six or seven hours after the Virginia Tech basketball team arrived home following a loss to Miami in Coral Gables, Fla.

Just hours removed from one of his worst performances of the season – if you can call a 16-point outing “bad” – Erick Green just wanted to sleep in and get some rest. He heard the phone vibrate, picked it up and recognized the number.

“Get your a** in the gym,” the text said.

Mom knows best, right?

Then again, Green is used to it. His mom is like an alarm clock, telling him every morning not to be in bed while someone else’s dreams are coming true.

That’s just the way things roll in the Green household, where you not only play for teammates and fans, but also for your parents and siblings. This quintessential American family from Winchester, Va., loves each other, certainly, but they also love competition and hold each other accountable. The standard is greatness, and none of them would have it any other way.

So with the tough love of his family pushing him on, Green stumbled out of bed on that cold February morning, got dressed, got in his car and truded over to Tech’s Hahn Hurst Basketball Practice Facility, where he launched shot after shot, making 300 before departing, part of what has become a daily ritual for him.

He knew better than to expect sympathy after shooting 6 of 13 against the 'Canes, especially from his mom, Tami, a former guard at Howard University in the late 1980s. Pity is truly a dirty, four-letter word among this group, and while his dad, also named Erick, taught him the game in their driveway, his mom is his coach.

Notice the verb tense there.

"My dad would take me out and do drills and teach me how to shoot," Green said. "Then my mom got involved. She was my first coach."

Then he added, with a smile, "She's been 'Coach Green' ever since."

Green's path to basketball stardom started in this small enclave in Virginia's northwest corner. He got plenty of practice playing basketball because of all the young children at his house. He has three younger sisters (he also has a half brother), and not only that, Tami Green works as the director of social services in Frederick County. Her job has led to more than a dozen young foster children having stayed in the Green's home over the years.

As a young kid, Green struggled to understand why the foster kids came and went. As he grew older, though, he became more sage about the situation, though always disappointed when they left.

"When I was younger, I didn't really understand," he said. "They were in the house, and the attention was toward them. I was kind of jealous. Our parents paid us mind, but it wasn't the attention we were used to, and I didn't like that.

"But when you get older, you appreciate it because those kids have nothing. A lot of them have nothing coming in, so you've got to teach your sisters to understand and be appreciative of all we get and the things our parents do.

"The best thing is that every kid we've had loved basketball, loved the game. We didn't even have to force them. They'd ask us to teach them. It was great to have someone else around."

Both of Green's parents worked – his dad is the supervisor of the Prince William County Juvenile Facility – but both took time to teach and coach him. Between that, his siblings playing against him and all the foster children helping him and inspiring him, Green gradually became one of the best players in Virginia. During his junior year, he led Millbrook High to Virginia's Group AA title.

Despite that, he wasn't getting very many looks from college recruiters, who viewed him as a little too scrawny for their liking. So to enhance his visibility, he and his family decided it best that he transfer for his senior season to Paul VI, a private school in Fairfax, Va., that played in the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference – arguably the best basketball league in the

Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia area.

The move, though, came with a price.

"I missed my friends," he said. "Then having people spray paint on my driveway that I was a sellout, that was tough. When I went back for games, people would call me a sellout. It really sucked. It did, but I had to sacrifice for my career."

The move paid off. Green helped guide Paul VI to the Virginia Independent Schools state title, and he got a little more attention from college recruiters. He looked at VCU. St. Joseph's coach Phil Martelli offered him a scholarship and

young man signed with the Hokies, wanting to play in the ACC.

"Everywhere I went, Coach Johnson was there," Green said. "If I was at an AAU tournament, he was there. He believed in me. I had a great relationship with Coach J.J., and my mom and dad loved J.J. I go off their opinion a lot, and I just stuck with J.J."

Green struggled his first season at Tech – badly, in fact. He got to play quite a bit, but he averaged 2.6 points per game and shot just 29.3 percent from the floor. Things got worse as the season



Erick Green won over Tech fans the past two seasons, many of whom were skeptical after his freshman year when he averaged 2.6 points per game and shot just 29.3 percent from the floor.

brought him to campus for a visit, and James Madison offered him a scholarship as well.

"Martelli called me while I was at a high school football game and offered me a scholarship," Green said. "I liked him, but I just didn't like Philly at all."

But Green did like a George Mason assistant named James Johnson – the current Tech head coach. Johnson served on George Mason's staff under Jim Larranaga, now the Miami head coach, and he had been keeping tabs on Green since Green was a 15 year old.

When Johnson got an assistant's job at Tech under former coach Seth Greenberg, he convinced Greenberg to offer Green a scholarship. The

went along, too, as he scored just four points in Tech's final 10 games that season.

He seriously doubted himself and whether he was an ACC player. He contemplated transferring, and actually, had decided to do just that until a phone conversation with sister Courtni late in the season changed his perspective.

"I sent her a text and told her I was going to come home, that it wasn't working out," Green said. "I was seeing things that people were saying, and it hurt me.

"But she told me to suck it up and that things would work out. She kept feeding me positive things and told me to hang in there and that I would be okay. So I stayed, and it worked out."



Erick Green scored more than 1,700 points in his career, but said he would have gladly traded away some of those for more team success.

It also helped that Johnson kept a close eye on his recruit. He constantly gave Green positive feedback, knowing that the young man hadn't reached his potential and never would if he departed.

"We believe in you and we wouldn't have

recruited you if we didn't believe in you," Johnson told him. "But there is a difference in coming from high school to the ACC. It's a step up, and you've got to continue to work on your game and continue to believe in yourself because we believe in you."

Green obviously turned a corner. He averaged 11.6 points per game as a sophomore, and as a junior, averaged 15.6 per game on his way to earning All-ACC honors.

This season, he took it to another level, but that ascension actually began last summer. He committed himself to being better than good. He committed himself to being the best.

Every morning, he'd come to Tech's practice facility and get up shots. He worked on different moves, like his favorite step-back move or coming off ball screens. He worked on game-like situations. He shot free throws. He forced himself to make 300 shots each morning, and often, he came back to the gym later to shoot even more or to play in pick-up games with his teammates.

"I think I made more than 20,000 shots," he said. "But I probably shot so many more. It's something I'd recommend to anybody."

Green kept the routine and attributes it to his tremendous senior season. He was averaging 25.4 points per game – leading the nation at press time – and broke Tech's single-season scoring record of 785 points set by Bimbo Coles in 1989-90. His 35-point outburst in the regular-season finale against Wake Forest gave him 786 points for the season.

"I've talked with my guys about that, and I'm sure there are other coaches around the country who are using that," Johnson said of Green's work ethic. "The kid goes from two points a game as a freshman to leading the nation in scoring.

"That shows what hard work can do for you, and that's the way we want to build this program.

Those are the types of kids I want to get in the program."

Green earned first-team All-ACC honors this season and was named the ACC's Player of the Year even though Tech went 4-14 in ACC play.

As he gets set to embark on the next phase of his life, he has no regrets.

"I've had a lot of great accomplishments," he said. "I wish we could have had more team victories, but individually ... I sit with my mom and dad and laugh. From my freshman year to here, who would have thought I would have been the nation's leading scorer? I do take time to think back to how far I've come.

"I don't have any regrets at all. I've got great relationships with the coaches. The community has been great. Everywhere I go, I get a lot of love. And these teammates, man, these are the best group of teammates. It's been great."

Green graduates in May with a degree in sociology. After that, he hopes to get a chance in the NBA. Certainly, he'll be playing professional basketball somewhere.

When basketball runs its course, he'll have options. He may get into law enforcement or work with kids. He loves kids.

Heck, he wouldn't mind being a coach one day, though he knows it might become a family affair, as everything between the Green family and all things basketball is. Would he hire his mom as an assistant coach?

"I'd hire her, but I think we'd butt heads a lot," he said, laughing. "She feels she's always right, and I think I'm always right. But she'd be on my staff, for sure."

His smile says it all. His family means the world to him. So, too, does his Hokie family.

It's certainly not a stretch to say that he's meant the same to them as well, probably more. 

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WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT ERICK GREEN



“I thought going to Virginia Tech, you know, he would have a very nice career, but he’s developed into the leading scorer in the country. That’s a whole ‘nother level. When everybody’s attention is on you, you’re going to get every defender’s best effort. You’re getting every team’s best defender on the perimeter. It is very, very hard to continue to produce the way he has. It’s a remarkable accomplishment by him.”

-Miami coach Jim Larranaga

“He’s what college basketball and ACC basketball is supposed to be all about. Here is a guy who every year has made significant improvements, and has stayed the course in terms of becoming a great player. He averages two points a game as a freshman and now he’s averaging 26.

“I’d be hard-pressed for anybody to find that kind of jump, No. 1, if they are pressed, find anybody with that kind of jump in college basketball, and then that kind of jump where a kid stayed at the same school. Usually the kids are like, ‘I’m outta here.’ You give him credit

for his steadfastness and understanding that Virginia Tech was going to be a place where he could excel at.”

-Georgia Tech coach Brian Gregory

“He’s just a handful. He’s a guy who’s clever with the ball. He made three or four real tough shots that we couldn’t let any players on our team take. Some of those shots, those floaters, I can’t imagine how he practices those shots. He’s very quick and fast, and he’s flipping them before he even leaves the ground, which keeps any defender off balance. He has a uniqueness about his game that he’s very clever in using.”

-Florida State coach Leonard Hamilton

“We’re thinking about playing a box and one. Four guys on him and one guy in the middle of the lane.

“We tried to keep fresh guys on him. Nothing works against him because he’s really, really good. And they set a lot of screens, and they’re legal screens. They’re just hard to get through.”

-North Carolina coach Roy Williams

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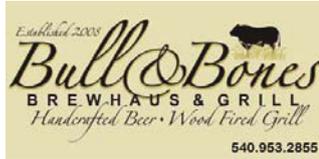
So, if needed, text "RESPECT" followed by your issue and the location to "71855" and the situation will be resolved as soon as possible.



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Tech's Alyssa Fenyn finished a productive career with 950 points, nearly 500 rebounds and nearly 300 assists.

Tech women's basketball team sees season end at ACC Tournament

by Marc Mullen

The Virginia Tech women's basketball team certainly did not want to end its season this way. After snapping a nine-game losing streak to start 2013, the Hokies went 3-4 in their next seven games, which included a pair of road wins – at Georgia Tech (63-61) and at Wake Forest (62-52) – and an upset of top-20 Florida State at home.

However, they closed their season with back-to-back losses to Miami, a 64-46 loss on senior day at Cassell Coliseum and a 45-39 defeat in the first round of the ACC Women's Basketball Tournament in Greensboro, N.C. The latter was a game that saw them score just eight points in the

first half, but come back to make it a four-point game with four minutes to go.

"We are disappointed," Tech coach Dennis Wolff said in the press conference following the game. "You know, these girls have worked incredibly hard all year, and they showed tremendous character to make it a one-possession game.

"It was just a tough break. We needed to come up with the ball, and then that 3-pointer (by Miami's Stefanie Yderstrom with 2:15 remaining) took away our chances. We are really, really proud of the kids. I just told the kids in the locker room that we finished last in the league – everyone has

made it clear to me what our record is – but we didn't play like a last-place team (in the ACC Tournament) against a team that is going to the NCAA Tournament, so I am proud of the girls for that.”

The Hokies ended the season with a 10-20 mark and a 4-14 record in the ACC.

FINAL GAME FOR FOUR HOKIES

The ACC Tournament loss to Miami marked the final one for a pair of four-year Hokies – Aerial Wilson and Alyssa Fenyn. Fenyn scored 10 points in the loss. It marked the third straight game she reached double figures and gave her 950 points for her career.

Her other career numbers include 491 rebounds, 283 assists and 135 steals in 120 games played in the maroon and orange.

“Alyssa Fenyn has been incredible in the way she has carried herself over the four years here,” Wolff said. “I have said it before, but to have a coaching change in the middle of your college career is not an easy thing.

“Alyssa has been above and beyond in accepting whatever we asked her to do. And it's a sad thing for all of us when, you know, from a coaching staff on down, when you have nice kids that try to do what you want them to do, and then it's over for them.”

Wilson, a backup for her first two seasons at Tech, finished her career with 642 points – more than half (362) in her junior year – 210 assists, 187 rebounds and 94 steals in 115 games.

The game was also the last for a pair of walk-ons who played a pair of seasons for the Hokies – Rachel Nichols and Kerry Sarver. Nichols played in 21 games and recorded four points and four rebounds, while Sarver played in 22 games and scored two points, had five rebounds and four assists.

TECH TOPPLES TOP-20 TEAM IN CASSELL

In their 71-52 victory over Florida State in Cassell Coliseum on Feb. 24 – part of a doubleheader sweep of the Seminoles by both Tech basketball teams on that date at home – the Hokies registered their second-largest victory over a ranked opponent in school history.

Back in 2002, Tech knocked off then No. 24 Boston College by 21 points. The 19-point win against Florida State passed the second-largest mark – a 16-point win over Virginia back in 1998.

“Thrilled,” Wolff said after the game. “This game showed the type of character that these kids have. When you're kind of mired in the type of season that we've been fighting through,

I believe the team approached this game in the right frame of mind despite that.”

Monet Tellier and Uju Ugoka both scored more than 20 points in the win, while Ugoka pulled down 12 rebounds to record her fourth double-double of the season. It was the second time the pair both reached 20. The other was in a win over Wake Forest in December.

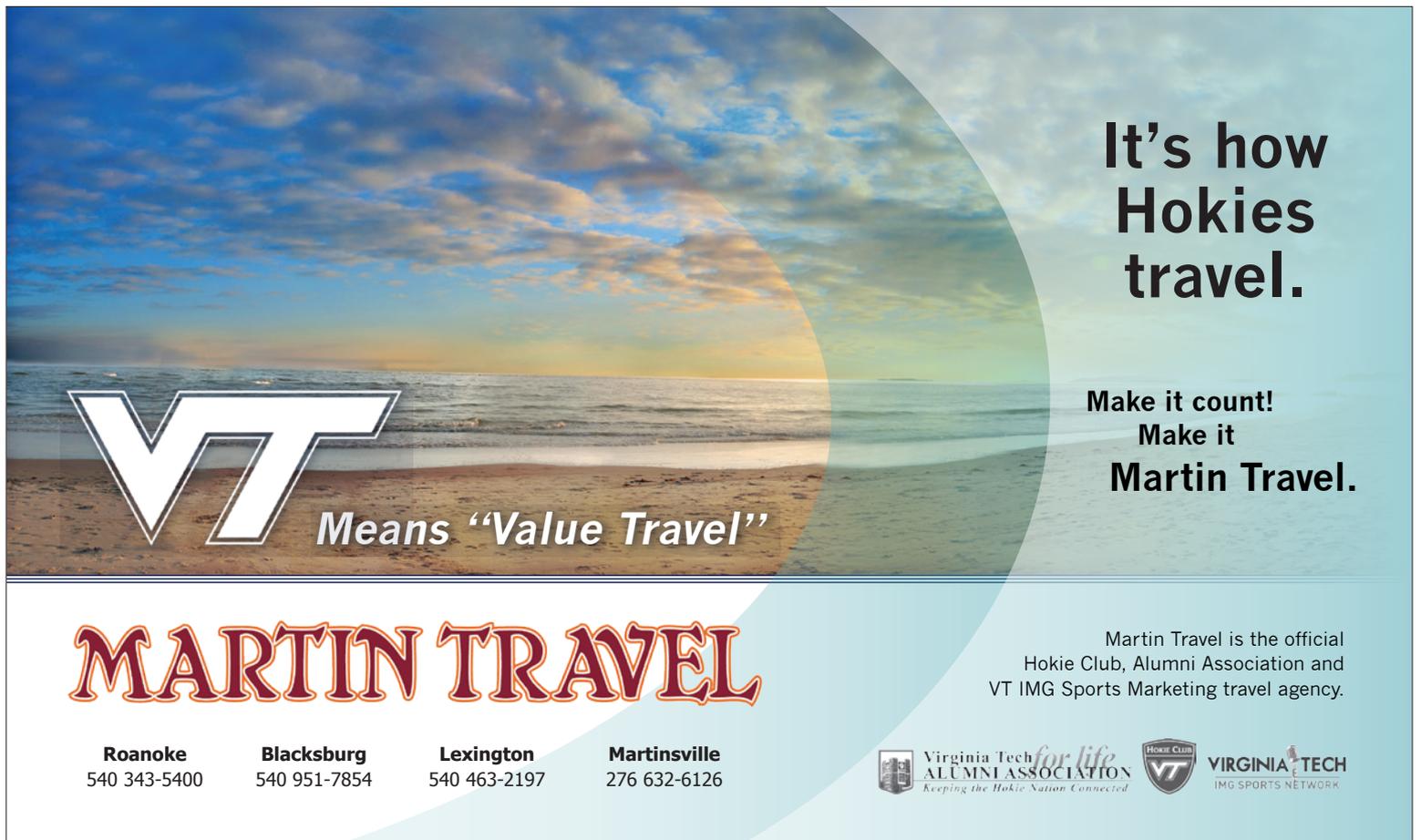
TELLIER PASSES 1,000-POINT MILESTONE

Tellier won't just remember her second win over a ranked opponent for the mere victory, but she will also cherish it because at the 12:32 mark of the first half she knocked down a 3-point shot that pushed her past the 1,000-point milestone.

She became the 23rd female at the school to reach the mark and is the first to reach it since Utahya Drye scored her 1,000th point during the 2009-10 season.

“Congratulations to Monet,” Wolff said after the game. “One thousand points in college is not an easy thing to do.”

The junior still has one more year, and she has already moved into the No. 21 position on the school's all-time scoring list. An average year for Tellier in her final season at the school would push her well into the top 10 and could get her as high as sixth. 



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Tech goes the distance at ACC indoor meet

Paced by strong performances from the distance runners and the usual steady play of the throwers, the Tech men's track and field team won the ACC Indoor Championships – and now holds the men's crown in all three league track and field and cross country championships

by Jimmy Robertson



Tihut Degfae's surprising win in the 800 was one of many outstanding performances for Tech at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships.

Given the moment, and all that he had accomplished throughout an undeniably great career at Tech, Will Mulherin understandably took a victory lap following his final ACC event.

And as he ran around to the final turn before the start-finish line, a large contingent of Tech fans gave him an ear-splitting ovation for what had just transpired.

Mulherin's victory in the 3,000-meter run propelled the Tech men's track and field team to the team title at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships held Feb. 21-23 at Rector Field House on the Hokies' campus. The Hokies finished with 153 points, beating Florida State, who accumulated 135.

The victory marked Tech's eighth team title in track and field since joining the ACC. Tech's victory also means that the men's program now holds all three ACC championship titles in track and field and cross country. Last spring, the Hokies won the ACC's outdoor meet, and this past fall, behind Mulherin, the Hokies won the ACC's cross country title.

"To win three in a row in our conference is very rare, even though it was two separate years," Tech's director of track and field and cross country Dave Cianelli said. "To win three championships in a row in the ACC hasn't happened that often (once since 1986, Florida State in 2009-10). It's a credit to these coaches and athletes really putting it together and wanting to do something like this."

Mulherin finished things for the Hokies in a meet that nearly came down to the end. He edged Florida State's Jakub Zivec to win the 3,000 with a time of 8:04.39. He beat Zivec by just over two-tenths of a second.

"I was coming around the (final) turn and I could feel someone on my shoulder, and I just gave it all I had," Mulherin said. "I know that turn better than anyone, so if I could hold him

(Zivec) off at the turn, then I could slingshot into the finish line.

"I don't think there's a better way to go out."

The distance runners, as a group, came up large for the Hokies. Thomas Curtin pulled off a huge win in the 5,000-meter run, setting a school record with a time of 14:01.65 and beating the mark of 14:02.00 set by Tim Covington in 1989. Michael Hammond finished second in the mile. The distance medley relay team of Mulherin, Grant Pollock, Martin Dally and Eric Hoepker brought home gold, and Tihut Degfae pulled out a stunning win in the 800.

A year ago, Degfae redshirted during the indoor season, and two years ago, he failed to make it to the finals of the 800-meter run. But this year, he edged out Georgia Tech's Shawn Roberts by one one-thousandth of a second.

"That was really the story of the meet – the unexpected scorers getting those important points that really made a difference," cross country and distance coach Ben Thomas said. "Two years ago, Tihut was the favorite, but he didn't make it to the finals. He really handled his business well here. He made the final and won the final. On paper, he's the fourth- or fifth-best guy in the field, but it's a good thing they run the races on rubber, so to speak."

The Hokies also picked up critical wins from seniors Alexander Ziegler, Jeff Artis-Gray and Stephan Munz.

Ziegler, like Mulherin, was competing in his final ACC meet – neither has outdoor eligibility remaining – and he led a sweep for the Hokies in the weight throw. He broke the ACC Championship record with a heave of 77 feet, 8.75 inches (23.69 meters) – on his first attempt. Freshman Tomas Kruzliak came in second and senior Denis Mahmic finished third.

In the long jump, Artis-Gray only jumped twice in the finals. But his mark of 25 feet, 10 inches

(7.87 meters) broke the school record by more than seven inches. In fact, the record, formerly held by Ken Stewart, had stood since 1984.

Munz got off to a slow start, but the German rebounded to vault past the competition. He converted on his second attempt at 17 feet, 9 inches (5.41 meters) and beat Florida State's Andrew LaHaye by a tenth of a meter.

In the end, the Hokies needed points from

everyone up and down the lineup – and they got them.

“I'd compare it to basketball when you shoot 75 percent from the field or in football when you complete 100 percent of your passes,” Cianelli said. “Those things are just rare, and they're rare for us when you hit on everything – and we had to. We had to hit on just about everything to pull it out.”

On the women's side, the Hokies finished ninth with 36 points. Clemson won with 141.5 points.

Martina Schultze was the Hokies' lone winner. The sophomore from Germany won the pole vault, setting the school record with a vault of 14 feet, 7.25 inches (4.45 meters). The vault was both an ACC Championship meet record and a European Indoor Championships qualifying standard. 

ZIEGLER WINS ANOTHER NCAA TITLE

Tech's Alexander Ziegler led the men's team to a ninth-place finish at the NCAA indoor meet after winning the weight throw for his third national title.



Virginia Tech's Alexander Ziegler closed his career in perfect fashion, winning a national championship in the weight throw at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships held March 7-9 in Fayetteville, Ark.

The individual title marked Ziegler's third and the track and field program's 13th. The senior from Dischingen, Germany, had won hammer throw national titles the past two years during the outdoor season.

Ziegler, who does not have outdoor season eligibility remaining, won the weight throw with his third throw, a mark of 73 feet, 8.25 inches (22.46 meters) that stood pat through the final three rounds.

“Coming into this meet with a huge PR (personal record) at ACCs (73 feet, 8.75 inches) and a huge lead on the NCAA list, at the end of the day, all I could do was screw up, so I'm glad it worked out,” Ziegler said.

Ziegler's win capped another fine performance by the Tech men's track and field

program. The Hokies finished in the top 10 nationally for the second straight year, coming in tied for ninth.

“It's tough enough to just get to this meet, but to then finish in the top eight is that much tougher,” Tech director of track and field and cross country Dave Cianelli said. “For the men finishing in the top 10, it was a great job.”

Other strong performances for the Tech men came from Ronnie Black, Jeff Artis-Gray and Will Mulherin. Black finished fourth in the high jump after setting a school record with a jump of 7 feet, 5 inches. Mulherin came in seventh in the 3,000-meter run with a time of 7:55.08. Artis-Gray finished seventh in the long jump with a mark of 25 feet, 6.25 inches (7.78 meters) on just one scored jump.

On the women's side, Martina Schultze finished third in the pole vault. Her top vault was 4.40 meters, or 14 feet, 5.25 inches. Schultze, who earned All-America honors, was Tech's only female competitor in the event. 

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ON TRACK

Under the management of Dave Cianelli, the Tech track and field and cross country programs have thrown, run, jumped and vaulted their ways onto the national scene

by **Jimmy Robertson**



There are numerous piles of papers sitting on Dave Cianelli's wooden hunk of a desk, each no doubt representing something of great importance to the Virginia Tech track and field and cross country programs and each meticulously stacked. Not a loose end sticks out abruptly anywhere in any of the piles.

Frames with certificates of those who have earned All-America honors and other honors during his tenure at Tech hang upon his walls. All of them suspend perfectly, each precisely even with another. Nary a one sits askew.

Trophies and awards sit proudly on his bookcase, all of them angled perfectly to show what they represent. All of them are polished to a shine. Dust is extinct on this shelf and throughout the office.

Cianelli simply likes symmetry. He needs it to function. It's his addiction, something to keep his inner biorhythms in harmony.

So when a tape recorder sits on his desk, recording his insight during an interview, he glances at it periodically. One almost gets the feeling that it bothers him, this foreign object in his otherwise ideal world.

"It's borderline OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder)," Cianelli said, with a smile. "My coaches will come in once in a while and move something on my desk, just to mess with me. I'll come in and that will be the first thing I'll see. Then I'll go and yell at Greg (Jack) or Charles (Foster) or somebody because they just want to mess with me."

Joking aside, the sheer truth of the matter is that Cianelli's strict attention to details and his impeccable organizational skills are his best attributes. He needs these to be successful in his job as the CEO of Virginia Tech's track and field and cross country programs.

Success is an understatement when talking about Cianelli, a 57-year-old native Marylander who has bounced all over the country in pursuit of track and field glory, both as an athlete and a coach. Actually, he's been ultra-successful, though Hokie Nation may be a bit oblivious to the school's most accomplished Olympic sport.

His men's team just captured the title at the ACC Indoor Championships, giving his programs eight of the school's 16 ACC team championships since the school joined the league for the 2004-05 season. Three of his teams have finished in the top five nationally, and his programs have brought home

13 individual national titles. Yet many a Hokie don't even know how to pronounce his name (cha-nelly).

They need to start learning. This stickler for the details is currently Tech's most successful coach – and that may not be changing any time soon.

Tom Gabbard remembers his inaugural meeting with Cianelli. It was in February or March of 2001.

At the time, Gabbard, an associate AD for internal affairs, served as the sport administrator for track and field. He and Jim Weaver, Tech's AD, wanted to hire someone to oversee both the men's and women's track and field and cross country programs after Russ Whitenack, the longtime men's coach, had moved into the role of Monogram Club director. Gabbard and Weaver sought an opportunity to bring ... well ... symmetry to the programs, particularly since the school was moving to the Big East Conference.

When Cianelli started talking about his plan for the Tech programs, he blew away Weaver and Gabbard.

"He told us, 'Your best time in the Atlantic 10 in any event would finish eighth in the Big East,'" Gabbard said. "He had done his research.

"Then, I'll never forget, he pulled out this ragged folder. He had a step-by-step plan of what he would do. He was so humble and grounded, too. Jim and I were thinking, 'This is our guy.'"

Cianelli certainly wanted the opportunity to build a program. Growing up as a kid in Bethesda, Md., he dreamed of becoming a physical education teacher and a coach. He wanted to coach track and field and football, the sport his father, Dave Cianelli, Sr., played at the University of Maryland in the early 1950s. A linebacker and a fullback, the elder Cianelli helped Maryland to an undefeated season in 1951 and an upset win over No. 1-ranked Tennessee in the Sugar Bowl. The Volunteers, though, were named the national champions.

"Back then, they voted (in the polls) prior to the bowl game," the younger Cianelli said. "Tennessee ended up No. 1 even though Maryland beat them."

After high school, Cianelli wound up at Bowling Green, where he was a decathlete for four years before graduating in 1977. Following college, he moved to California to continue training. He also took a job as the track and field coach at San Marcos High School in Santa Barbara, Calif.

There were no teaching jobs available at the high school, and the coaching gig didn't pay, so Cianelli worked odd jobs to pay his rent and meals. He ran a commercial fishing boat owned by one of the teachers at the high school for a

year, hoisting crab pots out of the Pacific daily and selling his catch at the local market. He also hauled trash to the local dumps for \$30 a truckload, and he worked for a spell as a day laborer for a construction company.

"I think I did everything but fast food," he said.

After three years of coaching high school track, he decided to take a job as a volunteer coach at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo, one of the best Division II programs in the nation at the time. He still worked odd jobs to pay the bills, but he found himself falling more and more in love with coaching instead of competing.

Cianelli, who married wife Ellen, also a Maryland native, during this time, worked at Cal Poly for four years before getting hired as an assistant at Southern Methodist University. After seven years of working an array of jobs just to keep a roof over his head, a few meals in his belly and a few bucks in his pocket, he had finally landed a job that was going to provide a paycheck in two-week increments.

"It's funny thinking back, but it wasn't so funny back then," Cianelli said. "For me, it was a great experience. I wouldn't trade that for anything. It was definitely a struggle. That experience, not having much money and struggling, but at the same time wanting to coach, tested my will in terms how badly I wanted to do this. That helped me become strong in my focus."

Cianelli worked at SMU for 13 highly successful years. He worked with 123 All-Americans and 27 NCAA champions, and the Mustangs finished in the top 10 nationally on 16 separate occasions.

But he got the urge to run his own program, and while he and Ellen enjoyed the Dallas Metroplex area, they wanted a little slower pace to raise their two children – daughter Mariah and son Sebastian.

In the winter of 2001, Cianelli saw an advertisement in NCAA News, a magazine at the time produced by the NCAA. Virginia Tech was advertising for a director of track and field and cross country position, and the ad piqued Cianelli's curiosity.

"When I saw the Virginia Tech job advertised, I told my wife, 'This could be a really good situation,'" he said. "It's in a college town, and it's not far from where we grew up. I'm going to apply for it and see what happens."

Cianelli got the job, selling both Weaver and Gabbard on his plan to construct a successful track and field program at Tech as the school headed to the Big East.

Building such a program wasn't going to be easy. At the time, Tech offered the full complement of women's scholarships allowed by the NCAA – 18 – because of Title IX requirements. However,



only 4.5 scholarships were available for the men's program because of budgetary issues.

Try finding top-notch runners, jumpers, throwers and vaulters to compete in a major conference with only 4.5 scholarships. That's like going to Outback and trying to pay for dinner with tip money.

Cianelli, though, was undaunted. He lured Greg Jack, one of the top throws coaches in the country, from the University of Pittsburgh to Tech, and they decided to put most of their emphasis on the throwing events, recruiting mostly foreign athletes to help them.



“My goal was to be good in one area, and to me, that was the throws because I knew I had the right coach to do that and we had the facility and location to be able to develop that area,” Cianelli said. “That was our first focus.”

Cianelli also got Bob Phillips, a former Tech pole vaulter and a legendary pole vault coach, to stick around. Phillips had been helping Tech pole vaulters for nearly 20 years at the time Tech hired Cianelli, and Cianelli wanted to take advantage of his expertise. He also wanted him to start a program on the women's side, which Tech didn't have.

And Cianelli brought aboard Ben Thomas as the cross country coach. Thomas, a former Tech runner, had coached an NCAA individual national champion at Appalachian State and an NAIA individual national champion at Brevard College.

Still, the Hokies didn't exactly get out of the blocks quickly. Cianelli's inaugural men's team finished 10th at the Big East Indoor Championships, while the women's team came in 14th. At the outdoor meet, the Hokies came in ninth, while the women finished 12th. The next season at the Big East indoor meet, the men finished 12th and the women in 14th. At the

outdoor meet that season, the men came in 13th and the women in 12th.

But Cianelli and his staff stuck to their plan. In 2002, they lured Spyridon Jullien, a thrower from Greece, to the Tech campus, and in 2005 at the NCAA indoor meet, Jullien won the first of his four national championships. Jullien's accomplishments brought unprecedented attention to the Tech track and field program, and that, in turn, resulted in better results on the recruiting trail.

Tech's administration also helped the men's track and field program by loosening the purse strings. Weaver gradually allocated more money for scholarships, and Cianelli and his staff ultimately were able to offer eight scholarships. In 2007, Weaver increased the number to the current 12.6 – the NCAA maximum.

The coaches also stayed with it in recruiting, and their work paid off nicely. In 2006, they landed a relatively unheralded young woman from Richmond named Queen Harrison. In 2007, behind Harrison and a bunch of other talented women's student-athletes, the women's program recorded its first ACC championship, claiming the league's indoor title that February and the outdoor crown later that spring. The women's team won both again in 2008.

Harrison ultimately won three national championships, winning the 60-meter hurdles at the 2010 NCAA Indoor Championships and becoming the first woman in NCAA history to win the 100-meter and 400-meter hurdles at the 2010 NCAA Outdoor Championships.

“We knew she was a talented athlete,” Cianelli said. “We had no idea she would do what she did. That wasn't in any of our minds. I have to be honest with you.”

The men's team broke through in 2011 at the ACC indoor meet. Behind first-place finishes from pole vaulter Stephan Munz and thrower Alexander Ziegler, the Hokies rolled to the ACC crown. The men won their first outdoor title last spring and their first ACC cross country championship last fall.

Under Cianelli, the track and field programs have enjoyed meteoric rises. The men's program finished fifth nationally at the NCAA outdoor meet in both 2011 and 2012, while the women recorded a top-five finish at the 2010 outdoor meet. More impressively, Tech has claimed 13 individual national championships.

“I knew it would take time,” Cianelli said. “I knew it wasn't going to be one or two years and then we'd be at the top. It took a while, but we gradually got there. First, we got there with the women and then with the men. Now, it's a matter of trying to maintain what we've built, which is difficult.

“That's the satisfaction of coaching, when you get the program moving and get it going again. The coaches and the students are the program ... These championships go back to the coaches and the students. I just sit back and coordinate the big picture, but all this stuff here (pointing at the championship trophies in his office), really, every kid who has come through this program and every coach has a huge part in every one of those.”

Moments after the Tech men's team clinched this year's ACC indoor title at Rector Field House in thrilling fashion, after all the championship t-shirts had been passed out and the photos had been taken, Cianelli walked up to the pole vault area, where his team had gathered in waiting. He started addressing the group, the massive ACC championship trophy sitting on the ground at his feet.

Behind him, Will Mulherin, who sealed the team title with a victory in the 3,000-meter run, and Ziegler stealthily carried a Gatorade cooler and approached Cianelli – and then they proceeded to dump the contents all over Tech's unsuspecting coach.

Such a moment rarely happens in track and field. But it goes to show the respect that the track and field student-athletes at Tech have for the man who runs the operation.

“It's really the assistant coaches and the athletes who deserve the credit,” Cianelli said in typical humble fashion. “They're the ones doing the day-to-day training and preparation. I just kind of sit back and look at the big picture.”

Days after the event, Cianelli was named the ACC's coach of the year – for the eighth time. His style works, as the evidence points out. Cianelli gives his coaches a lot of flexibility when it comes to coaching and training and recruiting. In many ways, he resembles another great Tech coach – Frank Beamer. Perhaps there's a lesson to be learned. After all, the two of them have won 12 of Tech's 16 ACC team championships.

The Tech men's team now holds all three ACC crowns in track and field and cross country, having won the ACC's outdoor meet last spring, the cross country championship this past fall, and of course, the recent indoor meet. It has been an unbelievable run, especially in a league with Florida State, which won NCAA championships in 2006 and 2008 (outdoor).

“Dave has done a great job,” said Thomas, who has been Cianelli's cross country and distance coach since the beginning. “He's the best CEO you could have. He lets you do your job. He keeps everyone grounded. He does a lot of the business side of it and lets us coach. That type of leadership really works for the program.

“Coming from 12th in the Big East – or whatever we were when we were starting off – to winning three ACC championships in a row is quite a story. You don’t see it very often. We’re super proud. It’s very tough to do. We’re not a traditional track power, but look at the banners on the wall here (at Rector Field House). We hope to become one and feel like we’re on our way and excited to keep it going.”

How far can it go? That’s an interesting

question. Those top-five finishes at the NCAA Championships provoke the thought.

Could one of the track programs some day win the school’s first team national championship?

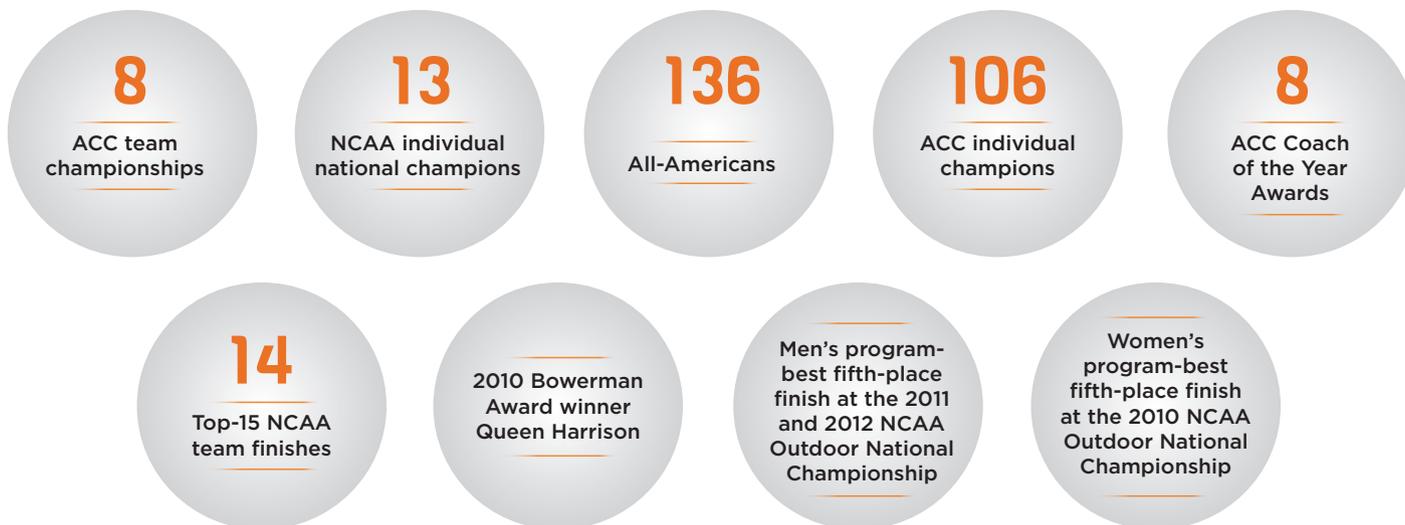
“I get asked that a lot by our fans, and I’m honest with them,” Cianelli said. “I tell them there is a chance, but I also tell them there is a big difference between fifth and first.

“I’ll never say we can never win one. That will always be a goal of mine, but our first order of

business is the conference and then we want to do as well as we can at the national level.”

Winning a national championship would be a dream come true, the fairytale ending to an improbable story.

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David Marone's 8-0 victory in the final match of the ACC Championships lifted the Tech wrestling squad to its first ACC title.



Tech claims first ACC wrestling title

The Hokies' David Marone comes through with a win in the final match to give Tech its first team wrestling crown since 1998

by **Jimmy Robertson**

As the 2013 ACC Wrestling Championships wound down, it became perfectly clear to those knowledgeable in all things ACC wrestling that the battle for the title was going to come down to Virginia Tech and Virginia.

Tech's chances ultimately hinged on the performance of an "old," married man who had overcome three serious injuries during his career.

David Marone, though, came up exceptionally large, dominating Virginia heavyweight Derek Papagianopoulos 8-0 in the final match of the

championships to give the Hokies their first wrestling team title since joining the league for the 2004-05 season and the program's first since 1998 when it won the Colonial Athletic Association.

Tech finished with 95.5 team points, edging out the Cavaliers, who finished with 90.5. Maryland came in third with 48.5.

The Hokies appeared to be in trouble heading into the finals, as they trailed by 10 points and headed into the final round with six wrestlers compared to UVa's eight. With no margin for

error, Tech won five weight classes, including four in which it went head to head with Virginia wrestlers, and after getting a little help from Maryland, the Hokies clinched it on Marone's dominating performance.

"Toughness prevailed tonight," Tech coach Kevin Dresser said after the final match. "Coming back when you have zero room for error is a credit to these 10 guys and my assistants. Great staff. Great team. ACC champions!"

Marone took all of the drama out of it early, taking down Papagianopoulos in the first period and then two more times to roll to the 8-0 major decision. His victory sent the Tech bench streaming onto the mat in celebration.

It marked a fitting end for Marone, who coaxed a sixth year from the NCAA to be eligible to wrestle this season. Last year, his season came to an end after he suffered a torn ACL in his left knee early in the season. That was his third major surgery since arriving in Blacksburg, coming on the heels of two shoulder operations.

"A lot of people were coming up to me and saying you couldn't have written a better script, which is true," Marone said. "I've had three major surgeries, and after tearing my ACL, I was pretty much done. Coach Dresser told me there was a chance I could come back and have a sixth year, but I wasn't having any of it. I was engaged and

moving on.

"But he talked me into going to the nationals, and me and my fiancé (Emily Puzey, the two got married last August) went. The next week, I went into Coach's office and told him my career wasn't over yet."

Tech's Jarrod Garnett got things started on the right note in the final round for the Hokies. The 125-pounder pinned North Carolina's Nathan Kraisser at 5:58 – and Kraisser came into the Championships as the top seed at 125.

Moments later, Nick Brascetta pulled out a key match for the Hokies. He was the top seed at 149 pounds, and he beat UVa's Derek Valenti 5-1 in a match that the Cavaliers had hoped to get.

That proved pivotal, as the Hokies held the top seed in the other three matches against the Cavaliers. At 157 pounds, Jesse Dong defeated UVa's Jedd Moore 2-1 to win that class, and then at 165 pounds, Tech's Pete Yates downed Virginia's Nate Sulzer 4-2 to take the crown in that class.

Virginia still had four finalists left, but the first three each lost to a Maryland competitor to keep Tech's lead at one point with the final match left. Those matches set up Marone's thrilling – and clinching – win.

"I had a lot of confidence because I had wrestled him (Papagianopoulos) before and beat

him," Marone said. "So I knew if I went out there and wrestled my best, I could beat him. My plan was to feel him out the first minute or so. But I felt good and my legs felt explosive, so I took my shot, and once I got to his legs, I knew I could finish it.

"Once it was finished, there was a sense of relief and excitement. I looked at my wife and my family, and the coaches and my teammates crowded me. It's definitely the highlight of my career."

Garnett was named the Most Outstanding Wrestler in the event after his two convincing wins at 125 pounds. In addition to beating Kraisser, he won a 10-2 major decision over Maryland's Shane Gentry in the semifinals.

Both Garnett and Dong won their third ACC titles, while Yates and Brascetta won their second. Marone won his first.

Nine of Tech's 10 starters qualified for the NCAA Championships. In addition to the five ACC individual champions, 133-pounder Erik Spjut, 141-pounder Zach Neibert, 174-pounder Austin Gabel and 184-pounder Nick Vetterlein all qualified. Neibert was second after losing 5-3 in the finals to North Carolina's Evan Henderson. Spjut finished third at 133 after beating N.C. State's Sam Speno 4-0 in the third-place match, while Gabel also finished third after beating Duke's Trey Adamson 4-2 in sudden victory. 



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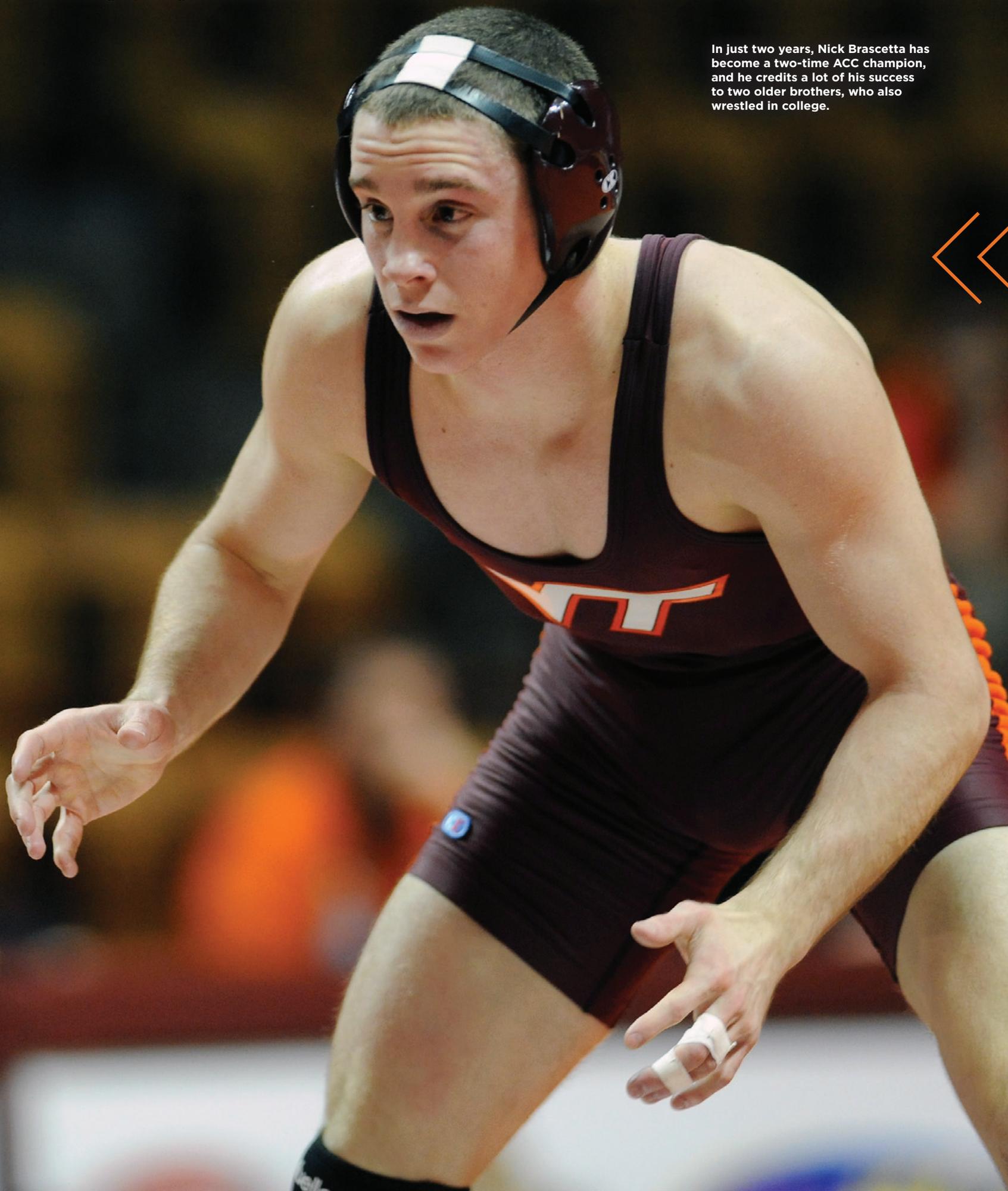


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In just two years, Nick Brascetta has become a two-time ACC champion, and he credits a lot of his success to two older brothers, who also wrestled in college.



BUILDING *on* FAMILY'S SUCCESS

Nick Brascetta's two older brothers wrestled in college, but already with two ACC titles, he's on his way to establishing himself as the family champion

by **MARC MULLEN**

The script couldn't have been written any better for then-freshman Nick Brascetta. He wrestled unattached through the first few weeks of the 2011-12 season, and then the coaches ended his redshirt season, putting him in the lineup.

The first match he would be competing in as an official Virginia Tech wrestler would be at No. 10 Ohio State, virtually a stone's throw from the home of Brascetta's parents in Columbus, and he would face 16th-ranked Cam Tessari in the 149-pound bout.

"Yeah, that match was basically in my back yard," Brascetta said. "After I graduated from St. Paris, which is about an hour west of Columbus, my parents moved back into Columbus, so I literally live 12 minutes from the OSU campus.

"Going there as a true freshman and in my home state was extremely exciting to me, on top of the fact that it was my first match ever in a Virginia Tech singlet. I knew there would be tons of people I knew there – my friends from high school, my coaches, family and family friends. Some of them would be rooting for me, but the majority wouldn't be because I didn't have the OSU singlet on.

"I just went into it as any other match, though. The fact that we were in Ohio didn't change the way I wrestled or anything like that. I think it just made the experience that much more fun and important. But at the same time, in the back of my mind, I think I wanted to go back to Ohio and show those fans what they missed out on by not having me on their team. It was kind of a pride thing."

Brascetta's road to that moment was long and winding, and he credits his two older brothers for helping him along that path. It's a journey that has seen the current sophomore win back-to-back ACC titles, be named the 2012 ACC Wrestling Rookie of the Year and qualify for two NCAA Wrestling Championships.

Nick was born in Philadelphia, the youngest of three boys for Michael and Marita Brascetta, and lived there until he was 4. He was basically born into a wrestling family. His dad only wrestled one year in high school because his mother thought it was too tough of a sport and made him quit.

However, Michael's passion for the sport never ceased, and he continued to follow it into his adult years. The family continues to tell the story to this day of how Nick's two older brothers got into wrestling.

"My middle brother was like 4 years old, and my dad was watching it with both of my brothers," Nick said. "And my middle brother looked at my dad and said – he couldn't pronounce his 'r's' right when he was a kid – 'Dad, I want to wrestle.'

"My parents tell that story all the time, and that's literally how it started right there. So my dad was like, 'Okay, we'll take you in.' And so they took my older brother and him in – I wasn't even born yet – and so, they were wrestling. Then when I was born, they were always wrestling, so it was something that I wanted to do. You always want to do what your older brothers do."

Nick credits his brothers for getting him into the sport and for almost every other success he has accomplished on the mat. After moving from Philadelphia, with a brief stop in Columbus, the Brascetta family settled into Aurora, Colo. – not

really a hot bed for wrestling talent. Interestingly enough, though, two other current Hokies call the Centennial State home (David Marone and Austin Gabel).

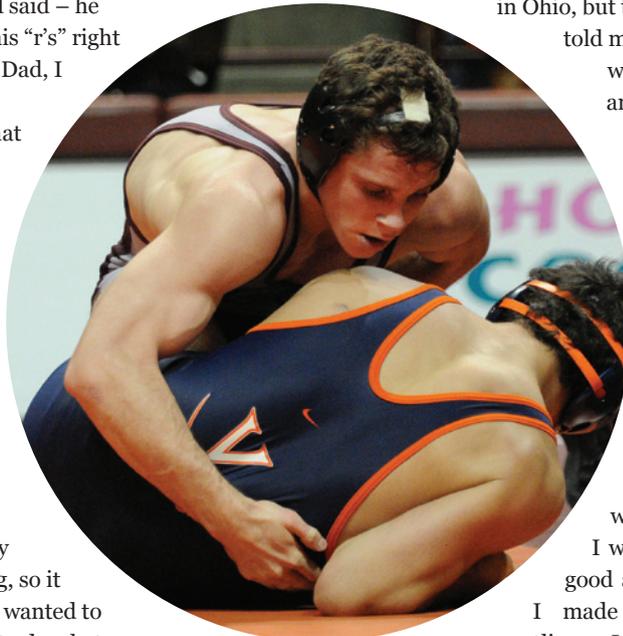
For almost the next 10 years, the three boys honed their skills in the sport, which helped the two older brothers earn spots on the Oregon State roster. After Jon graduated from Grandview High School and followed Dan to Corvallis, Ore., the youngest son and his parents moved back to the Columbus area, much to the disappointment of Nick.

"The move wasn't what I wanted, moving from the suburbs in Colorado to a farm town in Ohio, but they (his brothers)

told me that I could deal with everything else and that I'll get over it, but this will present you with an opportunity that you will be forever grateful," he said. "And of course, it didn't hit me then.

"So we moved to Ohio, and when I got there, I wanted to be really good at something, and I made that something wrestling. I just dedicated myself for four years, and to wrestle

for Graham (High School), that's unbelievable and that's why I'm here. It presented me with the opportunity to wrestle for a Division I school and get a scholarship and to help pay for schooling. So when I moved to Graham, that's when everything



started clicking.”

It clicked so much that he became a two-time state champion in Ohio, which included a 45-0 mark as a sophomore and winning the 103-pound title. He posted more than 150 wins in his high school career and won a state title at 140 pounds his senior year.

His success continued through the first two weekends at Tech, placing third at the Hokie Open with a 7-1 mark and then winning the Wolfpack Open at NC State, as he defeated a two-time NCAA qualifier and an All-American the previous year in Virginia’s Derek Valenti in the finals.

“I was technically redshirting my freshman year. I wrestled both of those two tournaments unattached,” Brascetta said. “Coming in to college, I knew that, because of where I wrestled in high school, I was prepared to wrestle at the highest level right out of the gate, so it was never a question for me.

“But coming in, I talked to the coaches about starting the year redshirting, with the possibility of that being pulled off because the 149-pound weight class was kind of up for grabs. And they said, ‘We’ll see how it goes.’”

Back to November 20, 2011, and Brascetta took the mat with the No. 15 Hokies trailing the Buckeyes 18-6 with just three matches remaining. He went out and faced Tessari and was leading the nationally ranked wrestler, who would eventually become a 2012 All-American, 4-3 in the waning seconds of the match.

However, with one last effort, Tessari recorded a takedown with four seconds left, and Brascetta was injured on the sequence. He missed the next 10 weeks.

In his second match back, he upset the No. 9 wrestler in country, Nick Lester of Oklahoma, 5-3, in sudden victory. Despite an “official” 6-2 record heading into the 2012 ACC Championships in Chapel Hill, N.C., Brascetta earned the No. 3 seed. He went 3-0 and won the 149-pound title with an 8-4 decision over Matt Nereim of NC State in the final to earn a bid to the NCAA Championships.

By his own words, though, he was disappointed with his 1-2 showing at the national meet, which included an upset of ninth-seeded David Habat of Edinboro in the first round.

“I won at the ACCs and then went to nationals and went 1-2, which I was not happy with at all,” he said. “I’m glad I stuck with it last year, even after the injury, to get that experience at the national level.

“This year, I’ve been healthy and hopefully that stays the same. I’ve been wrestling all year, hard practices, hard tournaments, wrestling ranked guys, and that all prepares you for March. Everything that I do during the regular season, I know that it’s preparation for March and

the NAAs. So I am really looking forward to wrestling there again.”

At the 2013 ACC Championships, Brascetta was the No. 1 seed and easily advanced to the finals, where he met an old foe – Virginia’s Valenti. It was a 5-1 victory for the Hokie, which advanced him to this year’s NAAs and helped the team to its first ever ACC team title.

It’s almost a certain that his trip to Des Moines, Iowa, this year will include his entire family. They have been at the biggest meets he’s wrestled – last year’s NAAs and the 2012 Midlands, which Brascetta won after beating a two-time NCAA finalist for Iowa in Montell Marion in the semis and No. 2 Donnie Vinson of Binghamton in the finals.

“If you win that, people know that you’re really good,” he said. “So I wrestled really good, but more than anything, I’m proud of the way I wrestled there. It was great to win, but I was happy with the way I did it, and I can use that in March. Ever since then, I knew that was how I had to wrestle the rest of the year and in March to be an NCAA champion, and I’ve been using that to fuel me. It’s all about getting to that point and peaking.

“But my entire family was at the Midlands, too. My brothers drove up with my parents to Chicago and watched me there, which was awesome. I won the tournament and my brothers – my idols – were there.”

Combining unattached and attached records, Brascetta has already won 49 matches at Virginia Tech in just under two seasons and owns a 27-4 mark this year.

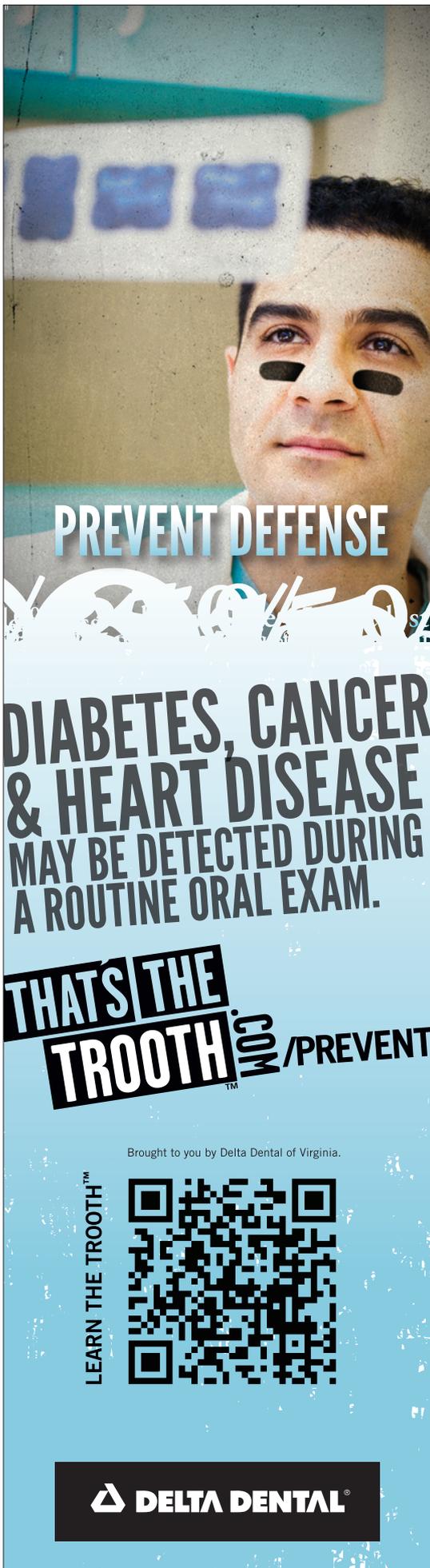
Dan’s best season was a 17-win season and he was victorious in 39 total matches, while Jon’s best year saw him win 18 matches and 42 in his career. However, Nick will NEVER say he is the best of the family.

“Everyone always asked me who do I think is the better wrestler of those two because they are so close, and I never answer the question,” he said. “People ask them all the time who’s better, and they are always like, ‘Our little brother is the best.’

“My response to that is that I wouldn’t be where I am today if it wasn’t for those two, so I give them the credit most of the time because they really do deserve it. It’s never a competition between us. I’ll joke with them about how old they are and that they couldn’t wrestle me now, but it’s nothing serious.

“It’s kind of a lifelong dream of ours to live together in the same neighborhood. We’ll never know what’s going to happen in the future, but I think someday, we’ll be living down the street from each other.”

Brotherly Love? Absolutely. They don’t even have to go back to Philly to find that. 



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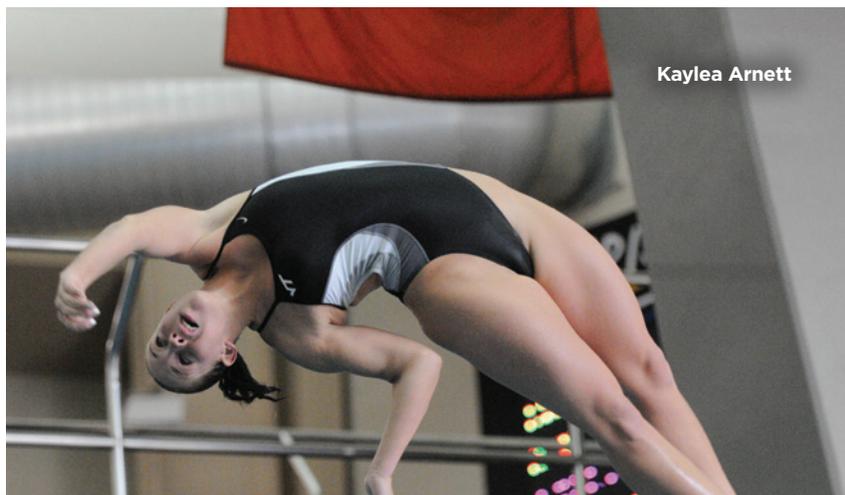


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Hokies again make splash at ACC Championships

The Tech men's swimming and diving team finished second for the second straight year, while the women's team was second as well – its best performance ever at the league's meet

by Jimmy Robertson

The Virginia Tech swimming and diving programs continue to make waves in the ACC, as both the Tech men and the Hokie women finished in second place at the ACC Swimming and Diving Championships held at the Greensboro Aquatic Center in Greensboro, N.C., the final two weeks of February.

The men finished in second place for the second consecutive year, while the women's second-place finish marked the program's best finish since the Hokies joined the ACC.

"On the women's side, I was pleased that we pulled it together," Skinner said. "NC State, Florida State and UNC, all three had beaten us pretty soundly in a dual meet, and we had to overcome some things within our team. They (his swimmers and divers) did a great job of coming together for the cause.

"On the men's side, we were second last year. I feel like our men and myself wanted to be in position to win. That was our goal, so of course, there is some natural disappointment when we realized that was going to be difficult to achieve. But that makes our men's performance the last day and a half really special. They didn't give up and didn't roll over and quit. If anything, they charged out better than ever. So that leads us to believe we can do this. This isn't an empty dream we're chasing here. We want to win conference titles. Second is fine, but it's not what we want."

On the men's side, the Hokies accumulated 597 points to finish behind in-state rival Virginia, which finished with 759.5. North Carolina claimed third

with 549 points.

Seniors Gregory Mahon and Zach McGinnis paced the Hokies with a series of superb performances. Both won two individual medals and helped three relay teams earn medals.

Mahon, a Medford, N.J., native, finished second in the 100-yard butterfly, setting a new school record with a time of 46.22 seconds. He just missed first place by two-thousandths of a second. He also claimed a bronze medal in the 200 individual medley, finishing in a time of 1:45.66.

McGinnis, from Raleigh, N.C., broke two school records in claiming his individual medals. He won silver in the 100 backstroke with a time of 46.28, and he took bronze in the 200 backstroke with a time of 1:42.34.

Both were part of the 200 medley, 400 medley and 200 freestyle relay teams that all won medals. The 400 medley quartet of Mahon, McGinnis, Emmett Dignan and Joe Bonk won gold with a record-breaking time of 3:07.17. The time set a school, conference and championship record, and automatically qualified the group for the NCAA Championships.

The 200 medley relay team of Mahon, McGinnis, Bonk and Nathan Hoisington swam the event in a time of 1:25.60 to finish second. The quartet automatically qualified for a spot at the NCAA Championships, while also setting a new school record. Also, the 200 freestyle relay team of McGinnis, Bonk, Mahon and Dignan claimed third in a time of 1:18.06.

"Zach has overcome so much this year, with his

epilepsy diagnosis and challenges with injuries," Skinner said. "To get a silver and a bronze and lead off a relay that won was just awesome. And Greg is so good and so important to us as a leader and contributor."

The 800 freestyle relay team also managed to medal. The quartet of Morgan Latimer, Owen Burns, Nick Tremols and Lucas Bureau swam the event in a time of 6:26.80, setting a new school record and finishing fourth. However, NC State's relay team was disqualified, enabling the Hokies to win a bronze.

Other individuals who placed for the Hokies included freshman Michal Szuba, who claimed two bronze medals. He finished third in the 500 freestyle with a personal-best time of 4:19.03 and then shattered the school record in the 1,650 freestyle by 15 seconds. He finished third with a time of 15:00.14.

Latimer added another individual medal to the Hokies' count, finishing second in the 200 butterfly. He swam it in 1:43.85, breaking a school record that he had set in the preliminaries.

In the diving events, Tech's Logan Shinholser had three second-place finishes. The senior from Burtonsville, Md., finished behind Duke's Nick McCrory in the 1-meter, 3-meter and platform diving events, as McCrory – who did not participate in last year's ACC Championships while preparing for the Summer Olympics in London last July (he and David Boudia won the bronze in the synchronized 10-meter platform) – took gold in all three.

Shinholser was second in the 1-meter event with 413.50 points, just more than 20 points behind McCrory, who won with 433.95 points. Tech's Ryan Hawkins claimed fifth in the event, while the Hokies' Jared Butts was seventh.

In the 3-meter competition, Shinholser finished with 439.65 points, while McCrory won with 498.60. Butts and Hawkins finished sixth and seventh, respectively, in the event.

In the platform event, Shinholser finished with 464.35 points, while McCrory finished with 515.20 to claim gold. Hawkins came in third in the event, and John Trope finished 10th.

"Logan is one of our greatest performers in history," Skinner said. "He's going to be missed on multiple levels ... I'd argue he's one of the greatest student-athletes in the history of Virginia Tech athletics, and not just in our sport."

On the women's side, Tech won five events, amassing 536 total points, which enabled the Hokies to improve on last year's fourth-place showing. Virginia won the women's crown with 832 points, while North Carolina finished in third behind the Hokies with 508 points.

Heather Savage, Weronika Paluszek and Kaylea Arnett all won their events to pace the Hokies, and the 200 and 400 medley relay teams also won for Tech.

Savage, a senior from Canandaigua, N.Y., enjoyed

a huge meet in her final ACC Championships. She became a two-time champion in the 100 butterfly, as she swam a school, ACC meet and championship record, and an automatic qualifying NCAA 'A' time of 51.78 seconds. Savage also took third in the 200 butterfly, finishing in a time of 1:56.54 and breaking her own school record in the process.

Savage also played a role in both of the medley relay teams winning gold medals. In the 200 medley, Savage, Sabrina Benson, Alyssa Bodin and Katarina Filova edged Miami by 15-hundredths of a second to win. The time (1:38.30) set a school record, and more importantly, was an NCAA 'A' standard time, thus qualifying all four for the NCAA Championships. Tech's women last qualified a relay team for the NCAA Championships in 2010 when the 800 freestyle relay group qualified.

In the 400 medley relay, Savage, Benson, Filova and Paluszek swam a school-record time of 3:34.41 to win. Thus, they became a part of Tech history, as the performance marked the first time that Tech has won two relay events at the same ACC Championships.

"The thing that is amazing about Heather is her will, her sheer desire to perform and race," Skinner said. "It's unparalleled. That's the difference between good swimmers and the best, and that's how she can get herself into that zone that's beyond coaching. We're going to miss her greatly."

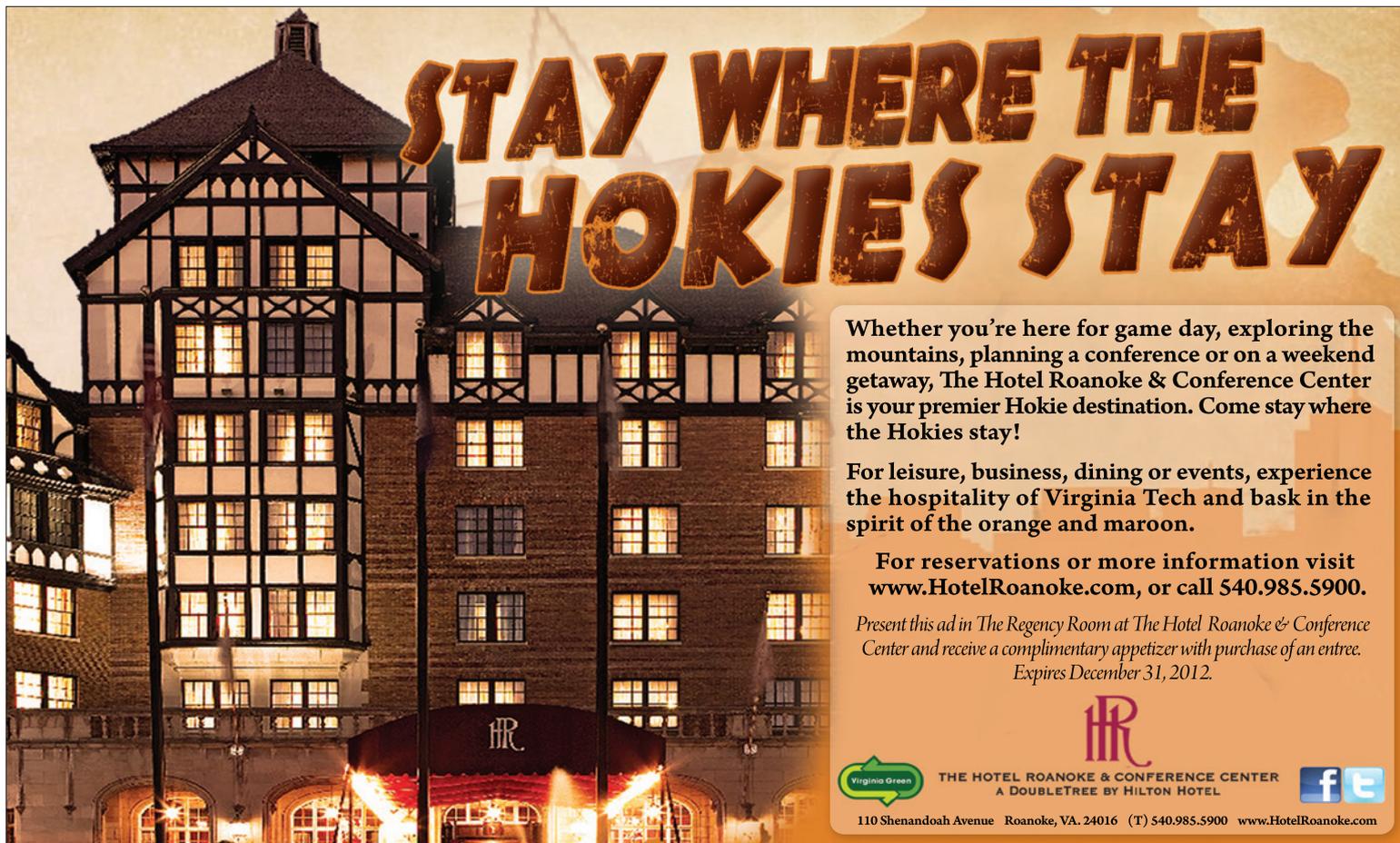
Paluszek, a freshman from Wroclaw, Poland, made a name for herself in this competition as well. In addition to participating on the 400 medley relay team, she won the 200 breaststroke, breaking a four-year-old school record with a time of 2:10.12. She also took home a bronze medal in the 100 breaststroke with a time of 1:00.78.

Arnett, a sophomore from Spring, Texas, led the Hokies' diving efforts and was named the ACC's Female Diver of the Year. She won the 1-meter competition for the second straight year, leading the entire way en route to a score of 327.70 points, and she finished second in the 3-meter event with a score of 364.90 points.

Arnett also placed fifth in the platform event with 268.55 points. Kelli Stockton and Sara Mokhtari took sixth (257.85) and eighth (244.50), respectively, in the same event.

"If you look at where we (both programs) were when we first joined the ACC, at the back of the pack, and now we're second and second, I'm proud of us," Skinner said. "I'm happy we're in the upper echelon of the conference, which I think is important for the athletics department."

"Second is not the position I want to be in, though. That's not what drives me. I want to win. I want to win titles for Virginia Tech. I can't be satisfied. If we get to the point where we win a title, then I'll be happy. But not quite yet." 



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Mikey Moyers is the Hokies' lone senior and will be counted on to lead this team this spring.



GOING FOR IT

After making the NCAA Men's Golf Championships a year ago, the Hokies have nearly all of their roster back and high expectations for the upcoming season

by Jimmy Robertson

On the day of Jan. 31, Virginia Tech golf coach Jay Hardwick and the distinguished golf staff at the Hokies' beautiful home golf course, the Pete Dye River Course, stood in the clubhouse and watched helplessly as the New River, aided by torrential rainfall, poured out of its banks and engulfed a portion of the course.

The flooding ruined some bunkers and left strands of silt in fairways and on greens. It, combined with normally unpredictable Southwest Virginia winter weather, also kept the golf team from practicing in preparation for the Hokies' spring season.

"We've only played three rounds of golf," Hardwick said just days before the Hokies opened their spring season at the Puerto Rico Classic in San Juan, Puerto Rico on Feb. 17 – an event in which they finished seventh as a team. "That's it. That's the least we've ever played (before a season)."

Fortunately, though, the River Course has been cleaned up, and the flooding certainly hasn't submerged the Hokies' 2013 expectations, as Hardwick returns four of five golfers who participated in the program's surprising run to the Division I NCAA Men's Golf Championships last spring.

Paced by smooth-swinging freshman Scott Vincent, Tech finished a respectable 24th in the event held at the famed Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif. Vincent shot 6-over-par, tying him for 45th position in the individual competition.

The Hokies lost Blake Redmond off last season's team, but other than Redmond, the entire roster returns. The roster includes just one senior in Mikey Moyers, but Vincent, fellow sophomore Trevor Cone and junior Bryce Chalkley all participated in Tech's run last year. So this young, but experienced, group won't be laying up when it comes to goals for this spring – a return to the Division I NCAA Men's Golf Championships.

"Absolutely," Hardwick said of his team's lofty goals. "I was very encouraged to think we were going to have four of those five guys returning (going into the 2012-13 season), and those have been the guys who have been the most consistent."

"We're still a young team, with only one senior. In the starting lineup, we've got a senior, a junior, two sophomores and a freshman (Maclain Huge). While we're young, four of those guys have played in the national championship. So that says a lot there."

Hardwick's team got off to a strong start this past fall, finishing eighth or better in all five tournaments. The Hokies won the Marshall Invitational, shooting 16-under-par as a team,



Scott Vincent played well at Riviera Country Club during the NCAA Championships and carried that over in the fall when he recorded two top-five finishes.

and they won the VCU Shootout as well, where they shot 14-over. The program notched its first victory since March of 2010.

Not surprisingly, Vincent played well this fall and headlines the group as the Hokies' top player. The sophomore from Harare, Zimbabwe, started 13 events as a freshman and really played well down the stretch. He finished third at the NCAA South Central Regional held in Bowling Green, Ky., and then capped his rookie year with the strong showing at Riviera.

This past fall, Vincent recorded two top-five finishes and a top-10 in four tournaments. He missed one tournament while competing for Zimbabwe at the World Amateur Team Championships held in Turkey. He shot 2-under-par in that tournament and finished in 32nd.

"His career changed at the ACC Championships (where Vincent finished 21st)," Hardwick said. "He played well there, and he played extremely well at the regional. Then he played pretty well at the NAAs, and he's played good since then. So postseason play helped him take it to another level."

"He should be ready. He's been home to Zimbabwe over winter break, and he's had the opportunity to play in great weather. He should be ready more than any of our other players. It was summer in Zimbabwe, so weather wasn't an issue for him."

Vincent figures to get plenty of help from Moyers, the lone senior and arguably the most talented player on the squad. Moyers, who missed the final round of the NCAA Championships

because of an illness, has been a little inconsistent in his career, but Hardwick expects a big senior season from him.

Moyers got started on a positive note this fall when he finished tied for fifth at the VCU Shootout after shooting a 1-over-par for the tournament. He also recorded a top-10 finish at the Marshall Invitational and a top-20 finish at the Brickyard Collegiate Golf Championship held in Macon, Ga.

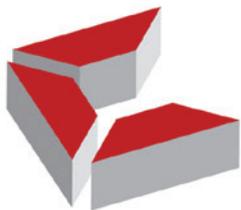
In Puerto Rico, Moyer started the spring season in fine fashion, shooting 7-under-par for the tournament. He and Vincent finished in a tie for fifth place overall.

"I hope so," Hardwick said when asked if this will be the year Moyers puts everything together. "He's playing well. He's a senior. He's got the talent. I really look for Mikey to have a good spring."

Cone and Chalkley solidify the third and fourth spots in Hardwick's lineup. Cone, a sophomore from Concord, N.C., actually led the team in scoring last season with a 73.13 average, and he made the Golf Coaches Association of America All-East Region squad after a year in which he recorded five top-20 finishes.

Cone recorded two top-10 finishes this fall. He finished sixth at the Marshall Invitational and sixth at the Brickyard Collegiate Golf Championship.

"He's the one who's got the capability to shoot a really low number," Hardwick said. "His fall was a little disappointing in as much as what he did last year. But he seems to be playing pretty



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"He was our player of the year last year and our rookie of the year, so certainly, he's a guy we count on. His golf swing is so natural and so good. He can be one of our low shooters because he hits so many quality golf shots."

Chalkley, the junior from Richmond, provides the consistency Hardwick likes. The young man doesn't shoot low scores that often, but he also rarely shoots high ones.

This past fall, Chalkley recorded two top-20 finishes and one top-10, claiming 10th at the Marshall Invitational. To provide evidence of his consistency, he only shot one round in the 60s this fall, but only two rounds worse than 75 – and none worse than 78.

"He's the only player on the team whose score counted every round this fall," Hardwick said. "Bryce is playing pretty well. He's a hard worker, and I never worry about him. He never gives up out there. He never gets down and lets a shot or two get away because he's upset. He's really a grinder. That's why you see his score counting all the time. He's gotten better every semester. He reminds me of (former player) Johnson Wagner in how much he's improved."

The rest of the roster includes redshirt juniors Marc MacDonald and Jacob Everts, sophomore Miles Curley and freshman Maclain Huge. Huge (pronounced hugh-gee), the tall, long bomber from Lovettsville, Va., earned the fifth spot in the Hokies' lineup following a solid fall in which he recorded three top-25 finishes.

Huge struggled in Tech's last two fall tournaments, but Hardwick thinks enough of Huge's potential to keep him in the lineup.

"He's got unbelievable talent," Hardwick said. "He's got as much upside as any player I've ever had. He has struggled with his swing, and when you've got a kid who is that big and that long, when it gets going sideways, it's going a long way off line. His last two tournaments, he played poorly.

"He's probably the hardest worker on the team. From the day the fall season was over, he was down in our team center hitting balls every day. He doesn't feel like he can miss a day. He'll get it figured out. I think he'd be the first to tell you he was disappointed with his fall season. Right now, it's a work in progress with him."

While he set his lineup pretty much before the season started, Hardwick made some changes to his schedule – largely because of the university's academic calendar. The school's spring break is a week later this year, thus forcing the golf team to miss its normal early March trip to Pinehurst, N.C., for the Pinehurst Intercollegiate and its annual outing with the "Hackin' Hokies," a fundraising group that

supports Tech golf. Instead, the Hokies will play in the Mission Inn Spring Spectacular held at the Mission Inn Resort in Howey-in-the-Hills, Fla., on March 16-17.

Also, the River Landing Intercollegiate, held in Wallace, N.C., was cancelled this year. Hardwick liked playing in that tournament because it occurred just a couple of weeks before the ACC Championships. Forced to adjust, he got the Hokies into a 36-hole event, the Navy Spring Invitational held at the U.S. Naval Academy Golf Club in Annapolis, Md.

"I've never played a two-day, 36-hole event," Hardwick said. "I don't particularly like them. A good team can have a bad round, and a bad team can have a good round, and you can't catch up in two rounds.

"But the coach at Navy is a good friend of mine, and they have a really fine golf course, one of the top-25 college courses in the country. It's a week before the ACC's, and it's on the weekend, so we'll only miss one day of school. A lot of our alumni live up there, and we don't get up there much, so hopefully they'll be able to come and watch."

Hardwick, though, is more worried about what may transpire later in the spring. The school's exam schedule coincides with the NCAA Regionals, meaning that the players will be coordinating exams while prepping for the regionals, provided they make regional play – something they've done the past six years.

"That happened to us four years ago when we went to Texas for the regionals," Hardwick said. "We had to take exams early and study and practice, and we were just useless (in the regional). We just played terrible, and we're going to have this for the next two years."

There is a lot of golf to be played between now and then, however. Tech hopes to better its finishes from last spring when it finished seventh or better in every tournament. The Hokies also hope to fare better at the ACC Championships. A year ago, behind Redmond's third-place finish in the individual race, Tech came in tied for fourth.

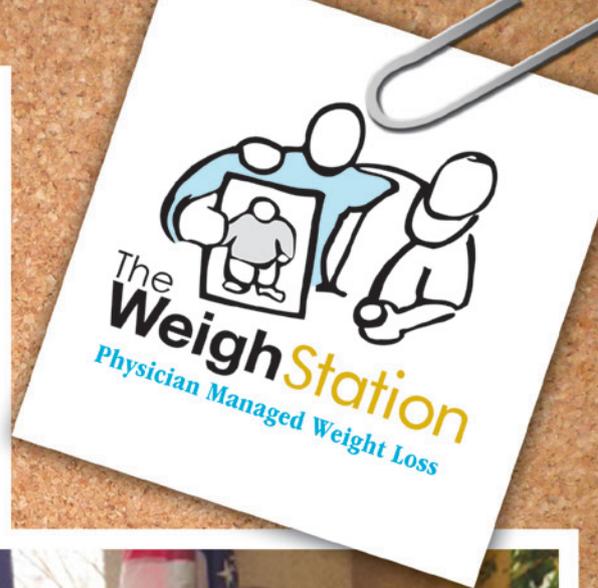
As usual, the league is loaded. As of press time, Duke and Georgia Tech stood in the top 10, according to Golfweek, with Florida State and Clemson in the top 20. Wake Forest and North Carolina sat in the top 31.

"It's always one of the best in the country," Hardwick said of the ACC.

But the Hokies have talent, too. Hardwick only hopes they have more than enough to overcome poor weather, a flood, a different schedule and stout competition. After all, a seventh straight NCAA regional appearance hangs in the balance. 

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