

INSIDE

HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



WHAT'S INSIDE:
A Q&A with new Tech
offensive coordinator
Scot Loeffler

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The Virginia Tech women's lacrosse squad was fired up for its game against No. 3 North Carolina, and the Hokies gave the Tar Heels everything they wanted before falling 18-11 in Blacksburg. The Hokies are still on track for their third straight winning season.





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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 really enjoy attending the games and have met some nice folks over the years at the games (both home and away), including Hokies and fans who support other schools. We have also met a lot of student-athletes and some of their parents, which we probably would not have had the opportunity to do if we were not involved with the athletics programs.

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

A: We usually tailgate with several other families and friends. Usually the two of us families that also have residences in Christiansburg set up the tailgate areas early so we can secure an area that will accommodate all of the group members and their families. The only tradition that we have is that one member of the

group always is in charge of bringing the “spudnuts” – donuts made of potato flour. Charlottesville has the only Spudnuts store that we know of. We also take them to away games and treat other fans to them at those games.

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

A: It was in my freshman year when I went to my first Virginia Tech varsity football game in the fall of 1965 (we had freshmen teams back then). Lane Stadium was under construction at the time and the students sat on the East “bank” in bleachers that season. Growing up in Charlottesville, I had attended a number of UVa games. But the atmosphere at Tech was different. The Corps provided a lot of school spirit (I was not in the Corps), and the civilian students also had a lot of spirit at the games (including other “spirits”) that

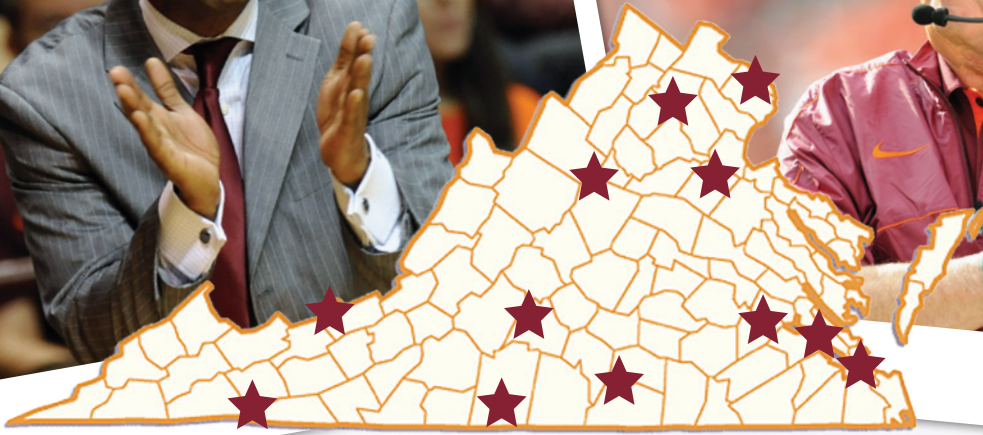
was not evident at the UVa games back then (except for the “spirits”).

Q: What has it been like being involved with the Charlottesville Hokie Club given that you are located in Charlottesville, Va.?

A: Actually, it has been great, particularly since we have won most of the annual football game matchups with UVa over the years I have been president. But not withstanding that part, there are a lot of Hokies in the Charlottesville area, and it is always good to meet and converse with them at the local Hokie Club events and Tech sporting events.

Q: When you head into town for a game, are there any “must-do” things for you and your family?

A: On football weekends, the first thing to do is to get the details straight for the tailgate. By having a local residence, it makes it easier to plan for the football and other games.



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APRIL 16

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APRIL 18

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APRIL 23

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APRIL 25

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MAY 1

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MAY 1

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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.

Green earns spot on AP All-America squad

The accolades continue to come in for Tech guard Erick Green, as the senior was named to The Associated Press' All-America third team in early April. He joined Dell Curry, who was a second-team selection in 1986, as the only Hokies to make one of the first three AP All-America squads.

Green was named the ACC Player of the Year in March by the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association, a group of media members who cover ACC schools. Green scored in double figures in every game this past season and led the nation in scoring. He averaged 25.0 points per game and shot 47.5 percent from the field. Green set a new school record with 801 points scored this season, breaking the old mark of 785 set by Bimbo Coles in the 1989-90 season. In the regular-season finale at Wake Forest, he scored his 1,700th career point and moved past Ace Custis into 10th place in career scoring at Virginia Tech.

Byington takes Georgia Southern head job

Mark Byington, an assistant coach on Tech coach James Johnson's staff, was named the head coach at Georgia Southern on April 1.

Byington, a native of nearby Salem, Va., came to Tech after working as an assistant at the College of Charleston for nine years. His time at the College of Charleston included seven seasons under Bobby Cremins, also the former Georgia Tech coach. Byington was 7-4 as Charleston's interim coach in the 2011-12 season when Cremins took a leave of absence.

Byington replaces Charlton "C.Y." Young, who was fired after posting a 43-84 record in four seasons. The Eagles were 14-19 overall and 7-11 in Southern Conference play this season. 

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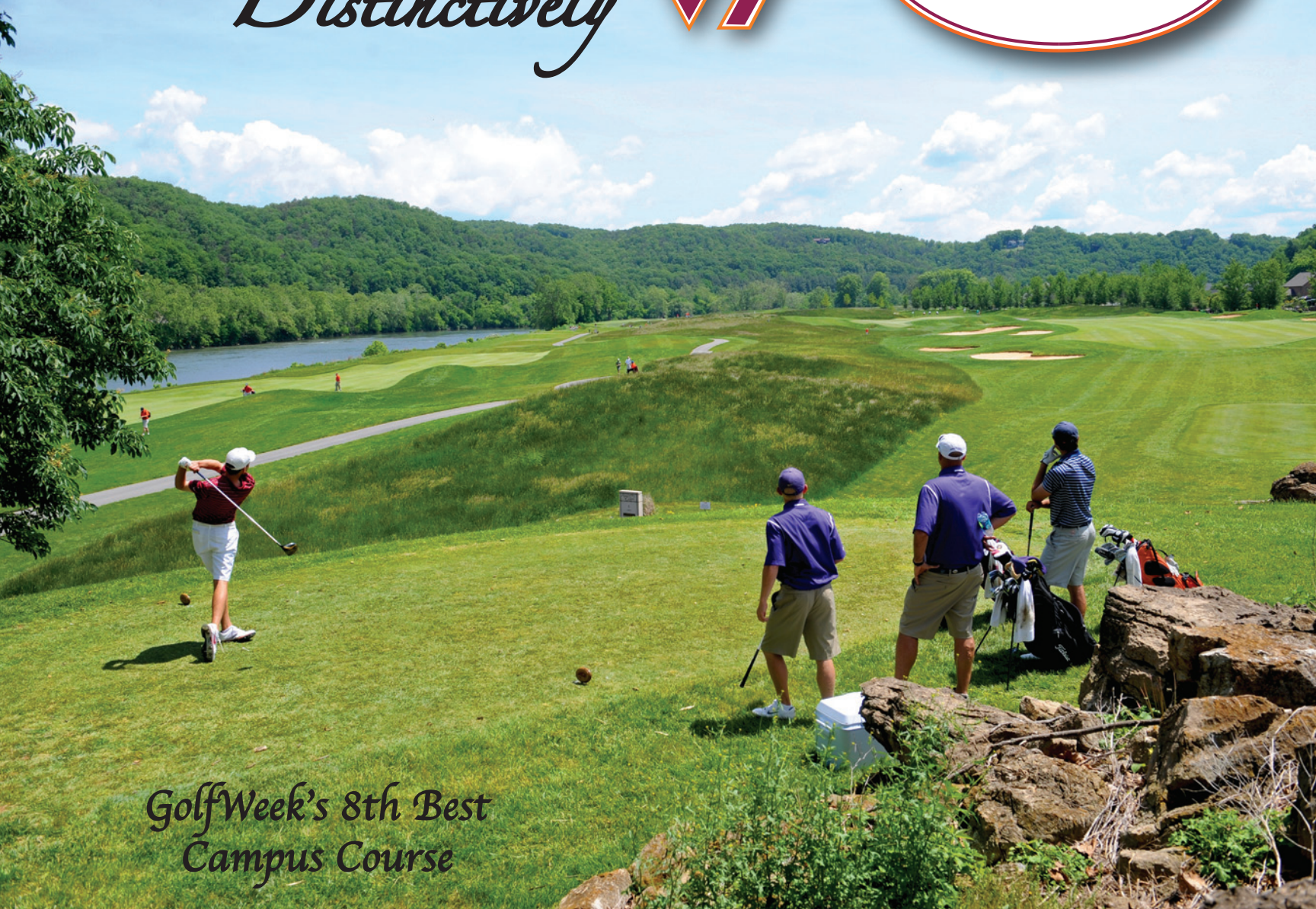
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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Tech running backs use spring to put past behind them

By everyone's standards, J.C. Coleman ranks as one of the good guys on Tech's football team, someone who, yes, carries a football, but also a big smile and a bigger heart.

Yet when the conversation turns toward the Hokies' rushing attack from a season ago, Coleman's facial expression turns sour.

"Not acceptable," he said.

It's a sore subject to be sure. But to Coleman's credit, and to the rest of the crowded backfield's credit, they do not run from what happened.

For those who need a reminder, Tech's running game struggled last year like none other in coach Frank Beamer's tenure. The Hokies rushed for 1,896 yards and averaged 3.7 yards per carry. To put that into perspective, David Wilson rushed for nearly that (1,709 yards) the previous season, and he averaged nearly six yards per tote.

Quarterback Logan Thomas led the team with 524 yards rushing, becoming the first Tech quarterback since 1965 to lead the team in rushing. Coleman ranked behind him with 492 yards, and he had the Hokies' only 100-yard rushing game the entire season.

Running backs don't take it too kindly when the quarterback leads the team in rushing, even one as good as Thomas. Just ask them.

"Quarterbacks shouldn't be leading the team in rushing," Coleman said. "We were all upset at that.

"To not have a 1,000-yard back - and I think I led the running backs with 400-and-some yards - that's not acceptable to me. We've got to be better, and we will this year."

There are reasons aplenty to think that will be the case. For starters, Coleman and Michael Holmes played as freshmen last season, getting on-the-job training. Obviously, they and everyone else continue to learn Scot Loeffler's offense, but this season, they won't be held back by the speed of the game and the physical nature in which it's played.

Also, the gut of Tech's offensive line returns, as guards Brent Benedict and David Wang and centers Andrew Miller and Caleb Farris return in the interior. Injuries, particularly one to Miller, probably set back Tech's running game more than anything else last season. Tech's staff tried to mix and match up front, but the unit just never meshed.

Finally, the running backs appear highly motivated. They certainly ran that way in the early part of spring practice (before this issue went to press). Competition appears to be driving them, as any of the five - Coleman, Holmes, Tony Gregory, Trey Edmunds and Chris Mangus - could be a lead back.

"We know that was one of our weaknesses," Holmes said of the running game. "We know we've got to get better at that. We have to do extra stuff that will get us better. Whatever it takes, that's what we're trying to do."

Holmes is an interesting figure. He started the season opener against Georgia Tech a year ago after a great spring and August. But he never got going, and in the final four games, particularly because of an injury, he carried the ball just once.

He knows he's better than that, and so, too, do

the coaches. He wants to show his talent again this spring.


"I didn't do so well. That's my opinion," he admitted about last year. "I think I could have hit the holes harder and ran a little faster on some plays. This year, that's what I'm trying to focus on.

"I think it was just being new. Last year, I had some pressure on me and I tried to do too much instead of just being myself. Now I'm comfortable and just playing football."

Tech running backs coach Shane Beamer ideally wants to whittle the five down to two or three guys by the end of spring practice and then get them ready for Alabama once August practices start. He said he blamed himself for some of last year's issues, saying he should have established a pecking order from the start.

Truthfully, though, the running backs establish the pecking order with how they perform on the field. One or two of them need to take control and distance themselves from the pack. Everyone knows a coach plays his best, but someone needs to be that "best."

This group possesses size, speed, strength and vision. They possess motivation, and they possess work ethic. Who is going to possess the most of all those is the question. Hopefully, the answer will come by the end of spring.

"All of us are working hard," Coleman said. "The best man will win. Whoever works the hardest and impresses the coaches the best will win. I hope it's me, but whoever is rewarded that job is going to deserve it." 



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Spring a perfect time to find answers to many questions for Hokies

Well, gang, it's time for the annual spring-cleaning edition of the Kroger Roth Report. Lots to get to, so let's get started:

FOOTBALL TOUGHNESS

You've heard coach Frank Beamer and members of his staff use the word "toughness" frequently over the past several weeks.

"I told the kids the other day that I want this to be the toughest football team we've ever had here at Virginia Tech," Beamer told the media during a recent teleconference. "I just think, when you sit back and evaluate, there's something about mental toughness and physical toughness that I think is important to winning."

Without question, this has been as rugged and as spirited a spring practice as Tech's had in recent years. So what exactly did the staff evaluate to conclude that the Hokies weren't tough enough?

Go back to 2011, when the Hokies had 70 red-zone possessions (inside the opponents' 20-yard line) and scored just 35 touchdowns. Tech finished ninth in the ACC in red-zone offense in 2011, and Beamer and the staff were focused on improving that number in a big way.

"Sometimes, you just have to bang it in there, and we're not doing that as well as we need to," Beamer said at the end of that season. "Sometimes you just need a yard."

The 2011 Hokies were 9 of 20 on fourth-down conversions. Not good.

Well, in 2012, Tech had just 41 red-zone

possessions. (Yes, you read that correctly. In 13 games, Tech had the football inside the other team's 20-yard line just 41 times and that includes three overtime possessions). In those 41 red-zone trips, Tech scored just 21 touchdowns. And on fourth down, the 2012 Hokies were just 7 of 20. Ouch.

Tech's overtime possession against Rutgers provides a specific example of what frothed the head man. The Hokies had first-and-goal on the Rutgers 3-yard line, but settled for a field goal.

This isn't about play calling or schemes. This is about needing a yard or less on fourth down and having the play blown up in the offensive backfield. This is about having first-and-goal inside the 5 in key games and either settling for a field goal or losing the ball on downs.

There's mental toughness (attention to detail) and physical toughness (getting three inches on fourth down, etc.). This spring, improving both has been a major focus for Beamer and his staff.

WHO'S RUNNING THE BALL?

The same question was asked a year ago following the departure of David Wilson to the NFL and the "backfield-by-committee" approach didn't work very well for the 2012 team. J.C. Coleman led the group with just 492 yards, and Beamer said settling on a tailback by the end of spring is huge for the 2013 team. Coleman, Michael Holmes and Tony Gregory return, along with Trey Edmunds and Chris Mangus, both of whom redshirted last year. Edmunds is the guy



J.C. Coleman led all Tech tailbacks in rushing last year with 492 yards and is one of several vying for the top job this spring.

to watch. He's gained some weight (215 pounds), which makes him even stronger. His 40-yard time is impressive, too (4.37 seconds, tied for second on the team). He's tough, and he's a strong kid and certainly a guy to watch this spring.

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WHO'S THE TIGHT END?

After spending time with new offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler, it's clear he'd like to use the tight end often in his offense. Tech's staff moved Zack McCray to that position at the end of 2011, and Ryan Malleck, Duan Perez-Means, Darius Redman and Dakota Jackson are all getting reps this spring. There are some options here, and with the new offense, it will be exciting to see who emerges. Fans will be excited about how the Hokies are using the tight end more in the passing game in 2013, provided someone emerges. My hunch is someone will emerge and be a new weapon for Tech this fall.

THE NEXT STEVE JOHNSON?

It would be great if one of those five tight end prospects could blossom like Steve Johnson, who lettered at Tech from 1984-87 before playing in the NFL with New England and Dallas. In really exciting news, Tech announced that the football practice fields will be renamed the "Steve Johnson Practice Fields" after Johnson made a \$1 million pledge toward the construction of a new indoor football practice facility. It's another generous gift from Johnson, who has contributed to several major projects since graduating from Tech in 1987. Johnson currently serves as president and owner of Bristol, Va.-based Johnson Commercial Development, one of the largest commercial developers in the southeastern United States. This is just a great feel-good story all the way around because we have a former Tech athlete who excelled on the field, helped found a major company in Virginia and now is giving back to the program he loves so much.

ANOTHER HONOR FOR ERICK GREEN

When he was named a third-team All-American, Erick Green became the first Hokie to be named to any basketball All-America team since Dell Curry in 1986. That's a pretty long dry spell for any program, but just another terrific honor for Green, who was named ACC Player of the Year as well. He has a future in pro ball, and everyone hopes to see him in an NBA jersey next season.

Every NBA mock draft I've seen has Green going somewhere in second round, but one NBA scout I talked with a few weeks ago told me specifically that, "We just hope Green is available for us, so you won't hear us talking about him at all." Scouts talk about his offensive efficiency, and if you're a number's guru, check out this page: <http://www.draftexpress.com/profile/Erick-Green-16580/stats/>.

Green will get his chance to impress scouts and general managers at various pre-draft events and workouts, but in this instance, where he goes is

probably more important than when he's picked.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ALL-AMERICA TEAM:

I took special interest in the first-team All-America team: Doug McDermott (Creighton), Victor Oladipo, (Indiana), Kelly Olynyk (Gonzaga), Otto Porter, Jr. (Georgetown), and Trey Burke (Michigan).

In looking back, McDermott picked Creighton over Drake, Indiana State and Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Olynyk had an offer from Providence. Burke wasn't a top-100 player in the recruiting rankings. Oladipo had higher-profile options (he took a recruiting visit to Virginia Tech, by the way, toured campus and had a great lunch at West End, per Tech coach James Johnson), but like Green, wasn't a major national recruit.

As you look at these players and see how they developed (Olynyk redshirted at Gonzaga as a freshman, Oladipo averaged 7 points and Green just 2.6 points per game as freshmen), you can see how so many really solid kids can develop into elite players if they work hard at it and fit in a system. Again, that's a selling tool for Johnson moving forward as he recruits kids to fit his program in Blacksburg.

There are good players everywhere ... we know that. But they can develop into elite players as Olynyk, Oladipo and Green have shown, and that's what is encouraging about that All-America team.

ALL-TIME SHENANDOAH VALLEY?

With Green joining Curry on the list of all-time greats, how's this for a six-man, "All-Valley team?"

- Kevin Madden, Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton, class of 1985 who played at UNC;
- Cory Alexander from Waynesboro who played at UVa;
- Walker Lambiotte from Woodstock Central High who played at N.C. State and Northwestern;
- Ralph Sampson from Harrisonburg who, of course, played at UVa;
- Dell Curry from Fort Defiance who played at Virginia Tech.
- Erick Green from Winchester who also played for the Hokies.

The team banquet should be at the Johnny Appleseed's in New Market, Va., if for nothing else, to enjoy the awesome apple fritters. Trust me on that one. 



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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: This past season, Duke lost to Miami by 27 at Miami, and Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski reportedly held a practice once the team got home late that night around 1 a.m. I thought this was some type of violation. Please elaborate. Thanks, Jack in Christiansburg.

TP: "Apparently, the media reports that Duke conducted a late-night practice after that loss to Miami were inaccurate.

"But you are correct in that this would have been a violation, had it happened as portrayed. There is a stipulation in the NCAA Manual that states that, 'Countable athletically-related activities shall not occur between midnight and 5 a.m.'

"There are, however, exceptions to this particular rule. Such activities could occur during participation in a conference championship or an NCAA championship; participation in any competition that begins before midnight and concludes after midnight; and participation in a promotional practice activity (e.g. Midnight Madness). So anything other than these exceptions would be an NCAA violation."

Q: I saw that the NCAA suspended two of the controversial proposals involving recruiting that were supposed to go into

effect Aug. 1. What is the next step in that process? Hank in Richmond.

TP: "You are correct. The NCAA Division I Board of Directors suspended two proposals: one that would have allowed any staff member to perform some on-campus recruiting tasks, and one that would have removed the existing restrictions on the size and type of printed correspondence that can be mailed to prospects.


"It is highly unlikely that the suspended amendments will come back before the NCAA membership . . . at least not in any form resembling the original versions.

"In addition to the two suspended proposals, the Board also will reconsider a proposal that would have permitted text messaging and eliminated numerical limits on phone calls. The review will occur because more than the required number of schools – 75 – requested an 'override' of the legislation.

"With regard to this proposal, the Board of Directors has several options. It can maintain its original approval of the proposal, which will send it to an online override vote of the entire Division I membership. It can agree with those schools requesting the override, which would rescind the proposal. The proposal could be tabled. The presidents could also amend the proposal in some

way – even possibly splitting it in two – which would subject the new proposal(s) to another 60-day review/override period."

Q: Hey, can you tell me when is the spring signing period, and what sports have a signing day in the spring? Thanks, Robbie in Radford.

TP: "The spring signing period for current high school seniors begins on April 17 and includes the following sports at Virginia Tech: baseball, basketball, golf, lacrosse, softball, swimming & diving, tennis, volleyball, and wrestling." 

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Scot Loeffler brings a lot of experience to Tech after stops at Michigan, Central Michigan, the NFL's Detroit Lions, Florida, Temple and Auburn in his career.

NEW BEGINNINGS

New coordinator Scot Loeffler begins the process of turning around Tech's fortunes on offense

by Jimmy Robertson

On Jan. 18, Tech coach Frank Beamer announced the hiring of three new coaches – coordinator and quarterbacks coach Scot Loeffler, offensive line coach Jeff Grimes and receivers coach Aaron Moorehead. The trio hopes to turn around the Hokies' offense, as Tech finished 81st nationally in scoring offense and total offense a year ago.

The process began on March 27, as the Hokies opened their 2013 spring practice. We caught up with Loeffler afterward to ask him some questions about the first practice and other matters pertaining to Tech's offense.

Q: How excited were you about this first day of spring practice, just to get back to coaching and get this thing rolling?

SL: "Coaching is awesome. It was good to get on the grass and see where we're at. It was a typical first day – some good, some bad and some ugly.

We've got a long way to go, but I was encouraged with the effort. We did some good things. We've got a lot of things to clean up. We were playing basketball today. We weren't playing football. We were in shorts. As we go, when we get into pads, we'll see where we're at."

Q: We saw that there was a student manager with a tape recorder taping the quarterback as he said the play in the huddle. What is the thinking behind doing something like that?

SL: "So they (the quarterbacks) can hear themselves. It's amazing. I think I'm a good golfer, but the minute someone videotapes my swing, I'm like, 'Gosh, that's awful.' Obviously, we use a lot of video, and we teach off the video, but they never hear themselves in the huddle. What you do is you audiotape them, and they hear themselves. Then you get the NFL cut-up or the NFL sound bites and let them listen to a Brady of the world (New

England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady) or a Favre of the world (former Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre), and they get to compare themselves and hear how they say the play. That's just as important as anything.

"It also allows me to check and make sure they're getting the terminology correct. You hear how they're saying it and where they're supposed to break up the words and what words they're supposed to emphasize. You're able to assess how they're saying the play. It's a good teaching tool."

Q: Over the past couple of months since you arrived in Blacksburg as the coordinator, how much film did you watch of last year's offense here, and what did you see or not see?

SL: "I watched every game. There are a lot of things on tape that you couldn't see. You watched the shuffling of the line because of injuries. You watched running backs that were injured. Sometimes that happens in football. A lot of bad things can happen, and a lot of things that are out of your control. The positive thing is that, even though they got themselves in a hole, they fought their way out. They were able to win the last two and then win a bowl game. At least they have some character and toughness, and



Scot Loeffler has emphasized fundamentals and good mechanics with Logan Thomas (3) and the rest of the Tech quarterbacks this spring.

my hat's off to them for doing that."

Q: You all have been meeting a lot in the offseason. Is this you just kind of coaching the staff on what you want to do offensively, and how did that go?

SL: "It's a little bit of that. We're all in there together, and we're all sharing ideas. Football is football. When you're out there and you're in the shotgun, and you run inside zone or wide zone or run the trap, it's all the same stuff. So you're sharing ideas on what you think is the

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best. We've got a lot of really, really smart people in that room and a lot of people with a lot of experience. So we're sharing ideas and trying to pick what's best and apply it to where we're at and who we have. We're all working together."

Q: Obviously, Coach (Jeff) Grimes is familiar with your scheme and how you want things done, having spent last season with you at Auburn. But in the passing game, how much have you worked with Coach (Aaron) Moorehead the past couple of months, and are you two on the same page?

SL: "The thing of it is he's coming from the exact same system that I grew up in. It's almost the identical language. I feel like I've been with Aaron for a long time just because of how similar the thoughts, the splits, the spacings, the type of drops ... all that stuff is. But it's not about what I know or what he knows. We've got to teach these guys. We've got to teach them and get them all on the same page. That passing game takes some time now. It's takes some time, and we've got to get it right."

Q: With that said, how do you handle teaching your quarterbacks, especially Logan Thomas. Do you throw everything at him at once, or do you take a step-by-step approach?

SL: "We take it step by step, just like if he

were a freshman in college. The one thing I do know with the quarterbacks I've had, when their technique is sound, when they're smart – and he is, he's smart and he's tough, and we'll get his technique right and improve him – but when all that's right, it's amazing how much your accuracy improves and amazing how much you don't take sacks. A lot of good things happen when your technique is where it needs to be. That's our emphasis. And it doesn't matter if Logan had thrown 500 touchdown passes last year. You're always trying to get that edge. At the end of the day, when it's hard and things are tough and it's the fourth quarter, you've always got to rely on that technique."

Q: Where would you like him to be at the end of spring practice?

SL: "I'd like him to be much improved. I'd like for him to take what he's learned in the spring and improve on it more in the summertime. Then he walks into training camp next August and gets better with that, and then he's an All-ACC type of player."

Q: This team has new guys all over the place on offense, from the offensive line to receivers to tight end. What concerns do you have just trying to develop an offense with so many young

players?

SL: "Well, everyone is new to me (laughing). We have some youth. It's always nice when you have some older guys, and we have a few. But we have a lot of youth, and we're going to learn and get better. We're going to take things step by step. It's a slow process. We want to get fundamentally sound and get a base and teach them how to win. We want to teach them how to not turn over the ball. It's amazing that, when Virginia Tech doesn't turn over the ball or ties the turnover battle, they're 42-5 (in the last 47 games). So heck, just don't turn it over with our defense and the way we play teams. Just don't turn it over."

Q: So, for you, coming out of this spring, what will you hope to have accomplished by the end of spring practice?

SL: "It's just like with Logan. We want to get a base. We're going to evaluate who we have and what they do well. Even with the people who have been here a while, we still have so many fresh faces that we don't know what we can do great. That's what we want to get accomplished with these 15 practices. We want to find out this spring what we can do well, and then we'll go and do what we can do – and hopefully do it well this fall." **VT**

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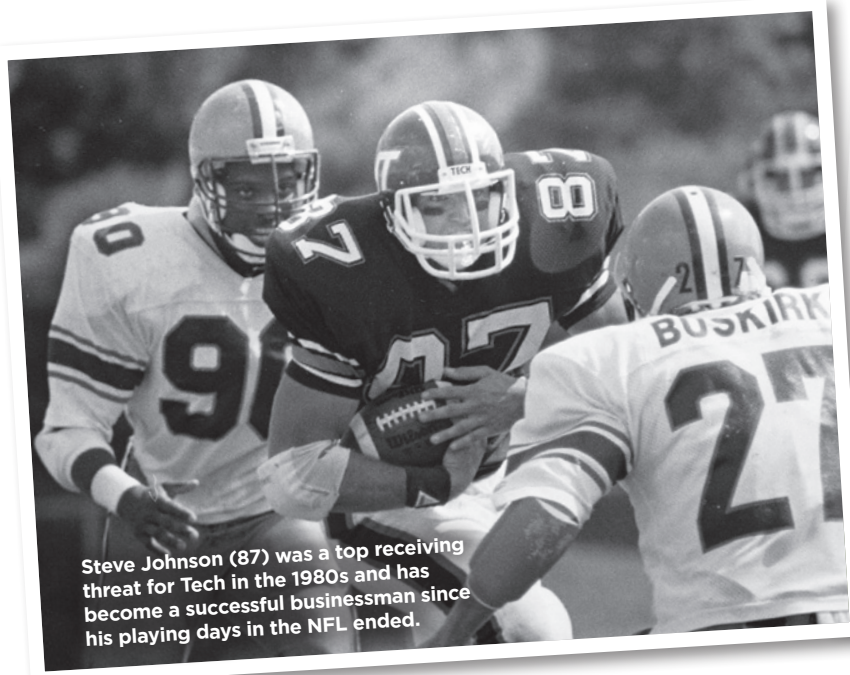
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Tech renames football practice fields after former player

The school honors former tight end Steve Johnson after his generous contributions to the football program

by Jimmy Robertson

Some past players just bring forth great memories.

Tech fans remember Chris Kinzer's kick against NC State, Corey Moore's game against Clemson, Michael Vick's run against West Virginia, and Tyrod Taylor's pass against Nebraska.

Steve Johnson's name certainly belongs among this crowd, too. Many remember his touchdown catch against Clemson down at Death Valley his junior year. Some remember his touchdown catch in the waning moments against Virginia his senior year – and watching the Hokies fall 14-13 after not being able to convert the 2-point attempt.

"Actually, the play that I get asked about the most is the fourth-down catch to keep the drive alive to get Kinzer in position to make the field goal (in the Peach Bowl)," Johnson said. "It was about fourth-and-5, and we were at the 50 or so. I think that's probably No. 1."

The athletics department and the university, though, are making sure that Johnson gets remembered for more than just his plays on the field. Those two entities want to make sure he gets remembered forever for his generosity to the Tech program.

Officials from both have decided that the football practice fields between the Jamerson Athletics Center and Lane Stadium will be renamed the Steve Johnson Practice Fields in honor of the former Tech tight end who recently made a \$1 million pledge toward the construction of a new indoor football practice facility.

This new facility, to be built on a site yet to be determined, will be used by the Hokies' football team. Preliminary plans call for an artificial turf surface and for the facility to be tall enough to allow for punting and kicking. The Hokies' current indoor facility, Rector Field House, will be renovated and used primarily by Tech's track and field programs, along with the women's lacrosse and men's and women's soccer teams.

The costs for the project have yet to be determined as well, but Tech officials estimate those to be between \$20-\$30 million. Of course, Johnson's donation certainly will help offset a chunk of those expenses.

"The key to any venture whether you're playing football or competing in the NCAA level or the pro level or out here in business really comes down to two things – people and equipment," Johnson said.

"In the case of Virginia Tech, on the people side, that's coaches and players, and on the equipment side, it's the facilities they have. You've got to have both, but without outstanding facilities, you limit your ability to attract the people side. These kids today coming out, if all things are equal, there's a strong chance they'll choose the university that has the most impressive facilities.

"We've got the people side covered, with Frank Beamer and our coaching staff. If we have the best facilities in the country, then the combination of our coaching staff and our facilities puts us in great position to attract the best players. I just want to do my part in that.

"As a supporter and a fan, if you're in a position to help the university create an environment that has superior facilities, if you're not doing your part, then you lose your right to have anything to say about the outcome, don't you?"

That Johnson actually got to the point where he could donate this type of money is quite the story. A native of Huntsville, Ala., he came to Tech in the mid-1980s to play for then coach Bill Dooley and he ended up lettering for two coaches in his career – Dooley and Beamer.

He caught four passes as a freshman for 83 yards and a touchdown, and as a sophomore, he hauled in nine passes for 109 yards and a score. He burst onto the scene as a junior in 1986 when he caught 33 passes for 391 yards and three touchdowns.

As a junior, Johnson helped the Hokies to the Peach Bowl, where they edged NC State 25-24 on a last-second field goal by Kinzer. Johnson, who caught six balls for 54 yards in the game, hauled in a touchdown pass in the fourth quarter that gave Tech the lead. He's also known for catching a touchdown pass in the third quarter of the Hokies' 20-14 upset of Clemson at Clemson, S.C., that season.

In 1987 – his senior season and his lone one under Beamer – he hauled in a team-leading 38 passes for 475 yards and three touchdowns, and he finished his career sixth on the school's all-time list for career receptions and eighth for touchdowns by a tight end (eight).

He anticipated a long career in pro football, especially after the New England Patriots drafted him in the sixth round of the 1988 NFL Draft. Johnson spent two seasons with the Patriots, playing in 14 games during the 1988 season. He started three and caught one pass. He signed with the Dallas Cowboys as a free agent in 1990, but tore up his knee in a preseason game and was

never on the Cowboys' active roster. He retired from football shortly thereafter.

After his football career ended, he had no idea what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. He and his wife ended up moving to Bristol, Va. – her hometown and a place he viewed as a temporary stop on the road toward longer-term career goals, whatever they may be.

"We didn't have any intention of staying here, but we just kind of settled in," Johnson said. "Her dad and I developed The Virginian (one of the best golf courses in the state), and once I was finished with that, I started dabbling in commercial real estate. In the mid-1990s, it really took off. It got hot, and I just stuck with it.

"In the process of the journey that got me involved in commercial real estate, I really found what I loved to do, and I just think that's so important – that you're passionate about what you do and love what you do. That will really set you apart from others in your field."


Johnson currently serves as president and owner of Bristol, Va.-based Johnson Commercial Development, one of the largest commercial developers in the southeastern United States. Johnson Commercial Development is currently developing one of the largest commercial projects in the country, the Pinnacle, a 1 million-square-foot upscale retail development under

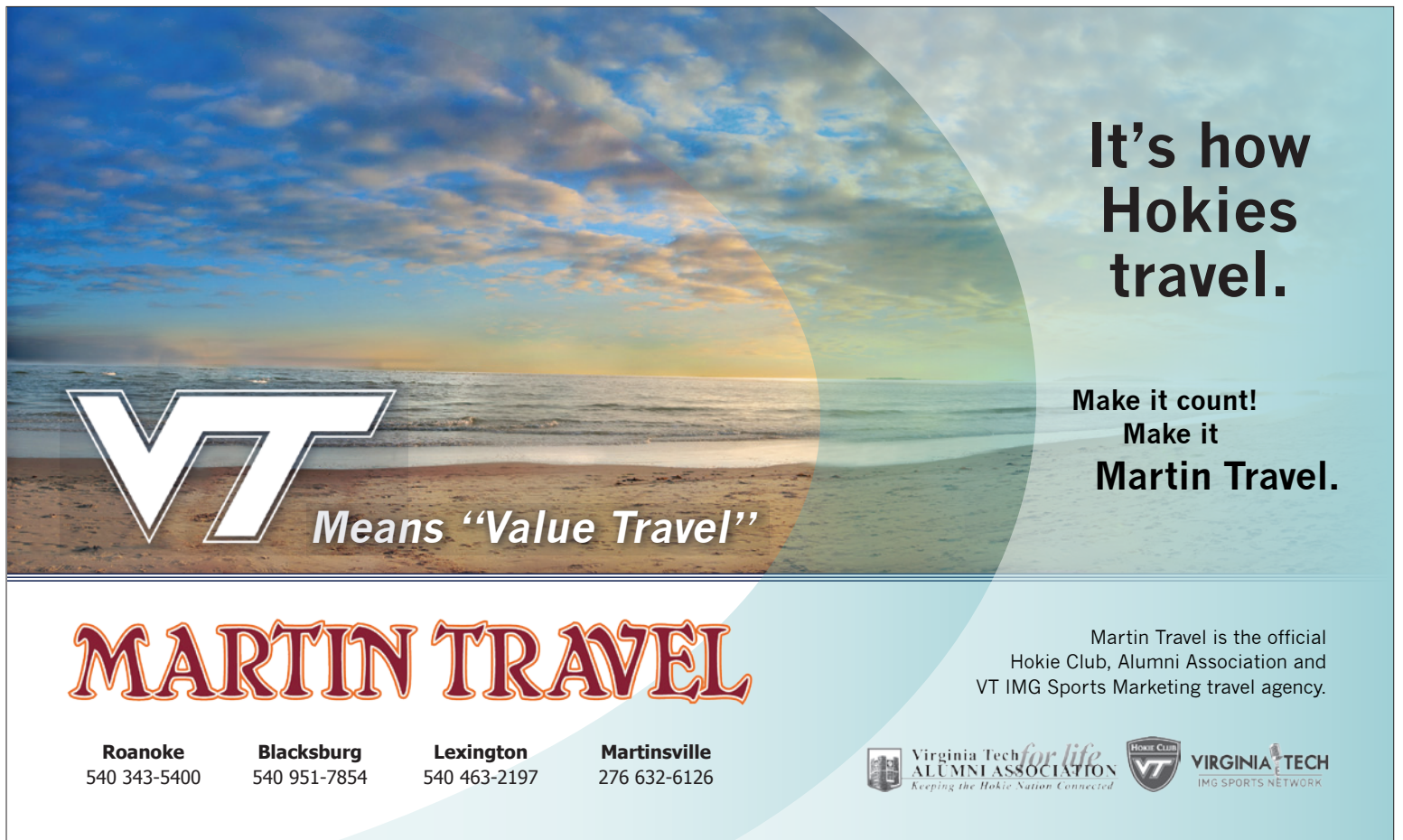
construction in Bristol, Tenn.

His success in commercial real estate has led him to contribute to other athletics department projects in the past. He previously contributed to support construction of the Merryman Athletic Facility, which includes a room for speed and agility training that also bears his name. He also is a member of the Ut Prosim Society, a select group of Virginia Tech's most generous supporters.

Johnson said he was honored to have the practice fields named after him and proud to leave that type of legacy for his family. More importantly, he hopes that it serves as an example for future football players.

"I'm hopeful that it's a symbol that the kids can look at today and say, 'I can do that, too,' because they can," Johnson said. "It's all right there in front of them. With the proper approach and emphasis on getting an education and working hard in the classroom and on the field and doing it right with honesty and integrity, they, too, can enjoy the success that puts them in position to do the same type of things. I can't imagine any kid coming through that program, that if they were in position to come back and do something special, that they wouldn't do it."

No timetable has been given for the start date or the completion of the indoor practice facility project. Fundraising for the facility is ongoing. 



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More than 60 players earn honors in recent strength and conditioning testing

by Jimmy Robertson

On March 27, the Virginia Tech football team participated in the first of its 15 spring practices.

Before that, though, the squad put in the *really* hard work.

In the 10 weeks leading up to spring ball, the players spent four days a week in the weight room, working with Dr. Mike Gentry, Tech's associate AD for athletic performance, and his staff. The players finished those grueling workouts before spring break, concluding them with a series of tests to see how much they had progressed.

In all, 63 players earned honors in the strength and conditioning program, including 11 who earned Super Iron Hokie status – the top rung on the strength and conditioning ladder (the levels consist of Super Iron Hokie, Iron Hokie, Hokie, Orange and Maroon). The 11 who earned Super Iron honors included Brent Benedict, Augie Conte, Laurence Gibson, James Gayle, Greg Gadell, Michael Holmes, D.J. Coles, Brian Rody, Nick Bush, Kyshoen Jarrett and Donovan Riley.

Also, four position records fell. Dadi Nicolas' 40-inch vertical jump was the best by a defensive end, while three position records in the power clean fell. Conte's team-best 375-pound lift is now the standard for offensive tackles, while Gayle's 370-pound lift is the new mark for defensive ends. Last, but not least, Trey Gresh owns the quarterback mark after his 330-pound lift.

That Tech's linemen recorded solid marks – and not just the award winners, but also up and down the roster – pleased Gentry. He and his staff tweaked winter workouts this year to place an emphasis on the linemen.

"We really placed an emphasis on the line of scrimmage – on both sides – just in terms of getting stronger," he said. "Now, generally we focus on strength this time of year, and then as we go into summer, we'll focus on other areas. But we really focused on the linemen and just doing things consistently in a tough and effective manner. We got good buy-in from the guys with their effort and attitude, and I'm pleased with that."

Some of the changes included implementing



Defensive end James Gayle is one of the Hokies' strongest athletes, as evidenced by his 550-pound squat in recent testing.

low-box squats and doing more sled pushes. Low-box squats are essentially traditional back squats, but players had to squat a little lower for a repetition to count. These types of squats took the place of the front squat, a good lift in its own right, but one that works a little different area of the body.

The sled pushes also worked the lower body of

each lineman – and developed a little toughness along the way.

"When you think about where your power comes from, it comes from the hips, legs and lower back," Gentry said. "We want them to be able to create that push on both sides of the ball.

"You look at our roster, and we had a lot of young linemen coming back. We want them to

STRENGTH & CONDITIONING TESTING RESULTS

BENCH PRESS

Nick Acree.....	475
Andrew Miller.....	440
Brent Benedict	430
Laurence Gibson.....	430
Alston Smith.....	420

FRONT SQUAT

Riley Beiro.....	500
Carl Jackson.....	425
D.J. Coles.....	420
J.C. Coleman	400
Maurice Taylor	390

LOW BOX SQUAT

Derrick Hopkins	650
Brent Benedict	605
Luther Maddy	555
Corey Marshall.....	550
James Gayle.....	550

POWER CLEAN

Augie Conte.....	370
James Gayle.....	370
Laurence Gibson.....	370
Corey Marshall.....	360
David Wang.....	340

PUSH JERK

Nick Acree.....	375
Augie Conte	370
David Wang.....	360
Matt Arkema	360
Derrick Hopkins	360

VERTICAL JUMP

Nick Acree.....	375
Augie Conte	370
David Wang.....	360
Matt Arkema	360
Derrick Hopkins	360

40-YARD SPRINT

Kevin Asante	4.36
Trey Edmunds.....	4.37
J.C. Coleman	4.37
Detrick Bonner	4.39
Chris Mangus	4.42

10-YARD SPRINT

Kyle Fuller	1.59
J.C. Coleman	1.63
Jack Tyler	1.64
Dewayne Alford.....	1.65
Joshua Stanford.....	1.66

be more physical. Guys like Brent Benedict and Andrew Miller, who was coming off that ankle injury, made great strides. Laurence Gibson was a Super Iron for the first time, and Augie Conte is a Super Iron and he's only been here a year. Nick Acree had a 500-pound squat coming off an ACL. Dadi Nicolas, his future is unlimited. Derrick Hopkins and Luther Maddy made strides, and of course, James Gayle, Corey Marshall, and J.R. Collins are great strength athletes."


Obviously, the focus on the linemen doesn't mean that Gentry and his staff ignored the skill players. On the contrary, he and his staff changed up the workouts for that group as well.

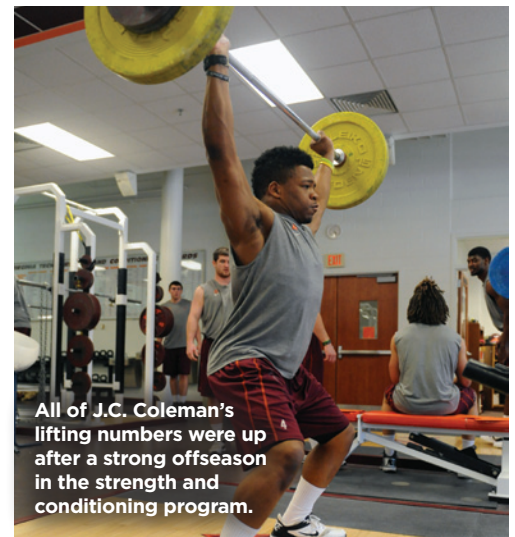
In past years, skill players lifted twice a week and then did speed and agility workouts twice a week. This winter, though, they lifted four days

a week, and it certainly didn't affect their speed. In fact, 10 skill players ran the 40 in under 4.50 seconds.

Also, Holmes, Jarrett and Riley earned Super Iron Hokie honors for the first time. Riley, like Conte, has only been in Tech's strength and conditioning program a year, having played last year as a true freshman (Conte redshirted).

"Everyone was doing the same core lifts," Gentry said. "The workouts were a little different, but the core stuff was similar. We were focused on getting this team stronger.

"I'm not saying we're Herculean strong. But I think we're stronger and tougher, and that's a pretty good place to start. This group has a great attitude and work ethic, and I'm confident we're going to be better next fall." 



All of J.C. Coleman's lifting numbers were up after a strong offseason in the strength and conditioning program.



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Moorehead excited about coaching and the potential of his young receivers

by Jimmy Robertson

There has been a lot of excitement on Tech's practice fields this spring, a newfound energy that comes mostly from the result of a remodeled coaching staff. Players have been playing with emotion and intensity, and they've been bouncing around – and the coaches with them.

Aaron Moorehead's athletic ability has been on display this spring. He's spent quite a bit of time running down the field and high-fiving his players after big plays.

But that's to be expected from Moorehead, who isn't that far removed from college. The 32-year-old has plenty to be excited about these days, as his beloved Chicago Bulls ended the Miami Heat's long winning streak, he's finally about to get cable television at his place in Blacksburg, and he simply loves his first full-time coaching gig as the receivers coach at Tech – as evidenced by his demeanor on the practice fields.

"I like running up and down the field," he said, laughing. "But I've told them I'm probably going to slow down a bit just so that I'm on top of the things that I need to be doing and not 40 yards down the field.

"But I like getting after it a little bit and showing them (the receivers) that I care. When they make a big play, I'm going to be just as excited for them as I am when I'm yelling at them for screwing up. That's something that they understand. It doesn't just go one way. I'm not going to just yell at them when they screw up, and then say, 'Hey, good job' when they do a good job. I want them to understand that I'm truly excited for them."

Moorehead, one of three new assistant coaches announced by head coach Frank Beamer this past January, brings a contrasting style to that of former receivers coach Kevin Sherman, who departed to take a job at Purdue following last season. Sherman took more of a staid, conservative approach that fit his personality, and his philosophy worked well for the most part.

But Moorehead wants his players to be loose and have more fun. He noticed early on that his receivers lacked a bit of a spark and seemed a little



New receivers coach Aaron Moorehead wants to see his receivers play more relaxed, and he feels that will translate into more big plays next season

uptight. So he has spent most of this spring trying to get them to play with confidence and to have fun.

"If you're not loose, to a point, then you're going to have a lot of trouble really going out there and making plays," Moorehead said. "If you're always tight and pressing, you're not going to be able to play to your full ability.

"We have to encourage each other. It's not about one guy. If D.J. (Coles) makes a big catch, then Kevin (Asante) should be the first one running to him. If Demitri (Knowles) makes a big catch, then Joel Caleb should be running to him. If Charley Meyer makes a catch, all those older guys should be running to him.

"I said, 'Guys, when you play as a group and don't care who catches the ball, those are the best teams I've ever been a part of.'"

Moorehead brings more than on-field

enthusiasm to his job, though. He also brings discipline, which he learned about from his former coach with the Indianapolis Colts – Tony Dungy. Tech's receivers got a quick lesson on Moorehead's disciplinary tactics right off the bat.

Shortly before spring practice started, Moorehead called an early-morning meeting with his receivers. One of them showed up a few minutes late. So Moorehead called another meeting the next morning – for an hour earlier.

"You have to learn," Coles said. "He (Moorehead) had to set an example. If you can't do it at this time, then we'll go earlier. He sent a message. No one has been late again."

"No excuses, no explanations," Moorehead said. "That was something we were big on with the Colts. It was a Coach Dungy thing. I'm not going to allow those guys to come in whenever they feel like

it. If I tell you to be here at 7, be there at 7. If it's at 6, be there at 6. That's the thing. A guy may stroll in at 6:02. Well, those little things get you beat in the end.

"It's one of those deals where we have to be up-tempo. Everything is fast, and part of it is not about being lazy, but having a purpose in everything you do. I wanted to set the tone with those guys."

Though young, Moorehead also brings serious coaching chops, having played five years with the Colts under Dungy and then working for three years at Stanford under coach David Shaw and offensive coordinator Pep Hamilton, a one-time candidate for the Tech offensive coordinator position that went to Scot Loeffler. In fact, Hamilton recommended Moorehead for Tech's receivers job.

Loeffler and Moorehead speak the same language – almost literally. Though they never played for or coached under the same coaching staff, the two worked in similar systems. That has made for a smooth transition, as the Hokies try to ramp up their passing attack.

"When we get to talking, it's almost weird," Moorehead said. "It's like we know what each other is thinking. It's kind of funny because we haven't been around each other long enough. So we laugh about that. It's almost like we can finish each other's sentences, and that's unique for people who

haven't been around each other that long."

Moorehead's job this spring hasn't been easy. The Hokies lost their top three receivers – Corey Fuller, Marcus Davis and Dyrell Roberts – off last season's squad. Those three combined for 127 of Tech's 224 catches a year ago and 2,166 of the Hokies' 3,002 receiving yards. They also caught 12 of the Hokies' 18 touchdown receptions.

In fact, Tech returns just 22 catches from the receiver position from last year's squad – 19 by Knowles. Coles, the most experienced receiver with 39 career catches, missed last season with a knee injury.

Not that any of that matters anyway, as Tech continues with the installation of a new offense under Loeffler.

"It's totally different, but I like it," Coles said. "The first time you're putting an offense in, you've got to get out the wrinkles, but I like it a lot. With the running game and the play action and the deep balls we've got down the field, I think it's all going to work out well for us. It's a lot different, but it's a good offense."

Knowles agreed.

"Some call it complicated, but I call it sweet," he said of Tech's offense. "I like it. We have some double moves for receivers. It's supposed to be a complicated offense. Once we get into our books,


though, we should be fine."

The Hokies do possess some intriguing young talent at the position. Josh Stanford and Caleb bring size and speed, and Asante has shown flashes. The staff liked Meyer last year during camp, and both he and E.L. Smiling continue to improve.

Coles' and Knowles' experience combined with the physical skills of the younger receivers alleviates Moorehead's concern a little, as Tech gets ready to countdown toward the kickoff of the 2013 season against Alabama.

"I don't think it's a concern," Moorehead said. "Over the 15 practices and training camp, we'll find our playmakers. For me, in our group, it's more about building consistency. I like playing four or five or six guys, if I can. I don't like just playing two or three guys. I like having a full stable of guys."

"There are certain guys who, as they get more comfortable and stop thinking and just play, they'll emerge. But some guys are starting a little slower and their learning curve isn't as fast. Other guys have picked it up a little quicker. We'll see how they all respond, but I'm excited about the effort and what they've done so far."

Excited may be the buzzword of spring practice. The players are excited, and so, too, are the coaches. One only needs to catch a glimpse of Moorehead to realize that. 

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Jarell Eddie averaged more than 12 points per game this past season and should be one of the Hokies' top scoring threats next season.



With the hoops season over, Hokies look ahead to life without Green

by **Jimmy Robertson**

The question was simple enough.

What was the difference between the first part of the season, when the Virginia Tech men's basketball team got off to its best start since the 1982-83 campaign, and the latter part in which the Hokies lost 12 of their final 14 games?

Jarell Eddie started to answer – twice. Then he paused. Finally, he gave an honest assessment.

“That’s a good question,” he said. “I don’t know.”

Tech’s 2012-13 season, the one that began with such promise, ended with an 80-63 loss to NC State in an ACC Tournament first-round game at the Greensboro Coliseum in Greensboro, N.C. With that loss, the Hokies finished their first year

under new coach James Johnson with a 13-19 overall record.

Clearly, those knowledgeable about the situation understood that Johnson had the deck stacked against him from the beginning. He was dealt a poor hand as soon as AD Jim Weaver hired him, entering the season with just nine scholarship players – and one of those being a former walk-on whom he gave a scholarship.

Following the loss to the Wolfpack, Johnson understandably refused to give a detailed dissertation of his inaugural season. Instead, he simply analyzed it in broad terms.

“It’s tough to talk about, coming off a loss,” Johnson said. “There are certainly going to be

some changes. We’re going to have a deeper bench (next season). We have some new recruits coming in. The program will be evaluated offensively and defensively and everything within it. There are certain things we want to change, and we need to get better at everything.”

Not everything went wrong for Johnson and the Hokies this past season. Tech showed its potential by jumping out to a 7-0 start, with impressive wins over Iowa and Oklahoma State. The Hokies also took to Johnson’s up-tempo style in the early going, scoring at least 80 points in six of those games.

That style certainly got Erick Green off to a quick start, and he continued his torrid pace

throughout the season. Green led the nation in scoring, averaging 25 points per game, and he enjoyed the greatest scoring season in Tech history, breaking Bimbo Coles' single-season scoring record of 785 points and finishing with 801 on his way to becoming one of the top-10 all-time leading career scorers in Hokie history.

For his efforts, Green was named the ACC's Player of the Year by the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association, a group of media members who cover league teams, and a third-team All-American by The Associated Press. He also made the list of finalists for the Wooden Award, which goes annually to the best college basketball player in the nation. For sure, he proved that players could be successful at Tech and under Johnson.

But once ACC games started, Green got little help, as the Hokies struggled to consistently establish a second and third scorer. Eddie averaged 12.3 points per game, but a lot of his scoring came early in the season when he hit double figures in 10 of the Hokies' first 13 games. He struggled in January and in a portion of February, and for the season, shot just 39.6 percent from the floor.

Robert Brown also struggled, shooting just 33.1 percent from the floor for the season, and Cadarian Raines, who showed so much potential at the end of the 2011-12 season, averaged 6.6 points per game and scored in double figures just four times in ACC play.

Arguably, Tech's most consistent player down the stretch – other than Green – was C.J. Barksdale. He averaged 10.8 points per game and shot 63.2 percent in the final six games of the regular season (24 of 38). He also shot 89.5 percent from the free-throw line (17 of 19) and averaged 6.2 rebounds per game.

Tech's bigger issues, though, may have been

on the defensive end. The Hokies finished last in the ACC in scoring defense (74.8 ppg) and last in steals (4.3 steals per game). They also finished ninth in field-goal percentage defense (43.6 percent) and seventh in 3-point field-goal defense, as teams shot nearly 35 percent against the Hokies from beyond the arc.

Beyond the numbers, however, Tech struggled to get stops in critical situations. The Hokies easily could have beaten Miami here in Blacksburg on Jan. 30 with a few late stops, and the same could be said in home losses to Maryland and Georgia Tech and road losses at UNC and Clemson.

"Defensively, we had our days," Eddie said. "We had our games when we played really well defensively. Then we had other games when we didn't play well defensively and gave up crazy percentages from the 3-point line and from the field. We were real inconsistent with our defense.

"Coach Johnson definitely wants to be a defense-first team, so we've got to work on that as a group. Just rotations and guarding the ball one-on-one and closing out on shooters, we've got a lot to work on this offseason."

As Johnson and his assistants embark on the offseason, they know the "to-do" list is lengthy. In addition to replacing Green, they also must replace Brown, who has decided to transfer following the end of this semester. He reportedly wants to get back closer to his home in Florida.

But the good news is that three starters return, and sharpshooter Adam Smith, the transfer from the UNC Wilmington, will be eligible. Plus, the staff stocked the cupboard last November, and the coaches get to use those goodies next fall. They signed four prospects in the fall and one this spring, including three guards all bigger than 6-foot-3. Tech needed size on the perimeter to combat the bigger guards in the ACC, like

Maryland's Dez Wells and NC State's Lorenzo Brown and the bigger guards that Pittsburgh and Syracuse offer.

Together, maybe the sum of their parts can replace Green and his 25 points per game.


"I'm not sure," Eddie said when asked if he was going to have to score more next season. "I'm going to contribute as much as I can, and I hope my teammates can contribute as much as they can. If it's balanced scoring, then it'll be balanced scoring. If I have to take on more of a scoring role, then I'll have to do that. It's whatever is best for the team."

Green's final season didn't end the way he wanted. The Hokies only won four ACC games, and he gladly would have traded points for W's. Regardless, he left behind a legacy.

The legacy, though, has nothing to do with points and everything to do with work ethic. He made himself into the league's best player because he got in the gym every single day and worked on his game. He tried to improve some part of his game each day.

"The thing is how much they (his teammates) want it," Green said. "How much do you want to get better? How much dedication are you going to put into this game? My words to these guys ... you see how far I've come. No one would have thought I would have been the player I am today. If you work hard and stay in the gym, anything can happen.

"I hope that's what guys take from me – my work ethic. I was in the gym so much last summer. I stayed after practice and came in before practice. I really worked. I wanted this. I hope I left a legacy that hard work will pay off in the long run."

He was the blueprint. And if his teammates put in that same amount of work this offseason, they'll be in for a much better 2013-14 season. 



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Pete Yates finished fourth in the 165-pound weight class at the NCAA Wrestling Championships and closed his decorated career as an All-American for the second straight year.



Tech wrestling makes history

The Hokies recorded a top-10 finish for the first time, while a program-best four earned All-America honors

by Jimmy Robertson

More than seven years ago, the future of the Virginia Tech wrestling program looked rather cloudy. The coach had left, and five of the program's top wrestlers went with him. No one seemed sure of the next move.

But Jim Weaver, Tech's AD, decided to hire Kevin Dresser as the coach – and now the future looks incredibly bright.

Buoyed by four wrestlers who earned All-America honors, the Hokies finished a program-best 10th at the NCAA Wrestling Championships held March 21-23 at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines, Iowa. Tech recorded 43.5 points, also a program best. A year ago, the Hokies finished tied for 11th.

"That was our goal – to get in the top 10," Dresser said. "Any time you have 10 point getters, you always feel like you left a little on the table somewhere, but there are probably

a couple of places where we overachieved. We had four All-Americans, and I don't think any ACC team has had four All-Americans. That's the pinnacle of our sport. Schools that produce All-Americans – that's a big feather in your hat."

Senior Pete Yates paced the Hokies at the Championships. The Conyers, Ga., native finished in fourth place at 165 pounds, just missing the best finish ever by a Tech wrestler at the Championships. In 1959, Brandon Glover finished third in the 130-pound weight class.

Yates advanced to the semifinals by winning his first three matches. He beat Buffalo's Mark Lewandowski 5-3, Missouri's Zach Toal 7-0 and Minnesota's Cody Yohn 5-3 in sudden victory. But in the semis, he ran into Penn State's David Taylor, a two-time national champion in that weight class, and Taylor pinned him at 3:24.

Yates beat Iowa State's Michael

Moreno 12-2 in the consolation round before falling 5-1 to Oklahoma State's Tyler Caldwell in the third-place match.

Still, he wrapped up a great career as a two-time All-American and with 132 wins, the second-most all time at Tech.

"He had the toughest weight class in the tournament by far," Dresser said. "There are a lot of kids who would have ran north or south in weight classes to avoid those matchups, but he was locked and loaded.

"He's definitely made history here. He's the most decorated guy to come through this program. We've got some young guys who are going to try and change that, but right now, in April, he's the most decorated guy – and deservedly so. He's earned everything he's accomplished."

Jarrold Garnett, Zach Neibert and Nick Brascetta also earned All-America honors for

the Hokies, whose four All-Americans were also a program-best at the NCAA Championships. Garnett rallied to finish in sixth place at 125 pounds after a stunning defeat in his first match. He lost to Appalachian State's Dominic Parisi 7-6, sending him to the consolation bracket.

But the senior from Newark, Del., came back and won five straight matches. He lost to Cornell's Nahshon Garrett 13-9 and then fell in the fifth-place match to Trent Sprenkle of North Dakota State 7-2. He closed his career with 126 wins, third-most in school history.

"He got there the hard way," Dresser said. "He had to win four matches just to become an All-American. You shouldn't have to win four times just to get to the podium, but that's what he did. He didn't wrestle great on Sunday (the last day), but he had wrestled eight matches in three days, and that's a tough road to go.

"But that's the one thing Jarrod couldn't have done before – to come back after that loss and win so many tough matches. Toughness was the difference for him. He's always been talented, but his toughness got him on the podium this year."

Neibert was the Hokies' surprise of the Championships, finishing in eighth place at 141 pounds. He lost in the second round, which sent him to the consolation bracket, but then he won three straight matches, including a 6-3 upset over ninth-seed Richard Durson of Franklin & Marshall (Neibert wasn't seeded). Neibert lost to old nemesis Evan Henderson of North Carolina 7-4 and fell to eighth seed Nick Dardanes of Minnesota 9-5 in the seventh-place match.

"Everyone from the outside looking in was probably shocked at Zach's performance," Dresser said. "One thing about him is that he's a gamer. He's always best in the biggest spotlight. He always seems to step it up a little bit. Sometimes, you

shake your head because he doesn't do everything right during the season, but when there's a big venue and a lot on the line, he seems to be better.

"It's kind of like in golf when you have a guy who doesn't practice as much as everyone else. But when he has to make that putt or make that chip in a big event, he does it."

Like Neibert, Brascetta finished in eighth place, dropping a seventh-place match at 149 pounds to Ivan Lopouchanski of Purdue. Brascetta lost his second match to Jake Suefloehn of Nebraska, but bounced back to win three straight matches and earn All-America honors.

"That weight class was so deep," Dresser said. "When you look at some of the guys who didn't place, you think, 'Oh my.' After first and second, there were about 15 guys who could have placed. You could wrestle that tournament the next weekend, and you could have a different 3rd through 8th (place)."

Tech qualified a program-best 10 for the Championships, and eight of them won at least one match. The Hokies nearly had five All-Americans, but Jesse Dong lost in the consolations 7-3 in sudden victory to UVa's Jedd Moore at 157 pounds. Austin Gabel won two matches at 174

pounds for Tech, while Derrick Borlie won two at 197 pounds.

Tech loses quite a bit off this team, as Yates, Garnett, Dong and David Marone all depart. The first three each won more than 100 matches at Tech, while Marone won 91.


The four of them combined for nine ACC titles and qualified for the NCAA's 15 times.

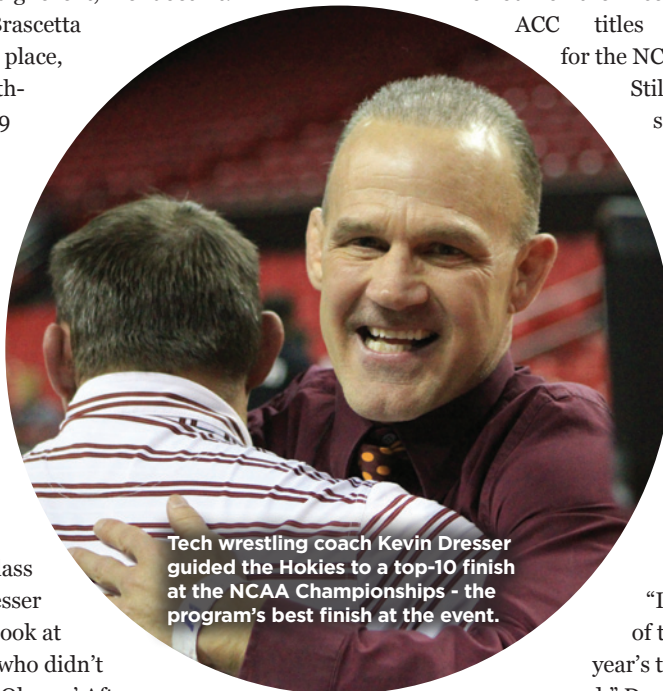
Still, Dresser returns six starters off this year's team, and both Devin Carter, an All-American last season, Chris Moon, an ACC champion last season, and Chris Penny all return as well after redshirting this past season.

"I think, by the end of the year, that next year's team could be just as good," Dresser said. "I really do. We've got some wildcards in there.

We've got a couple of redshirt freshmen who are in the room right now and a couple of freshmen coming in who will make an immediate impact.

We need to have a great summer, but I really think this team can be a top-10 team next year.

"We set a goal to be a consistent top-10 team, and if we want to achieve that, we've got to be in the top 10 every year. Last year, we got 11th. This year, we got 10th. That's got to be the standard." 



Tech wrestling coach Kevin Dresser guided the Hokies to a top-10 finish at the NCAA Championships - the program's best finish at the event.



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BACK TO SCHOOL

More than 10 years after his playing days ended, former Tech pitcher Pat Pinkman is helping coach at his alma mater while also finishing up work on his degree

by **Jimmy Robertson**

This season, Virginia Tech baseball is currently utilizing a pair of student assistant coaches. One, Michael McMenamin, is a 23-year-old young man who has been involved with the program since he first came to campus and is completing his degree while still working with the team. In essence, he is starting his coaching career.

The other is a name that could ring a bell, Pat Pinkman, the former Tech player who was the Atlantic 10's Rookie of the Year and a Louisville Slugger Freshman All-American in 1998. A man who won 19 games on the mound in his four-year Hokie career and struck out 219 batters. He's not your typical student assistant coach.

Pinkman's journey back to Blacksburg has been long and humbling, but he's realized that, to get to where he wants to be in life, he needs the one thing that eludes some student-athletes after their eligibility is complete – a college degree.

"My dad growing up playing baseball was a catcher, but he had two left-handed sons, so he

figured he couldn't teach them how to catch," Pinkman said. "He figured he might as well teach them how to be pitchers. So when I was 11, he started teaching my brother and me how to pitch, and other people wanted lessons from him, so he just started a business from there.

"That was basically one of the reasons why I never finished. Once I was done with my eligibility, I had a job back home working in the family business, and I always thought I could finish my degree later."

Almost a decade later, Pinkman was working approximately 70 hours a week, still giving lessons while also working a full-time job at a kitchen design company. The latter job allowed him to put his artistic talents to use – he was an art major at Tech during his playing days.

But a conversation one night with then-girlfriend Laura Massie served as an awakening of sorts for him. Here he was working 70 hours a week without a college degree. Maybe it was time

to start on a different path.

"I was just getting tired of the rat race," Pinkman said. "I didn't know if I wanted to continue to work at the academy (his father's business) anymore, but I wanted to stay in baseball. So she said, 'Why don't you coach?' And I said, 'I don't want to coach high school because then that means you have to teach, and I don't have a degree.'"

The subject of coaching in college came up, but so, too, did the obstacles of starting at the bottom and as a volunteer. The couple went back and forth on it for a week before Pinkman decided just to go for it.

"I just started talking to coaches. I had a pretty good network, and I just started asking questions," he said. "And they said, 'Go for it. You would be perfect for it.' I started getting motivated to do it, but I spent a whole year researching what I needed to do, how to get in the coaching circle and how to go about starting the process.

“Most guys in my position are Mike McMenamin’s age – 25 years or even younger, right out of college. They are volunteering, and they are starting their coaching careers. It was a little bit of a daunting task at first.”

Pinkman ended up getting a position as a volunteer assistant coach and was the pitching coach at Washington University in St. Louis, a Division III school. But after one season with the Bears, the right scenario gave Pinkman the opportunity to return to Blacksburg to get his degree and coach. Tech’s volunteer assistant coach, Ryan Connelly, had left Tech for a full-time position last July.

“The idea of coming back to Virginia Tech was always a huge want, but it was never really a reality,” Pinkman said. “I was floored by the opportunity, and I am so grateful to Coach (Pete) Hughes for it. I’m able to finish my degree, and I’m getting to coach at Virginia Tech, at the Division I level, in the ACC. It’s just a blessing to be in this situation.”

He started working for Hughes last August, and he enrolled in classes, changing his major from art to sociology. Now, he’s just like any current member of the baseball team, a cautionary tale for any of the men he’s currently coaching. He attends classes and practices and is on the road trips, but

he also puts in office hours. His workload demands his attention for more than 12 hours a day.

“I was not a dedicated student when I was here,” the 33-year-old Pinkman said. “At the time, like most college baseball players, I thought I was going to be a professional baseball player, and that was my goal. So I didn’t take my academics as seriously as I should have.

“Once I contacted Mike Swanhart (baseball’s academic counselor in Student-Athlete Academic Support Services), I realized I needed more hours than I originally expected. But he figured out I could finish my degree with fewer hours if I changed my major to sociology. So Mike helped me organize a plan so that I could come here for a year and a half, two years maybe, and coach and get my degree.”

Pinkman hopes to finish up all his coursework by next December. He certainly counts his blessings and is very appreciative of everyone who has helped him get to this point, which includes the entire baseball coaching staffs at Washington and Virginia Tech, Jon Jaudon (Tech’s associate AD for administration), who started here around the time Pinkman was on campus, Reyna Gilbert-Lowry (assistant AD for student life), and Swanhart.


“They obviously have a vested interest in

helping a former Virginia Tech athlete graduate,” Pinkman said. “But it also clear that they are interested in ‘ME’ finishing my degree. And that’s really cool to see.”

Most of all, he counts his former girlfriend and now wife – the two married in last June, just weeks after his Washington baseball season ended and a month before he moved to Blacksburg – as the biggest blessing of all. She lives in Annandale, Va., and has continued to live there and work while Pinkman has been on this journey.

“The struggles that my wife and I are going through now are going to pay off in the long run because I’m going to have my degree,” he said. “I’m going to be doing something that I truly love. If it weren’t for her being able to help me out and support me emotionally and financially, I wouldn’t be able to be doing what I’m doing right now.

“We’re struggling now so we can benefit from this later, and it’s something that I stress with the guys so much now. I tell them, ‘Regardless of what you do when you do it, make sure you finish your degree because that’s one thing that could potentially hold you back.’”

If anyone would know, it’s Pinkman. He’s taking the hard road to get his, and he’s letting Tech’s players know it. It’s not a road he wants to see them taking. 



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VERSATILITY *is his* SPECIALTY

All-American Jeff Artis-Gray's ability to be successful in many events has played a large part in helping the Tech men's track and field program become one of the nation's best

by Jimmy Robertson

Some student-athletes enjoy their social time, taking advantage of the nightlife opportunities that their universities usually present.

But happy hour for one Virginia Tech student-athlete consists of staying at his house, chilling on his couch and catching old episodes of CSI or Law & Order. The time of day doesn't matter.

"My teammates, everyone who knows me, they have to drag me out of the house for anything to happen," Tech track and field standout Jeff Artis-Gray said, laughing. "I'm really a homebody."

Artis-Gray came out of his shell somewhat following the Hokies' victory at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships in February. He attended a little gathering at one of his teammates' homes to celebrate the men's team and their third straight ACC title, one that came on the heels of last year's outdoor championship and this fall's cross country crown. Certainly, he deserved to celebrate. The Hokies scored 153 points at the ACC indoor meet to beat Florida State's 135, and Artis-Gray himself scored 17.5 points.

Thus, you don't have to be Isaac Newton to figure out his impact on Tech's latest run to the championship.

Then again, he's been doing this since he arrived on Tech's campus three years ago. He's simply the long-locked renaissance man of Tech's track and field program, someone with the ability to compete in multiple events – and to do so successfully to accumulate valuable points.

Want versatility in your track athletes? Well, Artis-Gray won the long jump at the recent ACC indoor meet, finished third in the 60-meter hurdles and participated on the 4x400 relay team that also came in third. Before competing in the 4x400 race,

which was the final event of the meet, he prepped to go down the runway a few times in the triple jump just in case the team had a need for precious points.

"I always loved to be versatile, and I feel the events I do really compliment each other," he said. "The speed work I do really helps in the long jump and with the hurdles. The jumping helps me with the power I need to get out of the blocks in the hurdles. They definitely compliment each other."

Artis-Gray got his start in track and field early. He said that his father, also named Jeffrey, was a track athlete at St. Augustine's, a Division II school outside of Raleigh, N.C., and also his older sister ran track at North Carolina.

Blessed with a long, lithe body, the 6-foot-1 Artis-Gray decided to copy his father and sister and pursue track. His high school coach, Claude Toukene, also coerced him, so Artis-Gray went out for the team his freshman year at Western Branch High School in Chesapeake, Va. Toukene tried to make Artis-Gray a sprinter at first, but that didn't work out too well for one main reason.

"I was too slow," Artis-Gray said.

But his height and his length fit well with the jumping and hurdling events. So Toukene nudged him in that direction.

That was fine with Artis-Gray. He went out for

the sport with modest expectations.

"My coach saw my height and said that I should be a hurdler and a jumper, and I said, 'I'll do it. Just as long as I'm on the team,'" he said. "I started off first as a triple jumper, and I hurdled every now and then, but didn't really get into the hurdles until my sophomore year of high school.

"After my sophomore year going into my junior year, things just kind of took off. I took training to another level and saw stats that I never dreamed of seeing."

Artis-Gray became one of the nation's best jumpers and hurdlers. He earned All-Group AAA

honors five times in the triple jump and four times in the long jump, and he won the state championship in the 55- and 110-meter hurdles his senior season.

Even before that, though, he started getting letters and taking calls from the likes of South Carolina, LSU, Texas A&M, and of course, Tech. He ultimately decided to attend Oklahoma.

Yes, that Oklahoma. The one in Norman, which is quite a lengthy Sooner Schooner ride from Chesapeake.

"Everyone asks me that," Artis-Gray said about going to Oklahoma. "They had a great jumping program there, and they had a national champion, a guy named Will Claye, who actually ended up at Florida and is now an Olympian (he won the national title in the triple jump in 2009 and transferred after his sophomore season). They had

“I'd probably say he's the most versatile athlete I've ever coached. Now, the best athlete I've ever coached? I don't think so. He is good at multiple events, but I've coached two Olympic gold medalists. I've had some real stars. But he's very good, and if you look at it collectively, he's a star shining right among them.”

– Tech sprints, hurdles and jumps coach Charles Foster on Jeff Artis-Gray



Jeff Artis-Gray's ability to jump has helped him become one of the best hurdlers in Tech's history.

a strong jumping program and that attracted me. I wanted to jump and hurdle on the side. When I got there, the story changed.”

Artis-Gray spent one year in Norman. The coaching staff wanted him to focus exclusively on the hurdles. But he loved jumping, and he wanted to do both in college. So after his freshman season, he and the head coach decided it best to part ways.

Of course, that wasn't his only reason for leaving. As one might expect, he missed his family.

“I was the youngest child, and it was pretty hard for me,” he said. “I thought I could take it. I thought I could handle being out there alone, but when you're in the dorm room and in a whole different atmosphere, it's depressing sometimes. So I definitely missed home a lot.”

So Artis-Gray set about to finding a school a little closer to home – and one willing to let him be the versatile athlete he wanted to be. He contemplated SEC schools, but that league ranks as the best track and field conference in the nation, and he didn't anticipate there being any interest given his struggles as a freshman. Instead, he focused on ACC schools.

Tech's staff wasted little time in trying to lure Artis-Gray to Blacksburg – again.

“His coach contacted me from Oklahoma, and said, 'I've got someone for you. He's really good.' But they didn't want him to do but one event, and he said he's better than that,” said Charles Foster, Tech's sprints, hurdles and jumps coach. “I said, 'Well, you're getting me off on the right foot right off the bat.' If he's asking for more and the other school is telling him no, then I'll take that and be happy to do it.

“We hit it off right off the bat, and we've been a good team since we met.”

Once Artis-Gray arrived, he fit in perfectly, as Tech's staff let him do everything he wanted on the track. Since then, he's done what he does best – score points – while also breaking a few school records and earning All-America honors.

Oh, and lest we forget that the Hokies have won three ACC championships (2012 outdoor, 2011 and 2013 indoor) since he arrived on campus and finished in the top 10 at the NCAA meets on four occasions (2012 and 2013 indoor, 2011 and 2012 outdoor).

Individually, Artis-Gray is a four-time All-American. He finished 13th in the long jump at the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships last spring, and he was part of the 4x100 relay

team that also finished 13th, enabling him to earn All-America status in both. This year, at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships, he finished seventh in the long jump, becoming a first-team All-American and was part of the distance medley relay team that finished 12th, with all four members earning second-team honors.

He also holds part of or all of five school records – the 60-meter hurdles (7.77 seconds), the indoor long jump (25 feet, 10 inches; or 7.87 meters), the outdoor long jump (24 feet, 11 inches; or 7.60 meters), the outdoor 4x100 relay (39.62 seconds) and the outdoor 4x400 relay (3:09.95).

But for all his point scoring and All-America honors and school records, Artis-Gray had never won an individual ACC championship. In 2011, he finished third in the long jump at both the league's indoor and outdoor meet, and last year, his best finish was a second at the league's outdoor meet.

The streak ended in late February when Artis-Gray won the long jump in convincing fashion. His best jump shattered Ken Stewart's old school record set in 1984 by more than seven inches.

“The thing that clicked with me this year is my landing,” he said. “Everyone has been telling me that since I started jumping and making it to nationals – if I could fix my landings, I'd be a better jumper.

“I started it a couple of times and it didn't work for me, but this year, I spent more time doing it and I zoned in on the landing. I finally started to stick it early this season, and then during the ACC meet, it really clicked in my head. If I had been focusing on this the whole time, I'd have been jumping like this a while ago. But I guess it's better late than never.”

Artis-Gray has one last jump at glory before the sunset of his career. He hopes to win the long jump at the ACC's outdoor meet this spring, but more importantly, hopes to lead the team to another title. The Tech men's team currently holds the league's indoor, cross country and outdoor championship crowns. But the Hokies lost a lot off the recent indoor title squad, as stalwarts Will Mulherin, Alexander Ziegler and Michael Hammond do not have outdoor eligibility remaining.

“We've got a few tricks up our sleeves,” Artis-Gray countered.

Could that mean more events are in his future? He'll participate on two relay teams this spring in addition to the long jump and the 110-meter hurdles. He may also get a shot in the 400-meter run.

“I don't know how much thinner we can spread him,” Foster said, laughing. “He's pretty thin right now. But he enjoys the competition.

“I'd probably say he's the most versatile athlete I've ever coached. Now, the best athlete I've ever coached? I don't think so. He is good at multiple events, but I've coached two Olympic gold

medalists. I've had some real stars. But he's very good, and if you look at it collectively, he's a star shining right among them."

After the league meet and a likely NCAA trip, Artis-Gray will jump to the next phase of his life. He graduates in May with a degree in consumer studies, and he plans on cutting his dreadlocks – he's had them since high school – which tells you the seriousness in which he takes his future. He wants to go to graduate school, get a master's degree in physical education and get into coaching.

"I definitely want to coach and influence someone's life like my coaches did for me," he said. "There are a lot of scholarships out there, and a lot of kids don't utilize that because they don't have the right coaches. These kids could get education just from running track.

"A lot of African-Americans don't know how they're going to get to school. They don't have the money to pay for it (a college education), and they just don't realize that, if you pick up a sport, you could get a scholarship to pay for it. Me being an athlete, I was very blessed to get a scholarship to be able to go to school for free."

His career at Tech certainly has been one worth celebrating. His future plans are, too.

Just give him a couch and a television, and he may do exactly that. 



Jeff Artis-Gray holds the school record in both the indoor long jump and the outdoor long jump.

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Kylie McGoldrick and her family started a charity several years ago and continue to try and make a difference in young people's lives.



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Young player reaching out to young people

Tech softball player Kylie McGoldrick has established a charity that collects used baseball and softball equipment and gives it to needy youth organizations

by **Jimmy Robertson**

The details are a bit fuzzy. She doesn't remember the exact day or time of day or even the show. But she remembers the moment.

Kylie McGoldrick sat on the sofa in her family's living room in Stratford, N.J., watching some show on television with her father, Kevin. The crux of the evening's entertainment dealt with underprivileged children playing ball, and at that moment, it touched a nerve.

"We were like, 'What can we do to help give back?'" Kylie said.

Not long thereafter, they went into their garage. Kylie noticed a lot of her old softball equipment lying around. She remembered the show and those underprivileged children. She and her family decided to take action.

Now, more than two years later, she's a sophomore at Virginia Tech. She's started every game she's played in except one, and in her brief career, she's hitting better than .270.

But none of that compares to what she's been doing off the field. It's there where she's simply hitting it out of the park.

Kylie and her younger brother, Ryan, along with help from her parents, started a charitable organization entitled "17K Diamonds for All" in which they collect used softball and baseball equipment and redistribute it to needy youth organizations. Their goal is a simple one – to provide kids with the opportunity to play ball.

"We (she and her brother) realized how blessed we are that God has provided us with the

opportunity to play this sport that we all love," Kylie said. "We've always had the equipment available to us and the teams to jump and travel all around the country to get exposure to these college coaches.

"We went into our garage one day, and we already had this much stuff here, so we decided, 'Let's start something.' We came up with the name together. It's '17K Diamonds for All.' My family has always worn the number '17,' so we went for that. The 'K' is for Kylie and 'Diamonds for All' is because the baseball and softball field is in the shape of a diamond."

Kevin McGoldrick created a website to get more information out there about the organization (<http://17kdiamondsforall.com/>). They also use their website to notify those interested about when and where they collect equipment, and where that equipment ends up.

Their first collection of used equipment came in late June of 2009. Kylie played for a travel team based in Newtown, Pa., called the Newtown Rock Gold, and the Rock Gold played in a local tournament that featured several other teams.

She contacted the tournament director and the head coaches of the other teams, notifying them of her plans to collect used equipment and asking them for help. She encouraged those

coaches to contact the parents of their players and have them bring in any used equipment that their daughters may have outgrown.

Her father made signs to be posted at the tournament, and her family brought bins to collect the equipment. The response was overwhelming.

They collected more than 65 bats, 18 helmets, dozens of softball and baseballs, six sets of catchers' gear, a dozen gloves, several dozen cleats, several sets of jerseys and pants and

several bat and gear bags. They donated all the equipment to the Boys and Girls Club of Camden County, N.J.

"My wife and I have always been about giving back, and we're fortunate that both of our kids have been able to play ball," Kevin McGoldrick said. "We've helped them, but we've really allowed them to implement it.

"Both of our kids have always tried to find a way

to help others, and this is a really simple concept. I remember a few years ago, when the troops went abroad, they used Silly String to detect trip wires (around bombs), and Kylie's school started a campaign to collect Silly String. She was a part of that. That's a simple concept, but the concept doesn't have to be big. There are a lot of ways to help folks."

“It's a little overwhelming, but it's awesome to see so many people who are ready to give back. It's hard to step up and try to do it. It can be time consuming. But once you drop off that equipment, you leave with a feeling of gratitude. People have told me that you don't realize how appreciative these kids are. One little glove might change their life. Hearing that from other people is motivation and drive to make it bigger.”

– Kylie McGoldrick on her charity organization

Kylie and her family also have helped other organizations. They held a collection in which they gave the equipment to their local church in Laurel Springs, N.J., to put toward its youth organizations. Again, the response was overwhelming.

Then, she brought “17K Diamonds for All” to Blacksburg.

Kylie arrived in Blacksburg in the fall of 2011, and she knew that academic demands and softball workouts might cut into time that could be used for developing and enhancing her charity organization. But she refused to let that stop her from bringing the organization to the area.

Before this past Christmas, she asked her teammates and Tech’s baseball players to bring back any of their old gear that they weren’t using when they returned from Christmas break. She called Micah’s Backpack, a local church-affiliated organization, to see if officials there could put the equipment to use, but that group deals more with helping to fight hunger than providing sports opportunities. Someone there, though, suggested that she try the Montgomery County Parks and Recreation office, and sure enough, they offered to take whatever she collected.

Just from her teammates and the baseball players, she collected 23 gloves, 11 bats, three bat bags, 15 pairs of cleats and a set of catcher’s equipment. All that equipment will benefit young children in the Montgomery County area.

“I usually call the place and let them know what the charity is about and ask them if they think they would be able to put it to good use,” Kylie said. “I did the same thing with my church. Around here, I started off calling Micah’s Backpack to see if they would need anything, and they didn’t, but they pointed me in the direction of Montgomery County Parks and Rec. I also checked with Special Olympics. I sort of filtered my way through until I found someone in need.”

Kylie has found a kindred spirit for helping others in the form of Tech baseball coach Pete Hughes. The two actually met at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Blacksburg while attending services there, and Kylie became aware of Hughes’ many community service projects.

As most know, Hughes came up with his “19 Ways” campaign in which he and his team find 19 ways each year to help individuals or organizations. Kylie asked Hughes many questions about his charitable endeavors, just to get an insight on how he goes about helping others.

“I’ve talked a lot of with Coach Hughes because I know how much he does around here charity wise,” she said. “It’s an inspiration to see



The left-handed hitting Kylie McGoldrick has started every game in which she’s played at Tech the past two years except for one.

a man who is just as busy as we are finding the time to do all that type of stuff.

“He’s the one who got me involved with Micah’s Backpacks. I started with the Special Olympics through a communications project that I had last year, but his team is involved with Special Olympics, too. He’s definitely an inspiration. It lets you know that if everyone puts a little into this, we can all make a difference.”

McGoldrick also has made a difference on the field for the Hokies. Undaunted at playing in the ACC, she started all 63 games as a freshman at second base. She hit a respectable .264, with four homers and 27 RBI. She scored 33 runs and her 30 walks set a Tech freshman record. She committed just 12 errors in the field.

One of her best games came in the ACC Tournament. Against then-No. 21 North Carolina, she went 2 for 3 and scored a run, and Tech’s win arguably sealed an NCAA regional spot. She earned all-tournament honors for her play in the league’s tournament.

“Everyone comes in with the drive to work

their butts off, just to try to play their freshman year,” she said. “I was told by my travel coach coming in that I needed to figure out my role and learn my role because it can completely change once you get to college. I was just fortunate enough to play second base the last two years of travel ball and then come in and fill that spot here. It was awesome playing the middle with Bkaye Smith (Tech’s shortstop). She was good at coaching me along the way, so I was prepared. She was great support.”

So far this season (as of press time), in spite of a balky knee, McGoldrick is hitting .300, with three homers and nine RBI, including a school-record tying two homers in a game against the Tar Heels in Chapel Hill, N.C. She and her sophomore classmates, a talented group led by her, Kelsey Mericka and Lauren Gaskill, played huge roles in helping the Hokies break into the national polls in mid-March and in helping pull off upsets of nationally ranked UCLA, Michigan and Arizona on their spring break trip.

Tech’s goals for this season were quite lofty

– to win the ACC and to advance to the NCAA regionals for the sixth time in the program’s young history. But with McGoldrick, Mericka, Gaskill and senior leaders like Courtney Liddle and Jasmin Harrell, those goals are attainable.

McGoldrick, though, will never lose sight of the bigger picture, which is to help others. She plans on holding another collection this spring, one in conjunction with a softball game, and she wants “17K Diamonds for All” to get to the point where it holds at least two or three collections each year.

“I hope to run one in the fall and the spring, and maybe during Christmas break,” she said. “I never try to put a prediction out there. Whatever you get is awesome and you’re always thankful for that. But the more we can get, the better.

“It’s a little overwhelming, but it’s awesome to see so many people who are ready to give back. It’s hard to step up and try to do it. It can be time consuming. But once you drop off that equipment, you leave with a feeling of gratitude. People have told me that you don’t realize how appreciative these kids are. One little glove might change their life. Hearing that from other people is motivation and drive to make it bigger.”

McGoldrick plans on keeping the organization going even after her playing days end in a couple of years. That comes as no surprise to those who




Kylie McGoldrick and the Hokies hope to win the ACC title and advance to the NCAA regionals for the sixth time in the program’s history.

know her best. Kevin and Lynn McGoldrick have seen their daughter participate in activities at their church and Special Olympics, and even Buddy Ball, an organization that gives individuals with mental or physical disabilities the opportunity to play sports, regardless of their abilities. She gravitates to those with the most serious challenges.

She always has, displaying traits rarely seen in a 19-year-old. Her passion for helping others is

arguably equal to her passion for playing softball. Maybe it exceeds it.

“For me, what she’s doing is more important than her batting average,” Kevin said. “I try not to be braggadocios, but I’m proud of her. Hey, as parents, it’s our No. 1 job – to raise our kids to help others. So I’m proud of her and her brother.”

He’s not the only one. Folks in these parts continue to hear what Kylie is doing to help others – and they’re pretty proud of her, too. 

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ON THE ATTACK



Megan Will has provided scoring punch for the Hokies in each of the past two years, much in the way her cousin Dawn did during her playing days at Tech.

Megan Will has been a goal-scoring machine the past two years for the Tech women's lacrosse team and is trying to chase down her cousin as the most prolific scorer in Hokie history

by **Marc Mullen**

Throwback Thursday is a term used in the social media world for when people post old pictures of themselves and/or their friends on their social media sites, and ... well ... it's done on a Thursday.

Throwback Thursday took on a whole new meaning for Megan Will, a current sophomore on the Virginia Tech women's lacrosse team, this past Thanksgiving when she visited her Aunt Sharon's and Uncle Gary's home on the annual Thursday holiday.

Her family members started reminiscing, but they didn't pull out an old photo album. Instead, they popped a VHS tape into the VCR – and yes, they still exist. The images displayed on the television were that of Megan's cousin, Dawn Will, who also played lacrosse at Tech and graduated in 2000.

"Thanksgiving was at her parent's house, so she showed me a VHS tape of her junior year, and it was the coolest thing to see how much the program had changed," Megan said. "They were playing games in (Rector Field House), and I was thinking, 'Why are you playing your games in the field house? We never play in there.'

"But it was cool to watch her and see how the uniforms have changed and how different everything was and to see how the program has grown. It was just crazy to see that and to be able to watch games from back then."

For those not familiar with Tech's women's lacrosse history, Dawn Will may be the best

player ever to play for the Hokies. Although she last played more than a decade ago, she still ranks first at Tech in five offensive categories and is the only lacrosse player from Tech to be named an All-American.

She was an honorable mention selection in 1999 when she led the Hokies to the Atlantic 10 Tournament title and was a third-team member in 2000 after an A-10 regular-season title and being named the league's player of the year.

"My cousin Dawn, she was so good, and I remember being little and coming here (to Blacksburg) and watching Virginia Tech lacrosse games," Megan said. "I thought that was the coolest thing in the entire world because she was so good and she was my cousin.

"But she really impacted me. She also had two brothers who went to UNC, so their family was, like, really big in lacrosse, so that kind of helped us out, me and my older sister."

Megan is the middle child of five siblings, with Andrew and Julie being older and Ellen and Laura being younger. So it was Julie, and maybe more her mother, Cathy, who got her into lacrosse.

"I was in second grade, and my older sister was deciding on what she wanted to do and she went

for lacrosse," Megan said. "So my mom signed her up for lacrosse and she was just like, 'If Julie's doing it, you might as well do it, too.' So I was kind of thrown into it."

After playing a couple years, she then moved on to club lacrosse, playing for the North East Maryland Select (NEMS), and just blossomed.

So much so that when she entered high school, she was the only freshman playing on the varsity team, and she got to play with her sister for the first time.

"My older sister and I did not get along at all – we had to share a room – and we probably didn't start getting along until my freshman year," she said.

"And that's probably why, because we started playing lacrosse together. And now we are like best friends, which is awesome, because I don't know what I would do without her."

Shortly after her freshman year, Will was at a crossroads. Due to a number of factors, she needed to make a choice – either continue on a soccer path, which she also played and considered her main sport growing up, or follow her sister, who was planning on playing lacrosse for Lynchburg College after graduation.

"In high school, I really was going to focus on

“ My cousin Dawn, she was so good, and I remember being little and coming here (to Blacksburg) and watching Virginia Tech lacrosse games,” Megan said. “I thought that was the coolest thing in the entire world because she was so good and she was my cousin. ”

– Megan Will on her cousin, Dawn



Dawn Will scored 186 goals during an outstanding four-year career at Tech in the late 1990s.

soccer, actually. Growing up, soccer was my main sport, but with how good of an experience I had with lacrosse, that kind of altered everything,” Will said. “In 10th grade, I had to decide on one or the other because my mom told me that I couldn’t do both club soccer and club lacrosse. So I had to pick one for club, and I could do the other for high school.

“At the time, my club team for soccer kind of fell apart, and I had to go to another club team, so I think that’s when I realized that this isn’t completely my thing anymore, and club lacrosse kind of took over and I was kind of OK with that. I was really into my club lacrosse team, and so I just went for lacrosse and I’m just so happy that I did.”

After that, the next step for Will was where to further her education and at what level was she going to play lacrosse. Julie was playing for the Hornets, a Division III school, and Megan was trying to figure out where she would fit.

“I looked at some D-II schools, and I was watching one of their practices and I thought that I could play at that level,” she said. “So I thought, ‘If I could play here, why can’t I play at D-I? And if I go D-I, why can’t I play at an ACC school?’ After my junior year, I thought, ‘Why not push it the farthest that I could go?’, and so I started to

look at just D-I schools. And then when an ACC school was looking at me, then I thought I might as well go for it.

“But I did not feel obligated at all to come here. It was kind of just an added bonus. Once I came here, I just loved it, and that my cousin came here and she loved it, and it helped me because she would always tell me how amazing it was.”

Although she couldn’t get her cousin’s number, No. 15, when she chose her jersey number for the Hokies, Will decided to go with No. 35, the number she wore for NEMS. She said she had the opportunity to switch for this year, but she is just too superstitious.

That has turned out to be a good move because she has followed up an impressive freshman campaign – 30 goals, 11 more than Dawn scored in her first season – with a successful sophomore season.

“No freshman expects to play. You just go in and learn everything and start to get the feel,” Megan said about her first-year success. “The transition from high school to D-I lacrosse is huge. It’s so much faster, and you need to adjust, and I guess it was just a lot simpler to adjust for me.

“It was just playing lacrosse for me, and I was just playing like I knew I could play. It was nice

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to be able to get the opportunity to start and play and be able to make an impact, so that was really cool. I wanted to play and make my impact, but I was not expecting it to be that much.”

She is already approaching – and will likely pass – her cousin’s first two-year total (Dawn had 65), but will need a phenomenal junior and senior year to get close to the school record of 186. No one other than Dawn has even reached 140.

Even if she falls short of her cousin’s record, she’ll have her own video filled with highlights, and it will no doubt be saved – though more than likely directly into the computer or onto DVDs. And a decade from now, those images will be played somewhere, somehow for somebody.

Maybe in the Will family, they’ll be played on Thanksgiving. It could be called “Throwback Thanksgiving.” Certainly, there will be plenty to watch. 

GETTING TO KNOW MEGAN WILL



Q: Why do you want to be an elementary school teacher?

MW: “I used to play school when we were younger, and I would always be the teacher. I have so many sisters, and we have this huge chalkboard in our basement and we have all these little teacher things, and I would always be the teacher, so ever since then, I’ve always wanted to teach.”

Q: Do you have any pregame rituals?

MW: “I wear my hair the exact same way every game, with two braids going across my head. And it may sound superstitious, but I have to wear it like that. If I don’t, I feel like if I have a bad game, I’ll blame it on my hair. No, I’m just kidding.”

Q: The team went to California for spring break. What was that like?

MW: “I had never been off the East Coast, so that was real cool, except that I am terrified of planes, so that was kind of scary. But it was just so warm, and it was so fun. Everyone was just bonding and just being able to play in California – that was my favorite part. Last year, we were in Blacksburg over spring break and everyone else was gone, so that was sad, and weird, but being able to go somewhere with the

team and a warm place, that was fun.”

Q: Being from the Baltimore area, were you excited about the Ravens’ victory?

MW: “I am a huge Ravens fan, and I am so excited about the Super Bowl win. But I am very sad about everyone leaving, especially Ed Reed (he signed with the Houston Texans). It was cool winning the Super Bowl because I can’t even remember the last time they won it. I was too little. Two girls from our team, Kimmy and Tina Patten, they are 49ers fans, and I am so jealous of them because they got to go, and they said it was awesome. But Baltimore won, so I got them on that.”

Q: What’s the craziest thing that’s ever happened to you?

MW: “I got into a bus accident when I was in seventh grade, and that was really scary. It was on my way to school. My bus driver had a stroke, and it was so scary because we were running over these huge stone mailboxes and stones were going everywhere and we ran over a couple cars. It was awful. And there were only like four of us on the bus because I was one of the first to be picked up, and it was early in the ride. It was a terrible, terrible morning.”

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Tech men's and women's swimming and diving teams record top-25 finishes at the NCAA Championships

by Jimmy Robertson

Ryan Hawkins earned two All-America honors and led the Virginia Tech men's swimming and diving team to a top-20 finish at the NCAA Men's Swimming and Diving Championships held March 28-30 in Indianapolis, Ind.

Tech finished in a tie for 20th with 52 points – just three shy of the program's best point total at the NCAA meet. Only NC State (15th) and Duke (17th) finished higher than the Hokies among ACC schools in the meet.

Hawkins, a junior from Charlotte, N.C., tallied 27 of those 52 points. He finished in sixth place in the 3-meter diving event (397.70 points) and eighth place in the platform diving event (352.85 points). As a result, he earned All-America status in both events. He also earned honorable mention All-America honors in the 1-meter event after finishing in 14th place with 312.20 points.

Logan Shinholser, a senior from Burtonsville, Md., finished ninth in the platform event to earn honorable mention All-America status.

Tech's 200 medley relay team came in 15th place with a time of 1:26.42. The quartet of Zach McGinnis, Nathan Hoisington, Gregory Mahon and Joe Bonk earned honorable mention All-America honors.

McGinnis, Mahon, Bonk and Emmett Dignan teamed to earn honorable mention honors as part of two relay teams. The 200 freestyle relay team placed 16th with a time of 1:18.82, while the 400 medley relay team came in 14th with a time of 3:09.83.

Mahon and McGinnis also earned honorable mention honors. Mahon took 15th in the 100-yard butterfly with a time of 46.94 seconds, while McGinnis placed 15th in the 100-yard backstroke with a time of 46.82 seconds.

On the women's side, the Tech women's swimming and diving team finished 24th at the NCAA Swimming and Diving Championships held March 22-23 in Indianapolis. The Hokies finished with 26 points and recorded the third-highest finish among ACC schools, as North Carolina came in 12th and Virginia came in 18th.




Heather Savage closed out a terrific career in fine fashion. The senior from Canandaigua, N.Y., finished eighth in the 100-yard butterfly, swimming the event in a time of 52.14 seconds. The two-time ACC champion in the event earned All-America honors for the second straight year. She leaves Tech holding the school record time in both the 100 and 200 butterfly.

Kaylea Arnett, a sophomore from Spring, Texas, earned honorable mention All-America honors in two events. On the first day of the event, she finished in 10th place in the 1-meter diving competition, accumulating a score of 326.60 points. Then, on the final day of the event, she scored 301.10 points in the platform

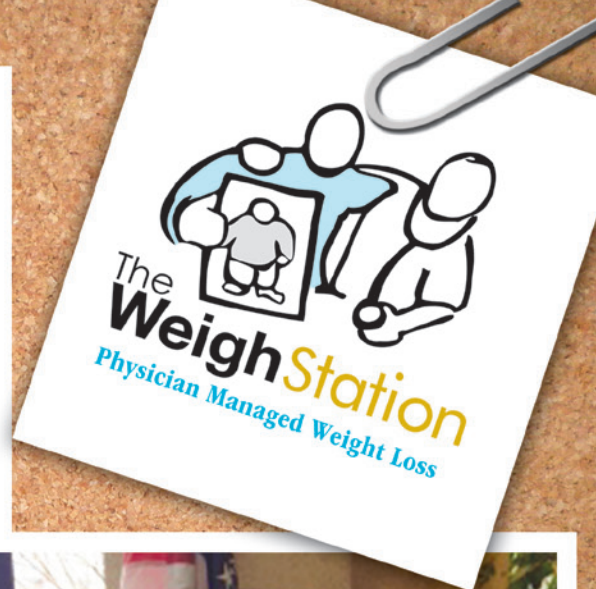
event to place 11th.

Logan Kline also closed out her career earning All-America honors. The senior from Mission Hills, Kansas, earned an honorable mention nod after finishing 15th in the 3-meter diving event with 325.35 points.

The Hokies lose a lot of talent off both the men's and women's teams, as Shinholser, Mahon and McGinnis depart on the men's side, while Savage and Kline leave on the women's side. But the remainder of those who qualified for the NCAA Championships – a total of 13 – return for next season, leaving Tech coaches, swimmers, divers and fans with optimism looking ahead to the 2013-14 season. 

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