

inside

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HOKIES SPORTS

The Official Magazine of Virginia Tech Athletics

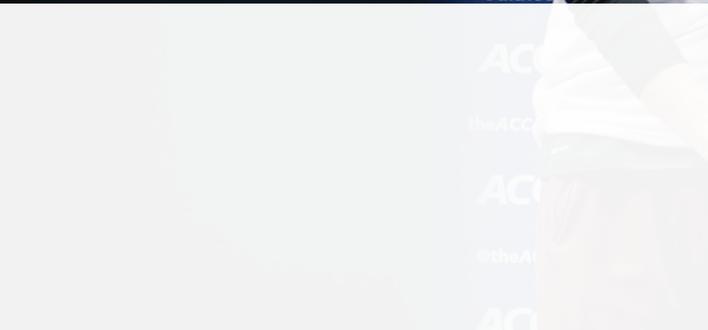


ACC CHAMPIONS!

A banner week for Virginia Tech athletics started with the men's swimming and diving team claiming its first ACC title and ended with the wrestling team winning its second straight ACC crown

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster gives his insight on the defense heading into spring practice



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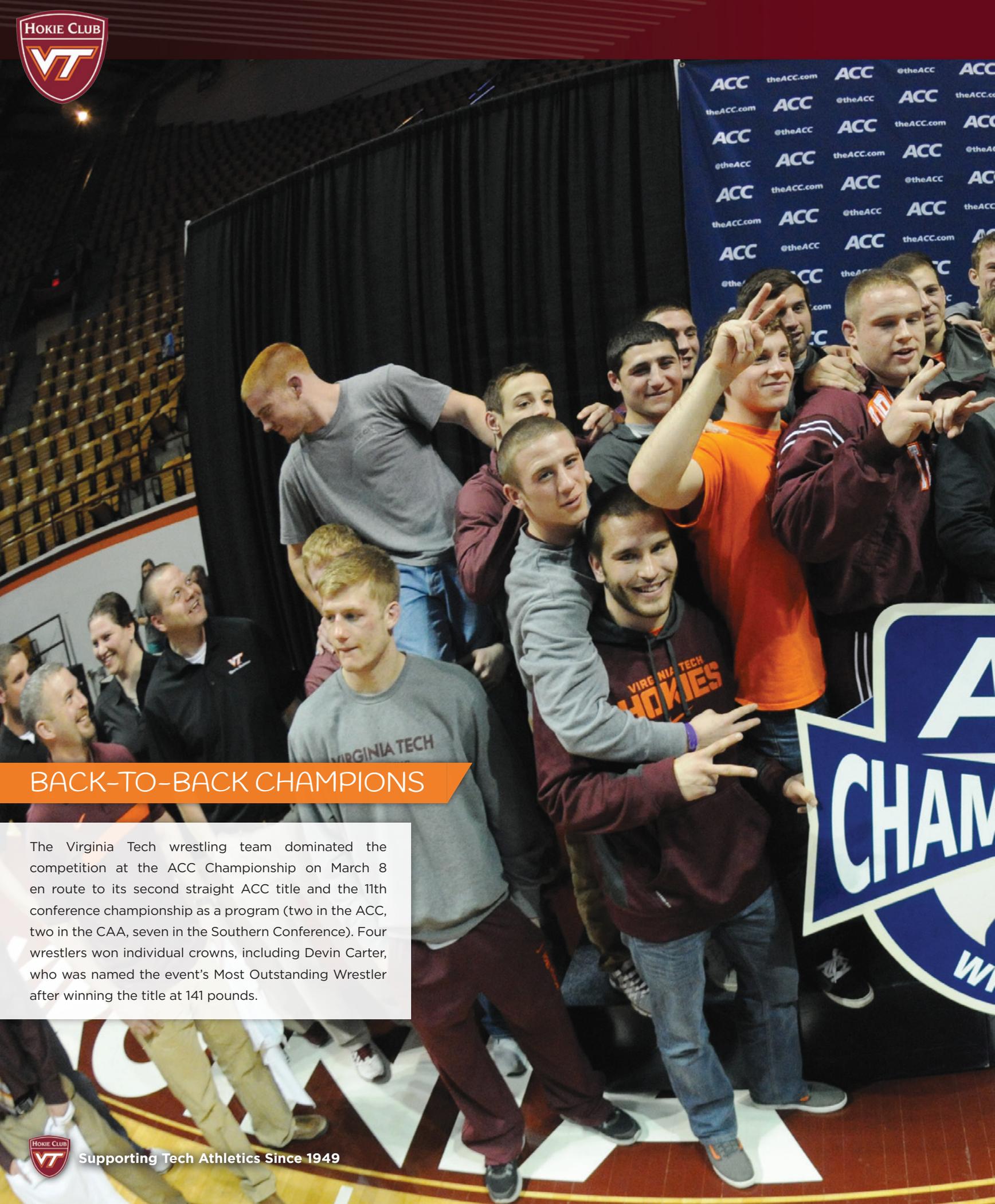
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BACK-TO-BACK CHAMPIONS

The Virginia Tech wrestling team dominated the competition at the ACC Championship on March 8 en route to its second straight ACC title and the 11th conference championship as a program (two in the ACC, two in the CAA, seven in the Southern Conference). Four wrestlers won individual crowns, including Devin Carter, who was named the event's Most Outstanding Wrestler after winning the title at 141 pounds.





THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

“Thanks for all the support! Being a Hokie is a blessing!”

Austin Gabel
R-Sophomore | Wrestling

“Thank you for everything that you do for Virginia Tech and all of the sports programs!”

Brooks Morrison
Sophomore | Wrestling





The Donor File

Nancy & Coleman Brittle

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL: Silver

CURRENTLY RESIDES: Blacksburg, Va.

WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE?

Nancy- 1972, Coleman- 1971

FAMILY:

Nancy's two sons, Todd (2004) and Mark (2006) Helton, are Hokies and Coleman's sons, Eric (1997) and Ryan (2000) Brittle are both Hokies. Coleman's daughter, Renee, is a University of Tennessee grad.



Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...

A: A passionate Virginia Tech fan who loves this university, the athletes, the spirit and the community.

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because ...

A: It is family. We have traveled all over the world and always wear our orange and maroon. Rarely will we not have someone shout, "Go Hokies," and we immediately find new friends and extend our Hokie family.

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

A: There are so many great memories! The national championship game in 1999 was played just after my son had received his acceptance letter to Tech. We took him to New Orleans for his first college football game! WOW! Another memorable moment was my very first airplane trip. As a Tech cheerleader, I rode the Virginia Tech president's plane to Buffalo, N.Y., in 1969, cheered at the game, and then flew back in the same day! A most memorable experience for

Coleman was watching his son (Ryan) play baseball at Tech.

Q: How did you get involved with the Hokie Club? Why do you enjoy being a Hokie Rep?

A: Being avid Virginia Tech sports enthusiasts, it was just a natural fit for us to get involved when we moved to Blacksburg. We enjoy helping with the Hokie events that support our athletics program. Working the Hokie Celebration event, the Welcome Back Picnic, the Hardwood Club auctions and anywhere else that we can give a hand to promote Hokie sports ... we want to be involved. Through these events, we have met so many wonderful folks who share our Tech bond.

Q: What caused you to become a fan of Virginia Tech?

A: I became a fan since the first day I came to campus. My father graduated from Burruss Hall in 1949 after the war, so it has been a special place all my life. Watching the enthusiasm and passion

that Tech fans displayed wherever we were proved to us that there was no place like Virginia Tech!

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

A: Not just game day, but we frequently dress in our orange and maroon attire wherever we go. Game day means tailgating with friends, meeting new Hokies and expanding our Hokie Nation family. Win or lose, we love and support our teams, although the postgame celebrations are much more fun after winning!

Q: We are Hokie Club members because ...

A: With the motto of our university being "Ut Prosim," giving back to the university - whether it means giving our time or money - is important, and because sports provide the most visible exposure of Tech to the nation, we feel like it is important to support the athletics programs. Sharing our enthusiasm with other Hokie fans is most enjoyable for us.



The following is the remaining list of donors who upgraded their memberships in 2013 along with new members. Room did not allow for the complete list, so the remainder will be listed next month.

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news & notes *by Jimmy Robertson*

Hokies land transfer QB

Michael Brewer, a quarterback from Lake Travis, Texas, will be transferring to Virginia Tech after spending the previous three years at Texas Tech. He plans to graduate from Texas Tech in May and then transfer to Virginia Tech, where he will be eligible to play immediately and have two years of eligibility remaining. The NCAA allows players who complete their undergraduate degree to transfer without having to sit out a year.

Brewer, a 6-foot-1, 185-pounder, played in four games this past season for the Red Raiders. A back injury suffered in June set him back, and he only got limited reps behind Davis Webb and

Baker Mayfield, who combined to throw for more than 5,000 yards this past season.

Brewer completed 7 of 10 for 65 yards and a touchdown this past season. In 2012, he completed 34 of 48 for 375 yards and four touchdowns while playing in nine games.

Brewer, who narrowed his choices to Virginia Tech and Kentucky, was ranked the No. 43 prospect in Texas by Rivals coming out of high school. He played on four consecutive state championship teams at Lake Travis, and as a senior, threw for 2,865 yards. He lost only one game as a starting quarterback during his high school career.

ACC All-Academic Teams announced

The Atlantic Coast Conference announced its fall All-Academic Teams, and 22 Virginia Tech student-athletes made the team in their respective sports.

To be eligible for consideration, a student-athlete must have earned a 3.0 grade-point average

for the previous semester and maintained a 3.0 cumulative average during his or her academic career. A student-athlete in graduate school must maintain a 3.5 grade-point average.

The following Tech student-athletes were named:

Women's cross country

Courtney Dobbs (finance)

Men's basketball

Jarell Eddie (psychology)

Will Johnston (human nutrition, food and exercise)

Trevor Thompson (university studies)

Joey van Zegeren (international studies)

Women's basketball

Uju Ugoka (sociology)

Football

Brandon Facyson (biology)

Sam Rogers (university studies)

Trey Edmunds (communications)

Women's soccer

Dayle Colpitts (biology)

Jazmine Reeves (human resource management)

Shannon Mayrose (master's in counselor education)

Katie Yensen (biology)

Ashley Meier (human development)

Jordan Coburn (communications)

Murielle Tiernan (university studies)

Men's soccer

Robert Alberti (marketing management)

Kyle Renfro (history)

Daniel Lauretano (university studies)

Volleyball

Kathryn Caine (marketing, international studies)

Jordan Fish (human development)

Lindsey Owens (general bioscience)

Three Tech student-athletes earn postgraduate scholarships

Virginia Tech pole vaulter Leigh Allin, runner Frances Dowd and women's tennis player Tea Ivanovic were three of 44 ACC student-athletes who were selected for the Weaver-James-Corrigan Award, including three who will receive the Thacker Award, as announced by ACC Commissioner John Swofford. An additional six ACC student-athletes who plan to enter a professional career in his or her chosen sport were named honorary recipients.

The Weaver-James-Corrigan and Jim and Pat Thacker postgraduate scholarships are awarded to selected student-athletes who intend to pursue a graduate degree following completion of their undergraduate requirements. Each recipient will receive \$5,000 toward his or her graduate education. Those honored have performed with distinction in both the classroom and their

respective sport, while demonstrating exemplary conduct in the community.

Dowd, from Fairfax, Va., was one of the three ACC recipients of the Thacker Award. Recipients of the award must demonstrate outstanding performance both in athletic competition and in the classroom and intend to further their education through postgraduate studies at an ACC institution. Dowd is studying environmental policy and planning.

Allin, from Lexington, Ky., is studying mechanical engineering, while Ivanovic, a native of Antwerpen, Belgium, is majoring in international studies.

The 50 student-athletes will be honored at the annual ACC Postgraduate Luncheon presented by ESPN on April 16 in the Guilford Ballroom at the Sheraton Greensboro at the Four Seasons. 

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Five intriguing names to watch, as Tech kicks off spring practice

Click on the football schedule on hokiesports.com, and it says that the Hokies' open the 2014 season on Aug. 30 against William & Mary.

Yet ask any Tech football coach and he will tell you that the season kicks off on March 26 – the opening day of spring football practice.

Tech lost more than 70 percent of its offense last season (Logan Thomas) and five starters on the defense's front wall. Good players – and good leaders – departed after the Sun Bowl loss to UCLA. So the coaches begin the process of finding replacements.

Spring practice provides opportunities for players. The question is who will take advantage of them? Well, here are five players to watch, as spring ball gets set to begin:

Mark Leal – Not to be Captain Obvious here, but everyone will be watching Leal this spring, right? He plays the most important position and possesses the most experience of the candidates vying to replace Thomas.

Without question, Leal played poorly in the bowl game in placed of the injured Thomas. But he's better than that. He made plays in scrimmages over the past two years, and being the backup, he went up against Tech's No. 1 defense in every scrimmage. Nothing prepares a quarterback better than that.

Expect to see a motivated Leal this spring. He's waited four years for this moment.

Seth Dooley – Dooley enrolled at Tech in January of last year. He went through spring practice last spring, and then he took a redshirt year last fall. He will participate in this spring practice and offseason workouts before August

practices start.

So Dooley will have participated in two spring practices and spent roughly 18 months working in Mike Gentry's strength and conditioning program before hitting the field against William & Mary on Aug. 30. Is there any better way to prepare a football player for his college career?

There are other reasons to like him. He's every bit of 6-foot-4, weighs nearly 250 pounds and ran a sub-4.6 40-yard dash in recent testing. He made a lot of plays in practices and scrimmages last spring and last August. Tech needs defensive ends, and if he continues to make plays, he could find himself seeing a lot of action next fall, possibly as a starter.

Alston Smith – Andrew Miller's lengthy career as a starter ended with the Sun Bowl, and his position (right guard) is the only vacancy on an offensive line that returns four starters. Expect Smith to be in the mix as Miller's replacement.

Genes aside – he's the son of former Tech standout Bruce Smith – Smith possesses a lot of attributes that make him an intriguing prospect. The coaches moved him from defensive tackle last fall, and he immediately impressed. They like his footwork, and he already throws up a 400-plus pound bench press in the weight room. His work ethic is off the chart, and the coaches love that out of any player.

Can Smith's upside overcome his lack of experience? Spring practice should provide the answer.

Nigel Williams – Williams gave fans a peek at his ability last season, playing 140 snaps from scrimmage as a redshirt freshman and even

recording a sack against Alabama in the season opener. Now, he could move into a starting role at defensive tackle, provided he holds off challenges from Woody Baron, Corey Marshall and a couple of true freshmen.

Williams possesses the size and strength needed to dominate. He also ran in the 4.8 range and recorded a 28-inch vertical jump at 285 pounds. He's explosive and athletic.

The Hokies lost the underrated Derrick Hopkins off last season's squad, and Hopkins played great for three years. If Williams comes close to that, he'll have a tremendous career. The path toward that starts this spring.

Joel Caleb – This is a huge spring for Caleb, who needs to show the talent that made him one of the state's top prospects two years ago. The coaches believe tailback is the position for him, but the depth chart continues to become more crowded at that spot.

Caleb shows flashes, with his size and speed, but not enough on a consistent basis. He should get plenty of opportunities this spring. Trey Edmunds (broken leg) and Shai McKenzie (ACL) are out or limited. Another heralded freshman, Marshawn Williams, needs to learn the offense, so expect J.C. Coleman, Chris Mangus and Caleb to get plenty of reps.

This is the perfect time for Caleb to shine. Hopefully, he takes advantage of it.

Opportunities are available for all players. That is what makes spring practice so much fun – and important.

After all, the season doesn't start in August. It starts in March. 



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In the Coastal Division, Hokies aren't the only contenders answering questions this spring

Although Virginia Tech's 2014 spring football game isn't until Saturday, April 26, we're going to learn a whole bunch about this year's Hokies in the next few weeks as spring drills get underway.

The post-Logan Thomas era begins at Tech, where senior Mark Leal, rising redshirt sophomore Brenden Motley and true freshman Andrew Ford will get first dibs at the quarterback spot. They'll get the spring reps ahead of incoming rookie Chris Durkin and Hokie-to-be Michael Brewer (who could be the first Texas Tech alum to play quarterback for Virginia Tech).

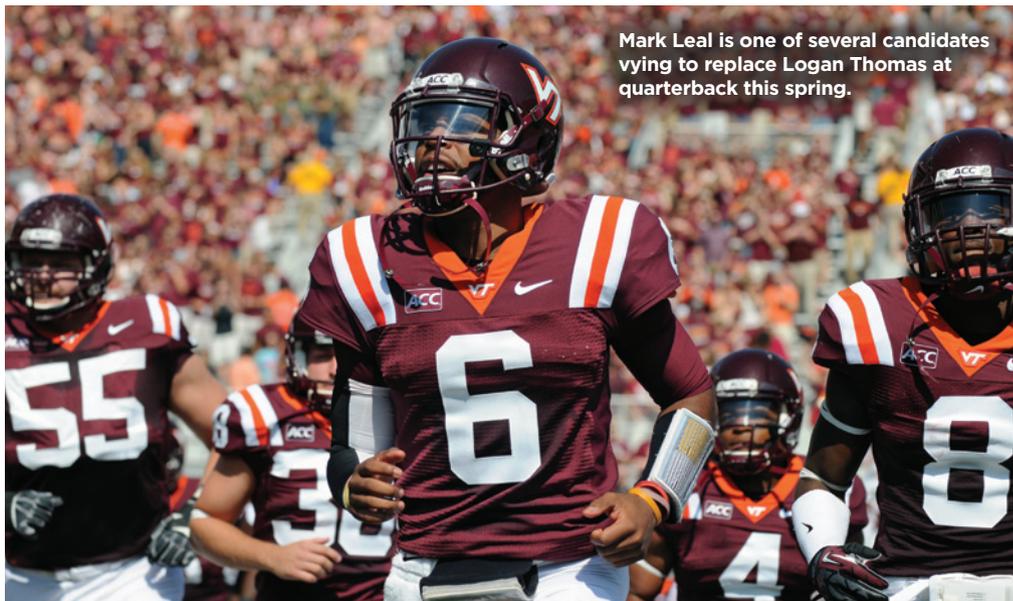
The latter duo will arrive this summer. While a wide-open quarterback competition excites the fans, it scares the heck out of coaches who have to take an inexperienced quarterback to Ohio State in week two.

The Hokies, like most of the other teams in the ACC, have some serious holes to fill in 2014. A lot of good players graduated, and some other stars left early from this conference. The new names and new faces make the Coastal Division college football's true "wildcard division" this fall.

For Hokie fans, newcomers, like tailback Marshawn Williams, and the return of tight end Ryan Malleck are encouraging. But with an inexperienced quarterback and some holes on defense, what are Tech's realistic expectations for this fall?

Five months out, one could make a point that Tech, Miami, Duke, UNC or Pittsburgh could be the preseason favorite to win the Coastal Division. Georgia Tech and Virginia ... not so much. But the other five teams? Each could get preseason votes to win the division.

This spring is important in Blacksburg, but



Mark Leal is one of several candidates vying to replace Logan Thomas at quarterback this spring.

fans also need to keep an eye on Coral Gables, Durham, Chapel Hill and Pittsburgh. Here's a look at the other four:

MIAMI

Last year: 9-4 overall, 5-3 in ACC. Lost to the Hokies 42-24 in Miami Gardens.

What looks good: A roster full of offensive stars with the return of tailback Duke Johnson and receivers Phillip Dorsett, Stacy Coley, and Herb Waters. The 'Canes are going to score points ... again.

What concerns coach Al Golden: Miami is replacing quarterback Stephen Morris this spring, and the 'Canes don't have much defensive depth. They were totally worn out by season's end

last year.

Schedule: Miami has the toughest schedule in the Coastal. The 'Canes open at Louisville, play at Virginia Tech on a Thursday night, and play host to Florida State as the crossover game. Those three teams beat the 'Canes 36-9, 42-24 and 41-14 last year.

Spring ball player to watch: Quarterback Ryan Williams.

Little-known fact: Miami has never won the Coastal Division and hasn't won 10 games since the BIG EAST days back in 2003 under then-coach Larry Coker.

DUKE

Last year: 10-4 overall, 6-2 in the ACC – and



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was the Coastal Division champ. The Blue Devils beat Virginia Tech 13-10 at Lane Stadium.

What looks good: All the big names on offense return – quarterbacks Brandon Connette and Anthony Boone, receiver Jamison Crowder and tailback Josh Snead. Duke returns three starters on the offensive line and booming placekicker Ross Martin, who nailed kicks from 51 yards and 53 yards at Lane last year.

What concerns coach David Cutcliffe: Duke gave up a ton of yards last season. In fact, the Blue Devils finished 12th in the ACC in total defense, allowing 418 yards per game.

Schedule: If you're going to pick Duke to win the division, here's another reason why: the Blue Devils get both Virginia Tech and North Carolina in Durham and miss Clemson and Florida State in the schedule rotation. That's a big advantage.

Spring ball player to watch: Duke returns 44 lettermen and 17 starters, including three All-Americans and nine All-ACC picks. The Blue Devils already completed their spring practice, so the player to watch this spring at Duke is Jabari Parker in the NCAA Tournament – and then in the NBA Draft.

Little-known fact: Duke has never played in three straight bowl games. That will change this fall.

NORTH CAROLINA

Last year: 7-6 overall, 4-4 in the ACC. Lost at Virginia Tech 27-17.

What looks good: The Tar Heels won six of their final seven games last season, and the emergence of quarterback Marquise Williams has North Carolina fans excited about this fall. The Tar Heels are similar to Miami in that they have tons of offensive skill guys returning.

What concerns coach Larry Fedora: Again like Miami, the defense is the question mark. The Tar Heels could not stop the run last season (182.5 yards per game last season – last in the ACC). They were also the second-most penalized team in the league. Defense and discipline are two words you'll likely hear this spring in Chapel Hill. Some good defensive players (defensive end Kareem Martin and defensive backs Tre Boston and Jabari Price) are gone, too.

Schedule: The Tar Heels play at Clemson this fall in the 2014 conference opener. The Hokies visit the following week at Kenan Stadium. The Tar Heels will need a split at the very least to win the Coastal.

Spring ball player to watch: Fedora brought in Seth Littrell, Indiana's co-offensive coordinator the past two seasons, as his new offensive coordinator. Littrell replaced Blake Anderson, who took the head coaching job at Arkansas State. North Carolina will still play

fast, though, and a name to watch this spring is tailback Elijah Hood from Charlotte. Hood enrolled early at North Carolina and will go through spring ball.

Little-known fact: Since 2008, North Carolina has had more first-round NFL draft picks than any other ACC school (6). Tight end Eric Ebron is likely to get picked early in this year's draft as well.

PITTSBURGH

Last year: 7-6 overall, 3-5 in the ACC. Lost at Virginia Tech 19-9.

What looks good: Wide receiver Tyler Boyd. In fact, he looks great.

What concerns coach Paul Chryst: Quarterback Tom Savage and defensive tackle Aaron Donald are gone. Pittsburgh would be a long shot to win the division, and Chryst would admit as much. But the Panthers will certainly help determine who does win the league.

Schedule: Pittsburgh doesn't play Florida State, Clemson or Louisville this season, which is huge. That's the same for the Hokies and Duke. The difference? Duke, Georgia Tech and Virginia Tech all visit Heinz Field.

Spring ball player to watch: QB Chad Voytik

Little-known fact: Every single point Pittsburgh scored in its 30-27 bowl victory over Bowling Green was scored by a freshman – Boyd, who was a freshman All-American, kicker Chris Blewitt from Northern Virginia, and running back James Conner, who rushed for 229 yards in the Panthers' bowl win.

So now that you have a thumbnail for each team, who's the favorite in the Coastal?

If you believe in Duke and what Cutcliffe is doing, then the Blue Devils may be your choice. They have two quarterbacks who might be able to start for any other team in the division and a favorable schedule. Plus, Duke has a tremendous kicker in Martin and receiver in Crowder among three All-American players.

If you believe in Tech's defense, trust the running game will return in 2014 and that the Hokies can get solid quarterback play from one of the five candidates at that position, then it could be the Hokies' year.

Or, perhaps the Heels or Miami have solved defensive issues and can make it happen. Five months out, there is no clear-cut winner here.

Other than Duke, every other Coastal team has a new name at quarterback, running back or kicker – in the case of Virginia Tech, all of the above this spring.

New names and fresh faces will make this spring really interesting to watch – all the way from Blacksburg to Coral Gables.

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Hokie student-athletes get jumpstart on professional development

On a cold, snowy evening in late January, 34 Hokie student-athletes filled the west side of Lane Stadium. They weren't there to watch film or run stadium steps. Instead, they exchanged their jerseys for business suits, as they participated in the 2014 Student-Athlete Career Jumpstart. This annual event, put on by the Office of Student Life, focuses on helping junior and senior student-athletes enhance their professional development.

The evening began with the student-athlete career fair, which was designed to assist student-athletes in preparing for career fairs and interviews by providing networking opportunities with professionals on local and national levels. Representatives from Kohl's, PepsiCo, Northwestern Mutual, First Bank & Trust Company, the United States Marine Corps, the Peace Corps, Southern Teachers Agency and Enterprise Rent-A-Car were in attendance. Virginia Tech Career Services staff members John Gray Williams and Johanna Smith were also on hand to provide information about programs and services offered by their office. This year, department photographer Dave Knachel provided LinkedIn profile photos, which allows for promotion of professional development through social media.

"Any time you can create a professional environment that places student-athletes who are ready, willing and able alongside organizations seeking interns and employees, you've created an opportunity for development and success," said Chris Helms, Tech's associate AD for Olympic sports. "The athletics Office of

Student Life and their Career Jumpstart program did exactly that, and those who participated came away with an enhanced awareness, new connections and potential career directions."

One of the goals of this event was to create an intimate setting for students to help enhance their confidence before attending larger campus career fairs. The timing of the event was essential since the spring Business Horizons career fair was held two days later. Prior to the event, students were given a networking pre-test that assessed their knowledge of and confidence level regarding networking. Seventy-eight percent strongly agreed that networking was important before attending the event, and this number increased to 83 percent following the event. The pre-test results also revealed that 15 percent of those in attendance knew several people with whom they should network. This number doubled to 31 percent after the career fair.

Following the career fair, participants took a short walk to a new location for the networking etiquette dinner. This portion of the evening provided an opportunity for students to interact with employers while also learning proper dining and conversation etiquette in a professional setting. In the past, many student-athletes expressed interest in learning more about athletics administration, and for that reason, several staff members from the athletics department were invited to the dinner to serve as table hosts and to help facilitate conversation. Helms and associate ADs Tom Gabbard and Jon Jaudon were in attendance, as well as clinical psychologist Dr. Gary Bennett, sports

nutritionist Jennie Zabinsky, and J.C. Whidden and Grant Duncan from the sports marketing department. Terry Bolt, Hokie Club Director of Development for Special Gifts, was also in attendance and was instrumental in encouraging several Hokie Club members to attend the event.

One of the main attractions of the evening was the suit contest. Students who attended the Career Jumpstart were automatically entered into a drawing to win a complimentary business suit. This year, football student-athletes Nick Bush and Darius Redman were selected as well as Becca Niles from the lacrosse team and cross country and track student Sarah Rapp. These students recently spent time at Garrett's Menswear Depot and Meg's Specialty Womenswear in Radford, Va., and Ross Dress for Less in Christiansburg, Va., and had the chance to pick out their business suits.

"The Career Jumpstart provided me with valuable information that I can carry into a professional setting," Bush said. "Not only did I get practice in communicating with professional employers, but I also got to experience proper etiquette when dining. The fact that I was able to win a suit during the drawing made it even more phenomenal, and I would like to thank Garrett's in Radford for providing our suits."

Virginia Tech student-athletes know firsthand the significance of practicing to develop their athletics skills. They also know how important it is to take advantage of opportunities to enhance their professional development and how persistence in both areas can pay dividends toward their future success. 

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Tech's swimmers, divers and coaches jumped into the pool following the final event of the 2014 ACC Men's Championship in celebration of the program's first ACC title.

TECH MEN WIN FIGHT TO THE FINISH

Getting solid performances up and down its lineup, the Tech men's swimming and diving team held on over NC State to claim its first ACC championship and the program's first since 2000

by Jimmy Robertson

The 2014 ACC Men's Swimming and Diving Championship at the Greensboro Aquatic Center in Greensboro, N.C., quickly turned into a dual meet.

After the first day, the competition pitted Virginia Tech against NC State. It also pitted the mentor versus his pupil.

Tech coach Ned Skinner and NC State coach Braden Holloway know each other quite well, as Holloway served as a Tech assistant under Skinner for seven years before taking the NC State job three years ago. The two, and their teams, competed fiercely, but in the end, the elder statesman and his team won.

The Hokies used superior diving talent and overall team depth to claim their first ACC swimming and diving title, edging the Wolfpack on the final day in a meet that came down to the final few events.

"It's interesting because Braden's a very intense competitor, and he was intense to work with here," Skinner said. "I know Braden and he knows me, and he knows that I'm a pretty intense

competitor, too. I know how badly he wants it. I know how tirelessly he's working to build that program. It's a combination between respect and competitive fire and my own personal fire to win.

"He and I were actually laughing about it at the meet. It's so interesting that we covet the same thing and both live our life for that. It brings out the best in you. I'm just glad to have come out on top."

The Hokies, who won the school's 17th ACC team title since joining the league for competition in 2004, scored 1,264 points compared to 1,226 points for NC State. Tech won its first swimming and diving team championship since 2000 when the school was a member of the Atlantic 10 Conference.

Tech and NC State swapped the lead multiple times over the final two days of the competition. The Wolfpack led on the last day after nine of their swimmers scored points in the 100-yard freestyle.

But the Hokies regained the lead for the final time after the 200 breaststroke. Junior Harrison

Cefalo earned a bronze medal with a school-record time of 1 minute, 55.54 seconds, to lead the way. Junior Owen Burns (1:56.64) and freshman Brandon Fiala (1:57.64) took 11th and 13th, respectively, while senior Emmett Dignan clocked a career-best 1:56.96 to finish 17th – all earning valuable points under the ACC's new scoring system that awards points to 24 swimmers in each event.

Junior Morgan Latimer took home the highest individual finish of the day in the 200 butterfly, breaking his school record with an NCAA "A" cut time of 1:42.58 to take the silver medal and put the meet out of reach. Freshman Jan Switkowski (1:44.67) and junior Nick Tremols (1:44.75) finished within moments of each other in 10th and 11th, respectively, while junior James Crabb took 19th with a time of 1:46.89.

The Hokies only needed to finish the 400 freestyle relay in the final event of the competition to claim the title, and the team of sophomore Joe Bonk, sophomore Lucas Bureau, Switkowski and Burns rolled to another school record, touching

the wall in 2:54.28 to take home the bronze medal and give Tech a 38-point margin of victory.

“Relief,” Skinner said on his thoughts right after the relay team’s finish. “Relief was as big of an emotion as I felt. I’ve wanted it [an ACC title] so badly for the guys, for the team and for the program – and of course, myself and the coaches. I knew we had a good shot this year. We got ourselves in position to win it, and then it got tight. So there is happiness, but then relief that we got it done.

“You’re just so happy that it happened because, in life, things don’t always go exactly the way you want, and we all have disappointments. It was refreshing that it was my turn and Virginia Tech swimming and diving’s turn. A lot of factors played into it, and it worked out great, but capitalizing on those factors is key. Not only do you have to have good fortune, but you also have to have everything in position for that good fortune. The league is so tight that you just can’t be off. You’ve got to be at your best just to have a shot. That’s what is so remarkable about elite college athletics.”

Make no mistake about it – Tech’s title truly was a team accomplishment. The Hokies won because of their depth and not particularly because of a standout performance from an individual. In fact, only one swimmer, Switkowski, won an individual event. He took the Hokies’ lone gold by winning the 500-yard freestyle in a school-record time of 4:18.15. He became the first swimmer from a school other than Virginia or Florida State to win the event since 1996.

In the other individual events, the Hokies only had four other swimmers make the podium, including Latimer’s second-place finish in the 200 butterfly and Cefalo’s third-place finish in the 200 breaststroke. Junior Jake Ores and junior Collin Higgins won bronze medals in the 1,650 freestyle and 200 backstroke, respectively, with Higgins recording an NCAA “A” cut with a school-record time of 1:41.28.

Tech, though, managed to stay even with the Wolfpack in the relay events. NC State won four of the five relays, but the Hokies recorded two silvers and three bronzes.

Latimer, Switkowski, Burns and Bureau teamed to finish second in the 800 freestyle relay, setting a new school record with a time of 6:19.69. Bonk, Latimer, C.J. Fiala and Dignan captured the silver medal in the 200 freestyle relay. The group clocked a time of 1:18.08, missing the school record by just two hundredths of a second en route to an NCAA “A” qualifying time.

The 200 medley relay team of Latimer, Dignan, Switkowski and Bonk finished third in a time of 1:24.97, setting a school record and notching

an NCAA “A” cut time. Latimer’s leadoff leg set a new Tech record, as his 50-yard backstroke time of 21.22 seconds set the school mark. In the 400 medley relay, Latimer, Tremols, freshman

the platform event in his first ACC Championship and 18th in the 3-meter. In platform diving alone, the Hokies scored 83 points.

In contrast, none of NC State’s divers qualified



Freshman Jan Switkowski won the only gold medal for the men’s team, besting the field in the 500-yard freestyle event. He set a school record in the process.

Brandon Fiala and Bonk combined to take third place with an NCAA “A” cut time of 3:08.26.

“We put a lot of emphasis in relays because those are double points,” Skinner said. “With an individual win, you get 32 points. With a relay win, you get 64. They’re not only critical for the points’ race, but also for momentum. You watch NC State win, and that’s tough to see. But we’re right there on them. They gain a few points, but you’re like, ‘No harm, no foul.’ NC State was fantastic in the relays, but we were rock solid.”

The difference in the meet turned out to be the diving events, which were held at the ACC Women’s Championships the week prior to the men’s conference meet, and the Hokies got great performances from their divers. Ryan Hawkins led the way for the Tech men, as the senior from Charlotte, N.C., finished third in the 3-meter event and the platform event and fifth in the 1-meter event. He closed his final ACC meet by scoring points in every single diving event at the ACC Championship all four years at Tech. He won two gold medals and three bronze medals during his career.

Hawkins got help this year. Jared Butts, a junior, finished seventh in the 3-meter event, 13th in the platform event and 16th in the 1-meter event. Logan Stevens, also a junior, finished 10th for Tech in the platform event, 12th in the 1-meter event and 13th in the 3-meter. Freshman T.J. Shinholser recorded a fifth-place finish in

for the finals in any event.

“Our divers did a great job, particularly on platform,” Skinner said. “All four guys were in the top 13, so that was huge points for us. It really did set a great tone.

“We said going into it that we couldn’t chunk into that insurance policy. I consider the diving points our insurance policy and try to utilize those points as little as we could. As NC State did keep chunking into it, we were able to hold them at bay enough so that when we went into the last day, we knew we had those points coming from platform diving. Diving continues to be so important to this program, and they share equally in this title.”

Tech’s depth played as big of a role. League officials changed the scoring format for this year’s meet because of the additions of Notre Dame, Pittsburgh, and next year, Louisville, and that change rewarded teams that placed a lot of swimmers into the finals of each event.

The Hokies picked up a lot of finishes between fourth and 15th. Switkowski finished fourth in the 200 freestyle with a school-record time of 1:34.26, and Bureau claimed eighth place in the same event, while Burns finished 11th. Sophomore Michal Szuba (4:21.14) and Ores (4:21.69) scored in the 500 freestyle, taking fifth and sixth, respectively. Brandon Fiala claimed fifth in the 200 IM and Burns took eighth. Freshman Robert Owen finished in sixth in the

400 IM, with freshman Zach Switzer coming in 12th. Latimer and Tremols claimed fifth and sixth, respectively in the 100 butterfly, and Latimer and Higgins finished sixth and eighth, respectively, in the 100 backstroke.

"I've always felt that we needed to have a total program," Skinner said. "That's how I see it. We had success in every event and we scored points in every event. We didn't get shut out in any event. We had 60 scoring opportunities, and we converted on 56 of those. Only four guys didn't score in one of their events. We really worked on each group to take ownership in their opportunity to perform."

In the women's competition, Kaylea Arnett recorded two victories to lead the Tech women's team to a fifth-place finish at the ACC Women's Swimming and Diving Championship held Feb. 20-22 in Greensboro. Tech amassed 914.5 points and finished 36.5 points behind fourth-place NC State. Virginia won the event with 1,433 points.

"I'm pleased," Skinner said of the women. "More than 50 percent of our team is new. We had a lot of freshmen. We were in position to have a great shot at third. Of course, we wanted to be in the upper echelon, but I think the morale and spirit of the team is high, and I'm proud of them."

Arnett, a junior from Spring, Texas, won the

ACC's Most Valuable Diver Award for the third time, becoming just the third ACC student-athlete to do that. She won the 1-meter and 3-meter events, and she finished third in the platform event. She broke her own school records in the 1- and 3-meter events.

Arnett wasn't the only Tech diver to fare well. Kelli Stockton, a junior from Fairfax, Va., recorded fifth-place finishes in both the 1-meter and the platform events. Also, Ashley Buchter, a freshman from East Berlin, Pa., placed seventh in the platform event in her first ACC Championship.

In the swimming events, Tech also got a nice meet from sophomore Weronika Paluszek, who finished third in both the 100 and 200 breaststroke events, setting school records in both. She broke her own school record in the 100 breaststroke with a time of 59.95 seconds that earned her the bronze medal and missed an NCAA "A" cut by less than a second. She snapped her own school record in the 200 breaststroke by recording an NCAA "A" cut time of 2:07.81.

Paluszek swam a leg on the 400 medley relay team that finished third at the meet. She, sophomore Holly Harper, freshman Maggie Gruber and senior Katarina Filova teamed to finish the event in a time of 3:35.45, which is an NCAA "B" cut time.

Paluszek, from Wroclaw, Poland, tallied 54

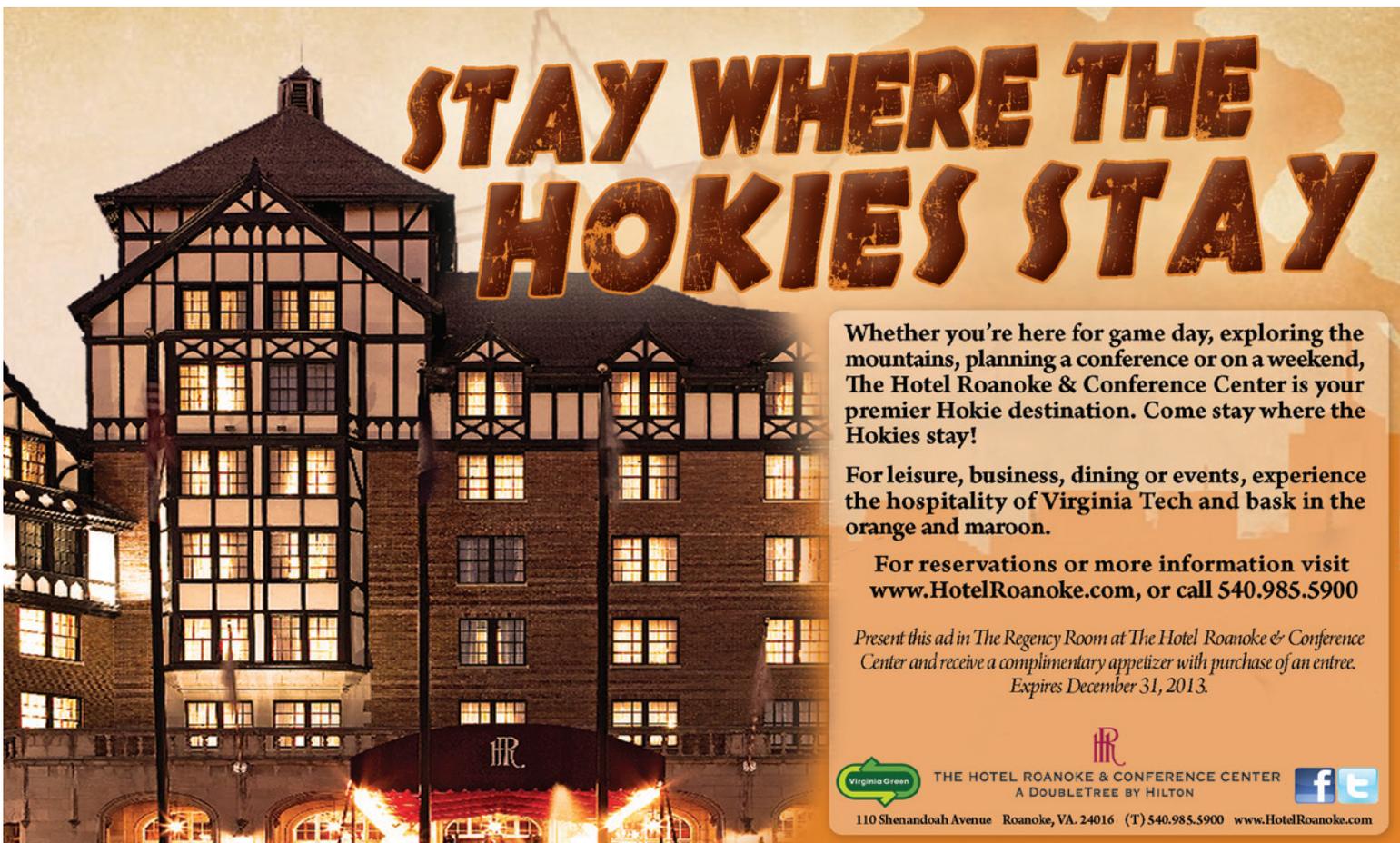
individual points between her two bronze medals and swimming the second leg of the third-place 400 medley relay team.

Harper, a native of Charlottesville, Va., swam well, too. She finished sixth in the 200 backstroke and eighth in the 200 individual medley, setting a school record (1:58.99 in the preliminaries).

Freshman Fiona Donnelly from Belper, England, and Gruber, a native of Gibsonia, Pa., added to the Hokies' point total. Donnelly recorded a seventh-place finish in the 400 IM, clocking an NCAA "B" time of 4:14.99. Gruber followed that with a time of 53.32 seconds in the 100 butterfly that earned her sixth place.

"We feel like there are a lot of positives we can take from this," Skinner said of the women's team's performance. "We can build on this and get back to the upper echelon. You don't want to go from second [last year's finish] to fifth, but we feel like we have what it takes to get back in the hunt."

Select members of the men's and women's swimming and diving teams now wait to see if their times are good enough for invitations to the upcoming NCAA Championships. The Women's NCAA Championships will be held March 20-22 in Minneapolis, Minn., while the Men's NCAA Championships will be held March 27-29 in Austin, Texas. 



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TAKING THE PLUNGE

Kaylea Arnett is the most decorated diver in school history, but this self-proclaimed free spirit has a wide array of outside interests – and she isn't afraid to pursue any of them

by Marc Mullen



Just a junior, Virginia Tech's Kaylea Arnett already has become the best female diver the Virginia Tech program has ever seen. Following the 2014 Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Swimming and Diving Championship, she became the league's third student-athlete to be named the ACC Women's Championship Most Valuable Diver for three consecutive years.

The honor was inevitable, as she won a pair of gold medals and a bronze medal at the event, which was held in late February at the Greensboro Aquatic Center in Greensboro, N.C. She began the three-day meet by capturing the 1-meter diving title for the third straight year with a school-record performance, and she became the first female in the ACC to claim a three-peat in the event in almost 20 years.

She followed that performance by becoming the school's first female to win the 3-meter diving title, setting another school record, and she completed her championship by fighting back from a seventh-place, first-dive effort in the preliminaries of the platform event to claim the bronze.

Not bad for someone who is really just a free spirit.

"I'm a very day-to-day, moment-to-moment type of person," Arnett said. "I don't plan ahead. I just go one second at a time here. I try not to set goals, and that's just how I keep myself positive and just go with what happens."

Diving (pun so not intended) into Arnett's past, listening to her summer plans and foreseeing her future endeavors certainly give a glimpse into the non-conformist lifestyle that she lives.

Maybe she was born for this, a life of spinning and twirling and jumping from a board. She is the middle child of Kevin Arnett, a retired stuntman, and Terri, a retired power tumbler and trampolinist.

Many kids tend to get involved with the things that their parents like. Arnett is no different. She possesses the same free spirit of her parents.

"Yeah, when my dad lived in Dallas, he was a stunt man. He was in a couple of movies, but that was before I was born," she said. "He specialized in car stunts and building falls and just random stuff. He used to do Jet Ski shows ... he's just crazy."

"But that's my parents. They've gone skydiving. My mom is really energetic and very enthusiastic, and my dad is also, so I just kind of take after them."

One thing that she couldn't avoid getting from her mom was her heritage. Her mom's side of the family is Chickasaw and part of the Chickasaw Nation – a federally recognized Native American nation located in Oklahoma.

"We do stay in touch with the tribe," Arnett



Kaylea Arnett has owned the 1-meter board at the ACC Championship, winning the event each year since she arrived at Tech.

said. "I have a guy that always keeps up with how I am doing, and he writes articles on me and puts me on the website. The governor, our chief [Governor Bill Anoatubby], stays in touch with us. It's just part of who I am.

"We actually used to live there [Oklahoma City] for a few years. They would have festivals and everything. The governor would have me make speeches to the tribe. Yeah, we moved away, but I still keep in touch with what's going on with them.

"But our tribe is more, like, civilized, just very normal. I know the history of our culture, and I really embrace it. I use our history and our past as a way to fire me up. I know the history of the Chickasaw, and they have a very strong warrior spirit and I would sometimes remind myself of that whenever I am going through a hard time or when I am competing. That helps fire me up."

Oklahoma City is also where an 8-year-old Arnett began her diving career – at the Oklahoma City Regional Training Center under the direction of Alik Sarkisian, who is now the head diving coach at Northwestern University.

"I was a power tumbler," she said. "I was very energetic when I was really little, so my mom put me in power tumbling. I did that for about six years, and then I went to a pool party and was playing around on the boards and one of the coaches – he was a Russian coach – saw me and he made me start trying diving. The rest is pretty much history."

There is a little more to the story. The center closed when Arnett was around 12 years old, and at that point, the family decided to make a move to the suburbs of Houston, so Arnett could

continue diving.

"We moved mainly because of diving," she said. "There was a program there that was pretty prestigious. It was between Indianapolis and Houston – the Woodlands, in particular, not exactly Houston. But in the Woodlands, they had a pretty prestigious program. They had tons of Olympians, and it was just a really big name.

"I just always go with the wind. Diving was a pretty big part of my life back then, and I think my parents really wanted me to go after diving, and so they moved for me. It was a hard decision, but my dad had better work in Houston as well, so it was a good move for everyone."

Her diving career took off. At the 2006 Speedo Junior National Championships, Arnett won all three events. She would also win the 1-meter and platform events at the 2007 Junior Pan American Championships and she was selected for the Olympic Medal Program, which provided her with additional resources and opportunities to develop her talent.

She eventually caught the eyes of college recruiters and had several schools on her list, including the Naval Academy, Miami, Texas, Kentucky and Tennessee. Arnett chose Tech thanks to an early relationship she developed with Hokies' diving coach Ron Piemonte.

"I had known him ever since I was, like, 8, ever since I started diving," she said. "I always really liked him, and he was the first person that started recruiting me. For some reason, I just felt Virginia Tech – my heart was there. So now I'm here.

"But when I was little, my coach and everyone around me was very Olympics gung-ho, and I was, like, 'OK, I'm going to go to the Olympics, yeah!'

diving spotlight | kaylea arnett

Then along the way, I learned that pushing for the Olympics actually landed me an opportunity to go to college, and this is what I really wanted.”

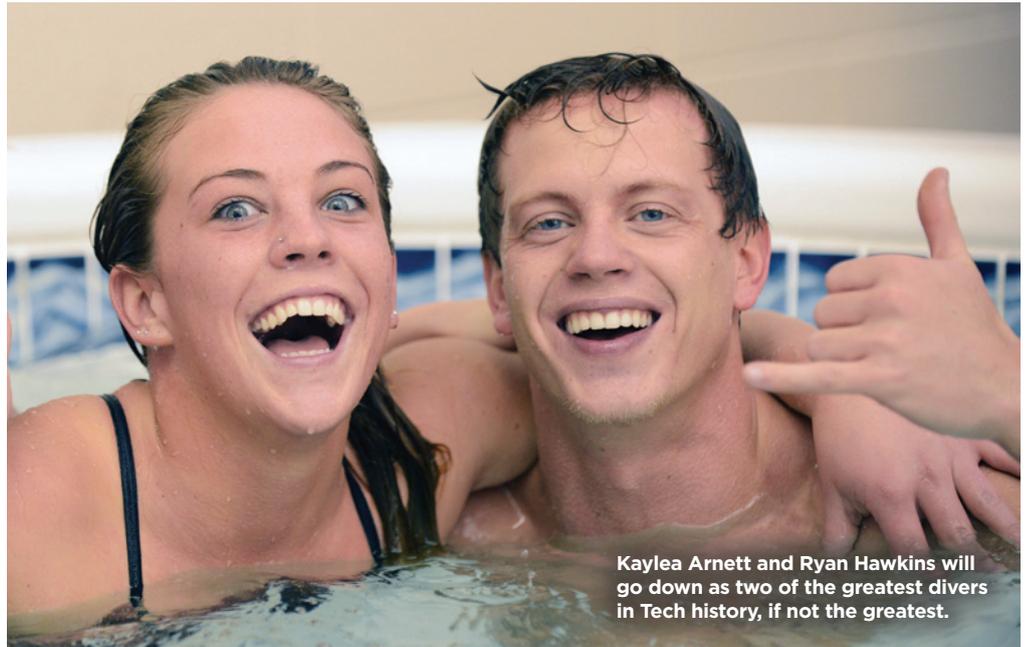
College is about new experiences, furthering education and building relationships, and that is certainly not lost on Arnett. The philosophy major has taken on an interesting subject and is exciting about where it is literally going to take her.

She has begun studying Japanese (as a language), and in June, she will be leaving the United States to study abroad in Japan – Kyoto and Tokyo, specifically. She will return in late August before the Tech fall semester begins.

“I’ve always loved Japanese culture,” she said. “I’m just really excited. It’s a dream. I’m going to be lost and alone in Japan, but I’m going to have a great time. I’ll be taking Japanese classes, like the language, and then in the afternoon, we’ll do cultural stuff.”

“I have Japanese diving friends that I met at the international meets, and I’ll contact them and find out when they’re diving at the pool. They’ll hook me up. They don’t even speak English, but we’re best friends. They are taking English now, so they are getting better, and I know a little Japanese, so it’s getting better communicating with them.”

“I don’t really know how I met them. But all the European teams would stick together and all the North American teams would stick together, and



Kaylea Arnett and Ryan Hawkins will go down as two of the greatest divers in Tech history, if not the greatest.

I would just hang out with the Japanese divers. I don’t know why. I just thought they were the coolest thing.”

A philosophy degree and the ability to speak Japanese don’t appear to be a part of her future plans once she leaves Tech, though. She plans on heading to another big city – Las Vegas. No, she’s not looking to become a professional gambler. She’s got her sights set on Cirque du Soleil.

“Oh, I love this question!” Arnett said in reference to the “what will you do after graduating” inquiry. “After college, I’m going to try and get into Cirque du Soleil, so I’m not really looking to do anything with philosophy. I am pretty set on that.”

The Las Vegas “O” show, which is a water-based show, really interests her. She got the bug back as an early teenager, and her parents are on board.

“Oh yeah, my parents know the plan,” she said.

A promotional graphic for the 'Hokies Respect Hotline'. The background features two football players in maroon and orange uniforms, one on the left and one on the right, both wearing helmets with the 'VT' logo. In the center, there is a circular logo with the text 'HOKIES RESPECT' and 'VT' in the middle. The logo is surrounded by the words 'THE MOMENT', 'THE OPPONENT', 'THE GAME', 'THEMSELVES', and 'THE COMPETITION'. Above the logo, the text reads: 'HOKIE FOOTBALL IS MORE THAN JUST A GAME. IT'S MORE THAN ENTER SANDMAN, LUNCH PAILS, AND TOUCHDOWNS. IT'S ABOUT FANS SHOWING CLASS, HONOR, AND RESPECT. RESPECT FOR THE OFFICIALS, THE COACHES, THE PLAYERS, AND OUR OPPONENTS. HOKIES RESPECT... THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!'. Below the logo, there is a box with the title 'HOKIES RESPECT HOTLINE' and the following text: 'While it's not commonplace at Lane Stadium, for instances when issues with unruly fans or disruptive behavior occur, you can access the 'HOKIES RESPECT HOTLINE'. It provides fans a method to report such issues so that stadium authorities can quickly act to resolve the problem and allow everyone in that area to continue enjoying the game. If needed, text "RESPECT" followed by your issues and location to "71855" and have the situation resolved as soon as possible.'

“When I came to college, my mom was like, ‘You need to be an engineer, or you need to be a doctor.’ And I was like, ‘I can’t. I just want to do fun stuff.’”

“When I was 13 or 14, I went to Canada for an event, and Cirque was there. Their base is in Montreal, so they had a tent at the meet and were recruiting us. So ever since then, I was like, ‘Wow, I should do this!’ So that’s the plan, and the “O” show, they recruit divers. So hopefully I will get into that.

“I haven’t seen “O,” but I have seen one Cirque show called “Delirium.” I have a friend that is in

Cirque – he won NAAs his senior year and now he’s in Cirque – so I kind of have an inside source on that. So he kind of tells me what I need to do to get involved. Hopefully, he will be able to help me out.”

Maybe that philosophy degree will come in handy for Arnett after all. It was popular philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote, “Life is a journey, not a destination,” and that is certainly not lost on her.

However, before Arnett runs away to the Cirque, she’s still got the 2014 NCAA Diving

Championship, where she can add to her four All-America accolades. She also has a senior year of competition, and she can tie or pass Sara Smith (2006-09) for the most gold medals ever won in ACC competition by a Tech swimmer or diver. Arnett’s four gold medals are already the most of any diver, male or female, at Tech, and she trails only Smith, who won five gold medals in swimming events, for the most.

She’s not worried about that, though. Such things are far into the future. For her, the current moment is much more interesting. 

GETTING TO KNOW KAYLEA ARNETT

Q: What do you do for fun?

KA: “I love to do trampoline. I do that at the pool [the Christiansburg Aquatic Center], and we have an Olympic-size one at home, too, in Texas. My parents got it when I was very little, so I have an emotional attachment to it. I never really watched TV. I just would go outside and listen to my music and jump on my trampoline.”

Q: What kind of music do you listen to?

KA: “I listen to lots of things – anything but country. Usually it’s rap or techno, just depending on how I feel. I usually just have one song per meet that I just listen to over and over. I don’t know why. I’m just feeling this song, so I just listen to it over and over again. My parents drowned me in country when I was little, so I hate it now.”

Q: How do you approach a diving event?

KA: “Well, I have a funny story about prelims. There is this famous Russian diver named Dmitri Sautin [who won eight medals, more than any other Olympic diver], and whenever he would do prelims, he would drink. He would go outside and smoke a cigarette in between because all he had to do was make it into finals, so he would just cruise and just punch his ticket into finals. But then during the finals, he would just turn it on. So Ron and I just have that mentality – just punch your ticket, just land on your end – so you’re not as nervous for prelims. But you know you have to make it, so you have to do well. But when finals come along, you have to turn it on.”

Q: After winning the 1-meter event three times, what was it like winning the 3-meter event?

KA: “Winning the 3-meter was cool. I really have no idea how I did any of that. I was just going dive by dive. I would hit a dive

and thought, ‘I have no idea how I did that. Hopefully I can do it again.’ And then I would hit another dive, and it just kept going. I always thought of myself as a 3-meter diver, but in the big competitions, I would always mess up. But this time, it all came together. All the hard work paid off, and it was really gratifying.”

Q: Do you have any interesting stories from your time in Texas?

KA: “I was actually in Germany for junior world championships when Hurricane Ike hit (2008). I dove at an outdoor pool at that time, so I came back, and the whole pool was ravaged. Everything was in the pool. They actually had a competition there before the hurricane, and the funniest thing was everything was so messed up, but there was this Sammy – the towels we use to dry off – hanging on the 1-meter before I left and the hurricane came through and that Sammy was still there. So I kept that Sammy. I still have that. It’s so old, but I still have it.”



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Chris Penny has bounced between heavyweight and 197 pounds during his career at Tech, but his unselfishness was rewarded when he won the ACC title at 197 pounds at this year's ACC Championship.



2014 ACC WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP



TECH WRESTLES ACC TITLE AWAY FROM THE FIELD – AGAIN

The Hokies' wrestling team dominated at the league meet, winning four individual titles and having four others finish in third place

by Jimmy Robertson

A year ago at the ACC Wrestling Championship, Virginia Tech needed to win the final match to secure the program's first ACC title.

This year, the Hokies took care of things in much quicker fashion.

Behind four individual championships and four third-place finishes, 16th-ranked Tech roared to another championship in convincing fashion on its home mat at Cassell Coliseum. The Hokies finished with 87 points and cruised past second-place and 10th-ranked Pittsburgh, which finished with 67 points. Virginia came in third with 61.5.

Devin Carter's title at 141 pounds wrapped up the team title for the Hokies – with seven matches still left – and sent a pretty rowdy throng of more than 2,000 fans into a frenzy. His victory clinched the program's second title since joining the ACC for the 2004-05 season (11th overall) and gave the school its 18th overall ACC team championship in that span.

The title came as a bit of a surprise for the Hokies, who were expected to be rebuilding this season. Tech lost All-Americans Jarrod Garnett, Jesse Dong and Pete Yates off last year's team in

addition to heavyweight David Marone, whose victory last season in the final match at the ACC Championship gave the Hokies their first team title. Plus, Tech didn't have Nick Brascetta, last year's ACC champion at 149 pounds. He elected to take a redshirt year this season.

But everything came together at the right time for this year's group.

"One weekend, we'd get help from one or two weights, and the next weekend, we'd get help from another two weights, and the next weekend, another two," Tech coach Kevin Dresser said. "I felt we had our bases covered, but we could never put it all together.

"Obviously, getting Devin back [from an injury] was a spark, and then them believing me that our fans were going to come out and get loud for this really motivated them. We didn't have a great semifinal round. But when you get six guys to wrestle back and four of those get third [place], that tells you that these guys were drinking the Kool-Aid."

How dominating were the Hokies? Just ask Virginia coach Steve Garland, whose Cavaliers

were expected to make the race for the title a three-horse affair between Virginia, Pittsburgh and the Hokies. Virginia, though, won just two individual titles.

"They [the Hokies] were awesome," Garland said afterward. "They just wrestled fantastic. I can't remember a tournament being this far apart before. Obviously, they made a statement. We were able to beat them during the year [in a dual meet], but we certainly didn't outwrestle them [Saturday]. They deserve all the accolades coming their way after what they did."

Everything went right for Tech, starting with the return of Carter, who was cleared to wrestle on Wednesday before the Championship. The redshirt junior from nearby Christiansburg, Va., suffered a torn hamstring in a tournament on Dec. 6, and Tech's sports medicine staff originally ruled him out for the rest of the season. The injury normally requires a six-to-nine month healing process, but Carter's dogged determination got him back on the mat in 12 weeks – months ahead of schedule.

"I wish I had the words for it," Zach Neibert,

Tech's 149-pounder, said of Carter's return. "It's like one of those scenes that you see in a movie when the tide changes and the team is lifted. I could say that this is all about Devin coming back. The guys did a good job, but it might be all about Devin. We might possibly have won it without him, but we'll never know."

"Devin is a machine," Dresser said. "He's not human. That machine is only about 75 percent right now. What you saw was 75 percent of Devin Carter. Our job is to get him between 85-90 percent before the nationals. We're not going to get him to 100 percent, but we've got to get him to 85 or 90."

"But nothing surprises me with Devin. He's a twisted dude – in the right way."

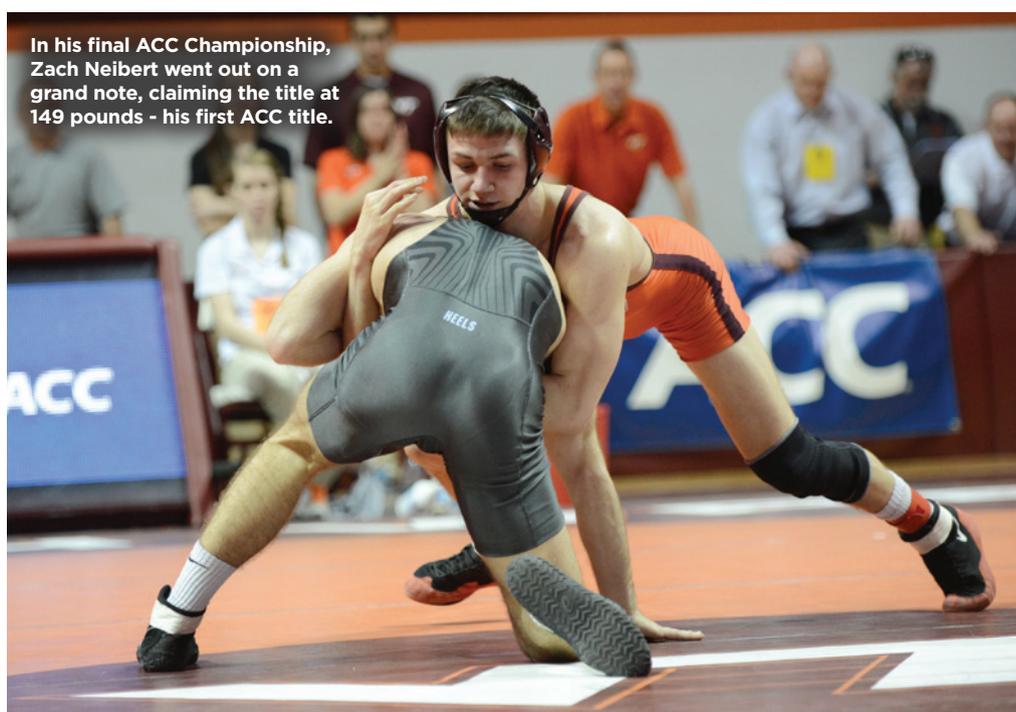
Carter returned with a vengeance. The top seed at 141 pounds, he received a first-round bye and then rolled past Maryland's Shyheim Brown in the semifinals, picking up a 24-9 technical fall. In the championship match against Pittsburgh's Edgar Bright, he slogged out a tough 6-1 victory.

Carter took a redshirt year last season, so he was an outside part of the Hokies' 2013 championship squad. Yet by winning this year, he became a three-time ACC champion, and after the event, he received the Most Outstanding Wrestler Award.

"Going in, I didn't know what to expect," Carter said. "I just wanted to go 100 percent and go all out, like I usually do. It paid off. I've still got to get my cardio up for nationals, but I felt good."

"That first match, I was a little nervous, more so than usual, just because I didn't know what to expect. My leg worked for me, though. I didn't even notice it when I was out there. I'm feeling pretty good."

Carter's return, though, wasn't the only things that went right. Tech caught a break when the top seeds at 133, 149 and 197 pounds all were upset in the semifinals and put the Hokies in favorable



In his final ACC Championship, Zach Neibert went out on a grand note, claiming the title at 149 pounds - his first ACC title.

matchups heading into the finals.

At 133 pounds, freshman Dennis Gustafson, the No. 3 seed, rolled through the bracket. He won all three matches by major decision, including the championship match when he destroyed No. 4 seed Tyler Goodwin of Maryland, 11-0. He had beaten Goodwin in a dual meet earlier this season.

At 149 pounds, Neibert, a No. 2 seed, won his first two matches fairly easily and then squared off against Pittsburgh's Mikey Racciato in the finals. He had beaten Racciato 7-4 in a dual meet in early February, and he took care of business again, winning 3-1 in sudden victory.

His takedown in the extra session accounted for the winning points and gave the redshirt senior his first ACC title. It marked his 13th win in his past

14 matches.

"In overtime, I was thinking it wasn't about me any more," Neibert said. "It's about the team and what it takes to get another ring and another title to build this program up."

At 197 pounds, Chris Penny, the No. 3 seed, put the icing on the cake for the Hokies. After upsetting Pittsburgh's Nick Bonaccorsi 4-3 in the semifinals, Penny took on Virginia's Zach Nye in the finals, winning 10-6. He, too, won his first ACC championship.

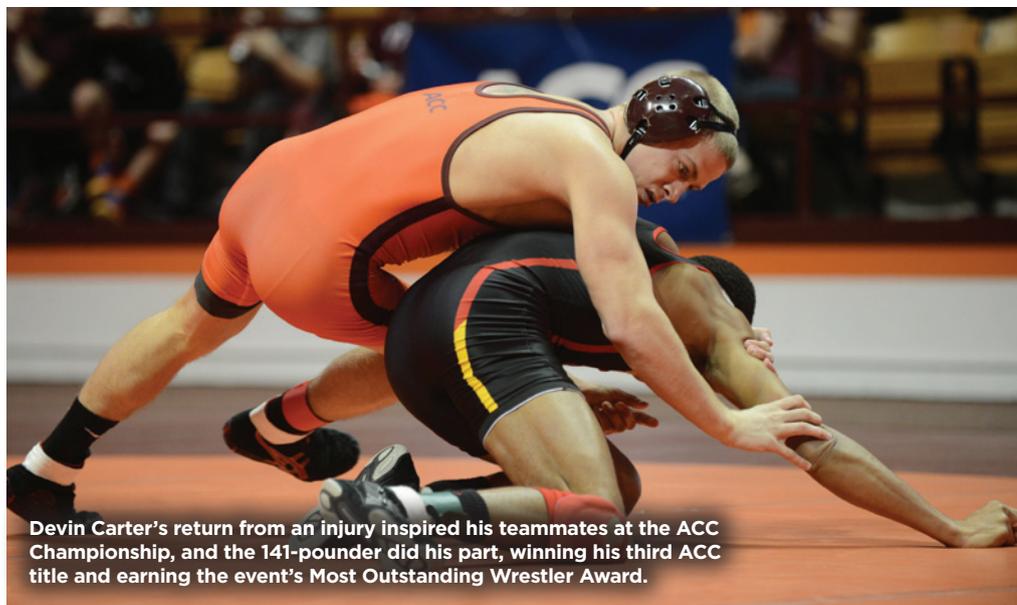
Penny actually had lost to Bonaccorsi 8-3 in the dual meet between the two teams in early February, and he had lost to his first-round opponent, No. 6 seed KaRonne Jones of NC State, 2-1 in a dual meet on Jan. 26. But he beat Jones and Bonaccorsi to get to the finals at the ACC Championship, where he beat Nye for the third time this season to claim the title.

"It's hard to describe," Penny said. "Things couldn't have gone any better. My first match and my second match were against kids I lost to earlier in the season, and my third match, I just won the ACC."

"Chris Penny is a rags-to-riches story – and the riches came [Saturday]," Dresser said. "I don't know what his record was as a freshman, but it was about 2-27 [actually 3-16]. He figured out how to lose more matches his first year than 10 humans. So he's a testament to hard work."

Penny's championship capped an amazing finals for Tech, which won all four of its title matches. In contrast, Pittsburgh, which sent five guys to the finals, only won one individual championship.

The Hokies also racked up points in the consolation rounds earlier in the day. Freshman Joey Dance finished in third place at 125 pounds



Devin Carter's return from an injury inspired his teammates at the ACC Championship, and the 141-pounder did his part, winning his third ACC title and earning the event's Most Outstanding Wrestler Award.

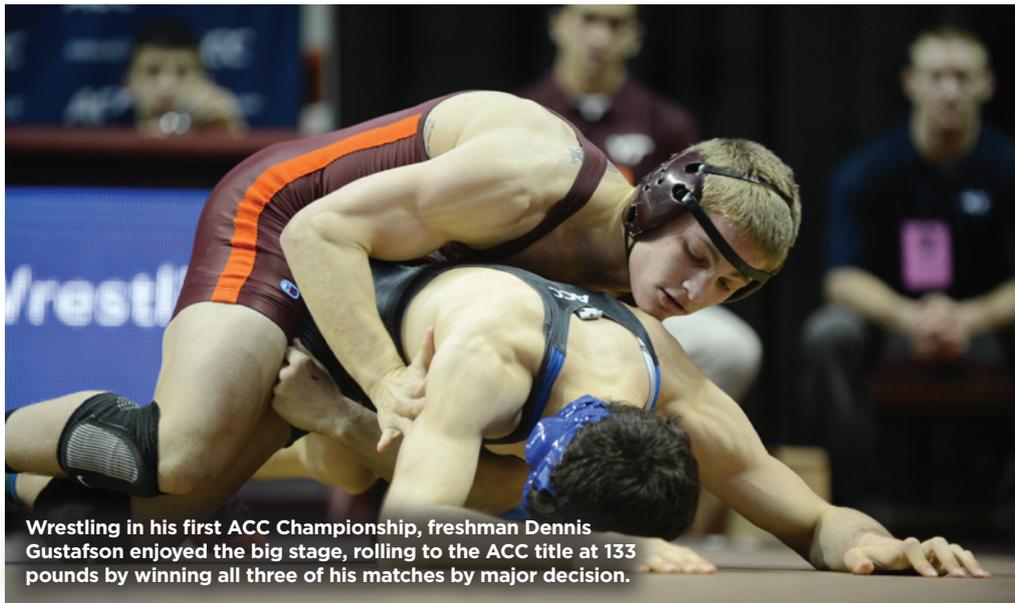
IHS extra | ACC wrestling championships

after beating UVa's Nick Herrmann 7-4, while Chris Moon bounced back after being upset in the semifinals and clinched third place at 165 pounds with an important 8-2 win over Pittsburgh's Geno Morelli. Tech's Nick Vetterlein beat UVa's Jon Fausey 8-7 in the third-place match at 184 pounds, and heavyweight Ty Walz beat Pittsburgh's P.J. Tasser 5-2. Both he and Moon took away potential points for the Panthers.

"That was huge," Dresser said of his team's performance in the consolation rounds. "I said last year that we won the ACC tournament in the wrestle-backs. We were down a lot of points and then we came back in the wrestle-backs and got within striking distance.

"We talked about it a lot. We took some of our guys who were redshirting, a guy like Nick Braschetta, and his whole job was to grab our guys after they lost and re-energize them because the way this tournament is set up, when you lose, you've got to wrestle in an hour or an hour and a half, and that's tough. Some kids don't get over that. But I thought we did a really good job. Every one of our kids who lost came back that next round and won. That was huge. That's what won the tournament for us."

Seven of Tech's wrestlers automatically qualified for the NCAA Championship to be held March 20-22 in Oklahoma City, Okla. The Hokies may send an eighth guy, depending on whether



Wrestling in his first ACC Championship, freshman Dennis Gustafson enjoyed the big stage, rolling to the ACC title at 133 pounds by winning all three of his matches by major decision.

Moon received an at-large bid at 165 pounds. Moon, who, like Carter, took a redshirt year last season, qualified for the NCAAs in 2012.

Regardless of what happens at the national meet, the Hokie wrestlers won't soon forget their run to the 2014 ACC title.

"No one gave us a chance," Penny said. "Everyone was like, 'Oh, Virginia Tech won last year. That was the best Virginia Tech team in a while.' Then it was like we got these great freshmen

and everyone was saying, 'Next year, we're going to have an awesome team.'

"What about this team right now? I'm one of the leaders of this team. This is my team. No one gave us a chance. Everyone discounted us. Everyone said we'd get third behind Pitt and UVa, and we showed that consistency, focus and belief compounded together after months and months and months will lead to results. Well, that's what we have right now." 



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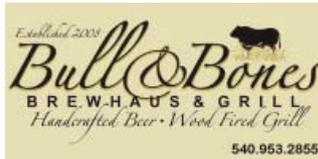




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Der'Woun Greene is one of many young players who will get a close look this spring, as Tech looks for playmakers on defense.



TECH "D" LOOKING TO RELOAD THIS SPRING

Defensive coordinator Bud Foster is hoping several young players progress this spring, as he and his staff look to replace several starters, particularly along the defensive front

by Jimmy Robertson

Despite dealing with numerous injuries in the secondary, Virginia Tech once again featured a top-20 defense, as it finished fourth nationally in total defense (283.6 ypg) in 2013. The Hokies also finished in the top 10 in pass efficiency defense (tied for fifth, 101.6 rating), interceptions (tied for sixth, 19) and rushing defense (10th, 110.9 ypg), and Tech closed 2013 ranked 11th nationally in scoring defense (19.3 ppg).

But the Hokies lose five starters among their front seven. So can that unit be as good or better next season? The process starts this spring, and defensive coordinator Bud Foster took time to answer a few questions before spring practice begins on March 26.

Q: Before looking ahead to spring practice, let's look back on 2013. What are your thoughts on the season from a defensive coordinator perspective?

BF: "We had an outstanding year. The kids did everything we asked of them. For 12 games, we played our tails off. The bowl game, I was disappointed, but I take a little blame for that because we had a big emotional meeting the night before, and I think I drained them a little bit, to be honest with you. Prior to that, we played our tails off for 12 straight games. There are maybe a handful of plays I'd like to have back, but that's about it. I couldn't ask any more of our kids. They played hard, and they played consistently well."

"We played well enough to be a championship team. We had a championship defense. We had as good of a defense as we've had in a long, long time. We didn't give up a lot of big plays, we made it tough for people to move the ball, we were good on third downs ... it's unfortunate we had a couple of injuries at the end of the year, especially Kyle Fuller. I think that hurt us a little, but at the same time, we had some young kids step up and overcome. I was proud of our seniors. They were great leaders for us, and they performed very well. Now we go into spring practice and we have some holes to fill. But all in all, last year, I couldn't ask any more of our players and our staff."

Q: At first glance, the strength of your defense heading into spring practice might very well be the secondary. Basically, four starters return - cornerbacks Kendall Fuller and Brandon Facyson, free safety Detrick Bonner and rover Kyshoen Jarrett.



Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster hopes to see talent and consistency emerge this spring, particularly at defensive end and linebacker.

How optimistic are you about this group?

BF: "I'd say that group should be our strength because those are the guys with the most experience. Obviously, those two young corners played really well and now they're game tested, and I'm hoping they'll make a big improvement physically after having been in there with Coach [Mike] Gentry [Tech's associate AD for athletic performance] all winter. Our safeties are returning, though Kyshoen is going to be out for spring ball (shoulder surgery). That gives us an opportunity to work some young kids. Desmond Frye is a guy who needs to step up and be more consistent. We're going to look at Chuck Clark and Anthony Shegog and see where they fit in."

"We're probably going to look at some guys from that back end forward to our nickel package as well. The past couple of years, we haven't done much nickel during spring practice, so we'll look at that and see if we can make it a competitive spot. We play it so much, with multiple receivers in the game. We'll play that by ear. It depends on how people are competing and certain guys

developing their skill level."

Q: For two straight years, your front four was one of the defense's strengths. Going into this spring, only Luther Maddy returns from that group. How concerned are you about youth and inexperience along the defensive line this spring?

BF: "The big question is who is going to be at defensive end. I think, at defensive tackle, you've got Luther coming back and he's had a great career here, and I feel good about Nigel Williams and Woody Baron. Those two played enough that they should be very competitive inside. We don't have much depth until the freshmen come in. We may work Corey Marshall both at end and tackle. We've got a kid in Wade Hansen, who was a transfer [from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute] and is a big kid, and we'll look at him there. Jeremy Haynes is a walk-on who can play inside and at end, and he gives us some depth."

"But the big question mark is at defensive end. We had a lot of experience graduate. We do return

Dadi Nicolas. He needs to be consistent in his play, but he has shown he can be a playmaker. After that, we have to find out who can play. The cupboard's not bare, though. I'm excited about some of these kids, when you start talking about Ken Ekanem, Seth Dooley, Dewayne Alford and Vinny Mihota. We need to evaluate Vinny and determine if he's an edge guy or an inside guy, but all those are guys I'm excited about and excited about their potential. We've got to squeeze in a year in about 15 practices with all those guys because they don't have much experience."

Q: Arguably, the biggest question marks on this team are the mike linebacker and backer spots. Chase Williams is the only one with any semblance of experience. How critical is this spring for him and how critical is it for Deon Clarke and Dahman McKinnon to progress this spring?

BF: "At linebacker, we're in the same boat as we are at defensive end. Chase Williams will be the guy starting out at mike because he has the most experience. I'm excited about what I hear and have seen in limited looks of Andrew Motuapuaka. I'm going to look at a kid named Sean Huelskamp, a walk-on who has shown a few things, and Josh Eberly, another walk-on who has been in our camp. "At backer, there is going to be a battle between

Deon Clarke and Dahman McKinnon. Both of those guys have been up and down in their young careers, and I'm looking for some consistency. Jamieon Moss will be in the mix, and Drew Burns is going to work at backer. He's a longer kid and athletic, and I think his skill set fits a little better at backer. We'll see. We want to create competition. That's a position where we have the least experience, but it's a position that needs to be productive. In the whole defense, that's the biggest question mark. Those guys have played at times, but they need to play at a consistent and high level. They've been up and down."

Q: How important is this spring for Corey Marshall, considering his situation from last season? He's a talented player with some experience.

BF: "Corey still has a lot of work to do in the classroom and things like that. If Corey can get his act together and be consistent in all aspects of his life and that carries over to the field, he can be a benefit to our football team. You want to put your best people on the field, and he has the ability to play either/or [defensive end or tackle]. But he's got to clean up some things off the field, and when he does that and becomes consistent with that, he'll be consistent on the field.

"I'm a big believer in that. How you are off the

field is how you are on the field. If you're consistent in your day-to-day life or in the classroom, you're going to be the same cat on the field. He's a perfect example of that. But at the same time, a lot of that is maturity. You're dealing with young people, and the light bulb comes on at different times. I'm hoping that he realizes how important we, as a program, are for him and for his future, for him to get a quality education and be a success in life. He's an intriguing guy. We just need for him to do the right thing."

Q: You've faced so many "spread" offenses now the past two years, and that has forced you to play a lot of nickel defense with five defensive backs. Will you change what you do with the whip linebacker position or even phase the position out?

BF: "No, we're still going to have a whip. I think you have to when people get into two backs and two tight ends, or bigger personnel groupings.

"That position is still a playmaking spot for us. Between our rover and our whip, those guys need to be good tacklers and need to be able to play in space because we bounce the ball [carrier] out to them. They're usually our free hitters. They need to be good cover guys. They need to be complete football players.

"The whip position doesn't change from the

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type of athlete we want there. You still need a bigger body there because you still see teams use multiple tight ends and things like that. You want that bigger body to hold up at the point of attack. You want him to be physical enough and athletic enough so that you can run your package.

“I want us to be able to run all our packages. I want us to be able to blitz off the edge with that guy. A couple of years ago, we kind of jumped around at that position and used different guys [Ronny Vandyke, Alonzo Tweedy and Jeron Gouveia-Winslow], and we didn’t pressure out of it. We didn’t do some things out of it, and it affected us. I think that’s the important part.

“Now, I’m hoping a guy like Ronny Vandyke comes back – and he will come back, but I wish he was going through this spring. But he’s a guy who can run well enough, and he’s a long body who can blitz. He’s a guy I’d love to have. He could play that spot, like we did with Cody Grimm. He could do some things athletically and not be a big liability if you had him match up on a wide receiver.”

Q: That said, you’re thinking about working more on your nickel defense this spring, aren’t you?

BF: “We may. We’re going to play it by ear and see. I think we need to settle in on a nickel guy and a backup. Last year, we had some injuries in the secondary, and we were juggling guys around. Kendall Fuller started out as our nickel guy, and then we used Chuck Clark there some and Detrick Bonner some. So I’d like to get one guy and a backup. I want to take a look at a guy like Der’Woun Greene, and I want us to see where Chuck Clark and a guy like Anthony Shegog, who we redshirted last year, fit in. I think all those guys can help us. We just need to figure out the right spots for them.”

Q: There was some chatter after this past

season that your defense struggled some against running quarterbacks, and that was the Achilles’ heel of your defense. What is your response to that?

BF: “The Maryland quarterback [C.J. Brown] made a couple of plays running. He had been injured, and the week before [the Tech-Maryland game], we didn’t see that mobility, and we played a coverage where we were matching our linebackers on their backs, and they’d check and release. That left a space for him to run. We needed to make sure we were good in our rush lanes. We played more athletic quarterbacks earlier in the year that didn’t give us fits. It was just that we weren’t good in our rush lanes that game.

“But Duke didn’t hurt us. They had a scrambling quarterback [both Anthony Boone and Brandon Connette], and he didn’t hurt us. The long touchdown that the UCLA guy [Brett Hundley] had, we had the right defense, and one of our ends busted it. We should have had a guy right there, a free hitter, and you tackle him for a 5-yard gain.

“Against Marshall, their kid [Rakeem Cato] wasn’t a big runner, but he ran a little more than we thought he would, and he’s athletic enough to create. But he didn’t hurt us. East Carolina’s quarterback [Shane Carden] was a scrambling quarterback, and we kept him contained. We kept UVa’s quarterback [David Watford] contained.

“For the majority of the time, we did a good job. It’s college football. It’s 11 on 11. If you don’t have that guy accounted for, yeah, he has the potential to hurt you, but I wouldn’t say that those guys were a consistent pain in our tail. There were a couple of plays where guys made some plays, and that’s a credit to them. Now, every team’s quarterback is almost a tailback back there, and you have to account for him.

“But looking back, the Maryland game was

the one game where the quarterback made some plays and kept some drives alive, and he made a big play in overtime to help them win the game. That’s the one game that stands out to me.”

Q: I know you guys visited with the Ole Miss’ staff a few weeks ago. What was the connection there, and are you planning on tweaking things this spring?

BF: “We’ve known Dave Wommack [Ole Miss defensive coordinator] for a long time. We visited out there years ago when he was at Arkansas. They run a similar package. There were a couple of things we wanted to look at, and they wanted to talk to us about a couple of things that we do. It was a good visit. We shared ideas. We’re not going to change what we do, but we’re always looking to tweak it and see if we can add a little wrinkle to our scheme. Maybe find something that can help us against certain offensive schemes that they’ve had success with and vice versa.

“I also wanted to see their infrastructure. They’re a lot like us in a lot of ways. At the same time, we’re behind in terms of personnel within our building. Every place now has two or three people in recruiting and quality control people. That’s what I wanted to see. They have seven or eight people outside of our John Ballein [associate AD for football operations] and Bruce Garnes [deputy director of football operations] who are football guys. We [as coaches] kind of do it all. They have guys who evaluate personnel [recruits] and tell you, ‘Hey Coach, here are the top linebackers that you ought to look at.’ That’s what everyone in the country is going to, so I was just looking at that and seeing how we could improve ourselves. You can’t stay status quo. You’ve got to keep moving forward and not just on the football field. There are a lot of things off the field that can help make you good on the football field.” 

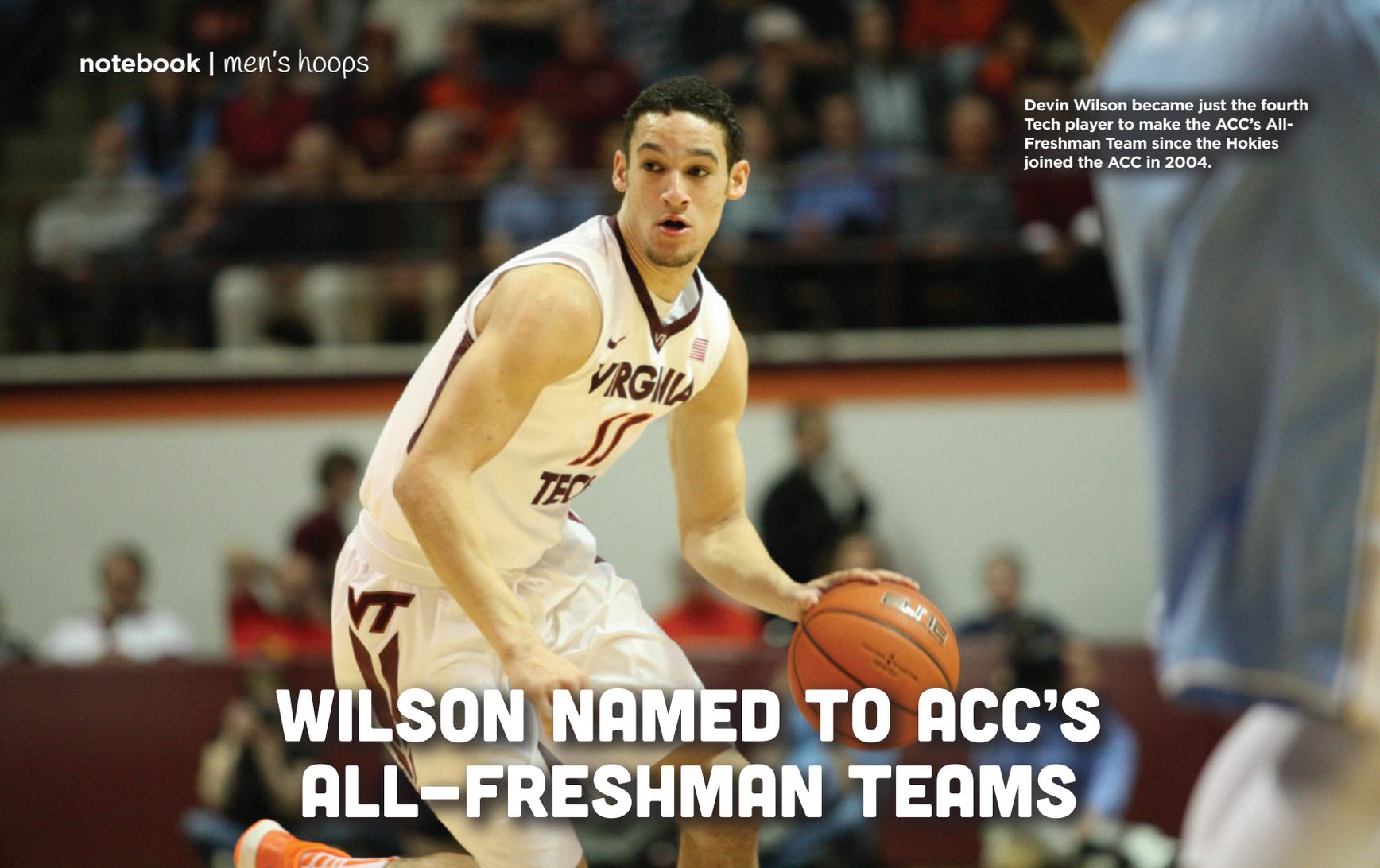
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Devin Wilson became just the fourth Tech player to make the ACC's All-Freshman Team since the Hokies joined the ACC in 2004.



WILSON NAMED TO ACC'S ALL-FRESHMAN TEAMS

Tech's point guard set three school freshman records this season, including one held by former great Dell Curry, and was rewarded by both the media and the league's coaches

by Jimmy Robertson

Tech point guard Devin Wilson's play this season for the undermanned Hokie basketball squad has been good, if not great, and certainly consistent.

And for that, he has been rewarded.

Wilson was named to the league's two all-freshman teams at the conclusion of the regular season – one by the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association (ACSM) and one by the league's coaches.

The native of McKees Rocks, Pa., led the Hokies in minutes played (1,043 minutes, 34.8 mpg), assists (4.8 apg) and steals (24) during the regular season. He also averaged 9.2 points per game.

The only Hokie to start every game this season, Wilson enjoyed a record-breaking first year for the Hokies, snapping freshman records for minutes played, total assists (143) and free throws attempted (178). Wilson's 1,043 minutes broke the previous record of 1,024 held by former Tech great Dell Curry, who set the mark during the 1982-83

season (34 games).

Wilson broke the freshman record for assists in a season by a freshman when he dished out five assists in the Hokies' 57-53 loss to Virginia on Feb. 18. Those five assists gave him 114 for the season at the time and enabled him to break the old record of 113 set by Hank Thorns during the 2007-08 season.

Wilson ranked third in the ACC at 4.8 assists per game heading into the ACC Tournament.

Wilson broke the Tech freshman record for free-throw attempts in the Hokies' 60-56 loss to North Carolina on March 1. He went 8 of 12 from the line in that game and scored 15 points. He finished the regular season with 178 attempts, besting Dale Solomon's previous record of 164, which came during the 1978-79 season.

Wilson became the first Tech player to make the ACC's All-Freshman squad since Dorian Finney-Smith in 2012. Other former Tech players to make the All-Freshman team include Jeff Allen (2008)

and Deron Washington (2005).

Jabari Parker of Duke, Tyler Ennis of Syracuse, London Perrantes of Virginia and Kennedy Meeks of North Carolina joined Wilson on the All-ACC Freshman teams.

Missed games add up

Tech's season essentially was ruined by injuries, as the number of games missed because of injuries indicates. Tech's players missed a total of 37 games because of injuries or illnesses, and 31 of those games came against ACC competition.

These numbers do not even include Marquis Rankin's missed season. He departed at the end of the first semester because of personal issues after having not played in a single game. The numbers also do not take into account the games missed by Malik Mueller, who missed the season because of eligibility issues.

Adam Smith, who started the first eight games as the team's shooting guard, missed 16 games

with a strained calf/stress fracture, including the final 13 of the regular season. Ben Emelogu missed nine games, including six because of a sprained ankle and three early in the year because of a concussion.

Van Zegeren closes regular season in fine fashion

Tech center Joey van Zegeren established his career high in scoring on three occasions in the final six games of the regular season. He went into that stretch with a career high of 11 points, but scored 13 in the Hokies' loss to UVa on Feb. 18, and then in the penultimate game of the regular season, he snapped that mark with 14 points in a 64-47 loss at Maryland on March 4. In the final game of the regular season, he scored 21 points in Tech's 62-51 defeat to Georgia Tech in Atlanta.

In the Georgia Tech game, he hit 9 of 17 from the floor and 3 of 5 from the free-throw line. He also grabbed seven rebounds.

"I saw a lot of confidence in Joey, not just in Atlanta, but the last couple of games," Tech coach James Johnson said. "He got his career high the game before and then he broke that.

"He's playing with a lot of confidence, and he's very aggressive on both ends of the court, especially on the offensive end. I think he's feeling like if we need a basket, we can throw to him and

he's going to get it. So I'm seeing a lot of confidence in the young man."

Van Zegeren, a redshirt sophomore, shot 60 percent from the floor in those three games, and he shot 58.5 percent from the floor in the final six games of the regular season.

Thompson strong down the stretch, too

Van Zegeren wasn't the only post player to finish up the regular season on a strong note. Freshman Trevor Thompson worked his way into the starting lineup and made the most of his minutes.

Inserted into the starting lineup on Feb. 5, the 6-foot-11, Indianapolis, Ind., native started the final nine games of the regular season, playing at least 20 minutes in eight of the nine. During that span, he averaged 7.4 points and 6.3 rebounds in that span.

Thompson's best game came against then-No. 6 Duke at Cameron Indoor Stadium in the Hokies' 66-48 loss. He tied his career high with 15 points, hitting 6 of 9 from the floor and 3 of 4 from the free-throw line. His other 15-point outing came against Western Carolina on Nov. 15.

He also grabbed six rebounds and had a career-high three steals. All of this came in a career-high 35 minutes.

"I came into the game, and I told myself to be patient on the offensive end," Thompson said after

the game. "I wanted to do everything possible to help my team out. I feel like there was a lot of stuff that I messed up on – rebounds I should have had. When I get back to school, I'm going to go back to the gym and work on the stuff that I thought I should have done better."

"I thought coming into the game that we could get the ball inside," Johnson said. "I thought we could score on them inside with van Zegeren and Trevor. Trevor was a lot more patient out there. He took his time when he got the ball. He scored around the basket with his right hand and his left hand. I thought he took a step forward against a very good team in a hostile environment. He scored whenever he got the opportunity to."

More impressively, Thompson held his own against Parker and Amile Jefferson – two of Duke's former McDonald's All-Americans. Parker is widely considered by many to be the best freshman in the nation and one of the best players nationally. He finished with 11 points and 12 rebounds, but made just 3 of 11 from the floor. Jefferson scored just six points.

"I know who they are, but I really don't care," Thompson said. "At the end of the day, it's just basketball. We're all basketball players. We all put on the same type of jersey. We all shoot the same ball. I came in and I wasn't worried about the hype. I just wanted to play." 

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Nearly every member of the 1973 NIT team was making his first trip to New York City, where the Gobblers played at Madison Square Garden - the "World's Most Famous Arena."

MIRACLE AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN NOT A THING OF THE PAST FOR '73 NIT TITLE TEAM

More than 40 years have passed since the Tech basketball team won four games by five points to claim the 1973 NIT crown – but the former players and coaches remember vividly how they pulled it off

by Jimmy Robertson

Here they stood, a cast of misfits mostly from all over Virginia playing on a team with a funny nickname and trying to do something that had never been done at their school. They were playing basketball in the world's most famous arena, a lengthy haul from their basketball home in Southwest Virginia. Only 12 seconds remained on the clock, and their leader, not much older than them, had just finished drawing a final play, one that would hopefully produce the two points needed to send them to basketball glory.

The Gobblers, as they were known in 1973, inbounded the ball, and the clock started ticking

toward their destiny, whatever it may be.

0:11

The season had begun with low expectations, as five seniors needed to be replaced off the 1971-72 squad that went 16-10. A hodgepodge of returning players, junior-college transfers and freshmen comprised the roster, and 31-year-old coach Don DeVoe was tasked with making this group into a respectable team.

0:10

The team's best player was Allan Bristow, who had two offers coming out of Henrico High School in Richmond – both for swimming. Yet Bristow

went into the NIT averaging more than 24 points and 11 rebounds per game.

0:09

The Gobblers finished the regular season with 18 wins, including victories at Ohio State, home vs. Florida State and at St. Bonaventure.

0:08

Losses to basketball lightweights Toledo and Richmond, the latter of which ended in controversy, probably cost them an NCAA Tournament bid. More than 40 years later, DeVoe still swears that Ed Frazier's tip-in at the buzzer against the Spiders should have counted.

The Gobblers lost 94-93 in two overtimes.

0:07

The NCAA Tournament back then consisted only of conference champions and the premium of the independents. So the 16-team NIT got the best of the rest, and in 1973, it featured some serious hoops muscle in North Carolina, Alabama, Minnesota, Louisville and Notre Dame.

0:06

The Gobblers had upset New Mexico in the first round by a score of 65-63, getting 26 points and 10 boards from Bristow. They nearly saw their New York City experience cut short by Fairfield, a gritty little team out of Connecticut. But Tech got 24 points from Craig Lieder and rallied from a nine-point halftime hole to escape with a 77-76 win.

0:05

The Gobblers went on to beat Alabama in the semifinals, advancing to the NIT championship game, where they would face Notre Dame. The Irish managed to fight off the Tar Heels to advance.

0:04

Notre Dame had taken a 10-point lead in the second half. Tech, though, had come back and trailed by two points with five seconds left. Lieder splashed in a 15-foot jumper to send the game into overtime.

0:03

Tech trailed Notre Dame by four with less than a minute to go. But Bobby Stevens' three-point play with 43 seconds left cut the lead to 91-90. The Gobblers got the ball back after Notre Dame missed a one-and-one, and they called that timeout. The final play broke down, and Stevens launched a jumper – that missed.

0:02

Bristow got a hand on the ball, but couldn't corral it. Stevens, alertly following his shot, chased it down.

0:01

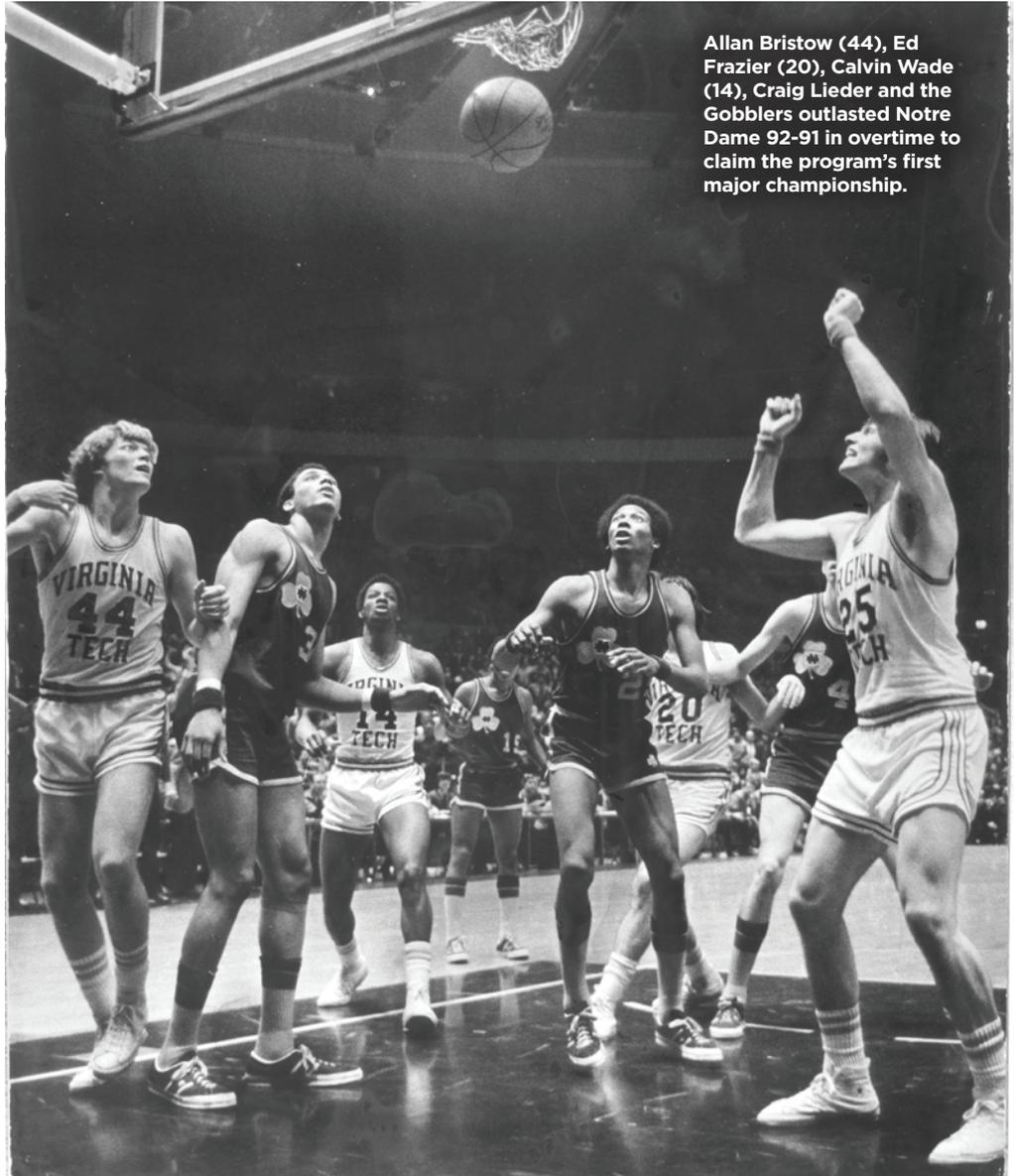
Stevens hoisted the final shot of the season, one that, in some way or another, would change Tech's destiny.

DEVOE BUILDS CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM

Today's Tech fan barely realizes that the school's basketball history extends beyond the playing days of the wonderful Dell Curry or the terrific Bimbo Coles, arguably the two best players in school history and both of whom played in the 1980s. But the school played solid basketball in the 1950s and 60s, too, when guys like Chris Smith, Bob Ayersman, Howard Pardue and Glen Combs were setting records.

In the late 1960s, Howard Shannon oversaw the program. Taking over in 1964, Shannon served as the head coach for seven years, and in 1967, he led the Gobblers to their first NCAA Tournament. They made it to the Mideast Regional final before losing to Dayton in overtime.

In 1971, Shannon resigned, deciding to accept



Allan Bristow (44), Ed Frazier (20), Calvin Wade (14), Craig Lieder and the Gobblers outlasted Notre Dame 92-91 in overtime to claim the program's first major championship.

a full-time position in Tech's physical education department. He went 104-67 during his tenure as the coach and had just one losing season.

Enter DeVoe, one of the youngest coaches in the country. Hired by then-AD Frank Moseley at the age of 29, DeVoe came over from Army, where he had been serving as an assistant to future Hall of Fame coach Bobby Knight. DeVoe inherited a good situation. In 1971-72, the Gobblers went 16-10 in his first season.

"The first year I was here, we had five seniors, and they just gave me a tremendous effort in everything," DeVoe said.

The star, though, was a junior – Bristow, who averaged 25 points and 13.4 rebounds per game. The Gobblers lost three of their four top scorers after that season, but they returned Bristow, Frazier, who had averaged 7.3 points per game, and Lieder, who had averaged 6 points per game.

To replace those seniors, DeVoe relied on transfers and freshmen. Stevens and Charlie Thomas transferred in from Ferrum Junior College

and became starters. Calvin Wade transferred from Mount Olive Junior College in North Carolina and was the team's sixth man, and DeVoe recruited two freshmen to come in and play key roles – Dave Sensibaugh, a guard from Lockland, Ohio, and Kyle McKee, a post player from Richmond, Ind. The 1972-73 season marked the first season in which the NCAA shelved its rule forcing freshmen to sit out their first year, thus allowing them to play immediately.

The Gobblers would be tested early that season. As an independent, they found scheduling much more difficult and wound up playing a lot of good teams. They played North Carolina in Charlotte, N.C., in their second game, and then traveled to Ohio State for a game against DeVoe's alma mater in their fifth game.

"Expectations weren't off the charts for us," DeVoe said. "In those years, we were an independent. So I really beefed up our schedule. We played at Ohio State, and we played Memphis, and we won a key game at St. Bonaventure early in



Members of the 1973 NIT championship team returned to Blacksburg last fall to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the team's accomplishment. The Gobblers were the first basketball team from Virginia to win a major championship.

January where no one had ever won. There were key games all year that we were able to pull out, and when it came selection time [for the NIT], we had an impressive record.”

The game against Ohio State served as a springboard of sorts for the team. The Gobblers won 67-62 for their third straight win. Ohio State had won the Big 10 title just two years prior.

The Gobblers ended up winning nine in a row. The streak ended with a setback to Florida, but the Gobblers responded by winning three straight after that loss, including a win over Florida State. So after that loss to North Carolina, they had won 12 of 13 games.

“I thought the turning point was when we went to Ohio State and upset Ohio State in Columbus, Ohio,” Sensibaugh said. “Then we knew something special was going on because we competed so well against them. Then we had Florida State, with Reggie Royals [a 6-10 center] and Otto Petty [a 5-7 point guard], and we beat them in Cassell Coliseum, which was huge. As time went along, we were achieving more than anyone ever would have thought.”

After losing at Toledo, the Gobblers closed the season with wins over Virginia and West Virginia to finish 18-5 and easily got into the NIT.

“The NIT, in that era, was *the* tournament,” Stevens said. “Everyone wanted to play in Madison Square Garden, and you went up there for the full week. We would have liked to have gone to the NCAA, but we were proud of our accomplishments because we had heard so much about the prestige [of the NIT] and just the fact that you were going to New York. You were going to be in New York for seven straight days if you could survive.”

FOUR WINS BY FIVE POINTS

For most of the players on the 1972-73 team, the trip marked their first to New York City. DeVoe had made many trips into the city while as an assistant for Knight at Army, but other than him, no one knew what to expect. Most of them had not packed a lot in the way of clothes. They didn't

expect to be there long.

“You wore your shirt inside-out so you could get the 2-for-1 deal,” Stevens joked. “We stayed in a Ramada Inn on 84th and 7th. I can still remember it. We had the same lunch – cheeseburger, fries and cheesecake. The waitress [at the local restaurant] got to know us. We spent a lot of time there.

“It was a big thing for us because very few of us had visited New York City. We played in the mystique of Madison Square Garden and the [NBA's] New York Knickerbockers. We got to see Willis Reed and Clyde [Frazier] coming off the floor. It was a wonderful experience for guys who are 20 years old.”

Tech upset New Mexico in the first round. Thomas, the junior-college transfer from Ferrum, was known more for his defensive prowess, but he hit the game-winning shot with 33 seconds left to lift the Gobblers to a 65-63 victory. That turned out to be their largest margin of victory in the tournament.

In the next game, they rallied to beat Fairfield 77-76, and then in the semifinals against Alabama, they trailed by five with 3:05 left. But Thomas scored twice to cut the lead to 71-70. A basket by Frazier and two free throws by Stevens capped an 8-0 run that gave the Gobblers a 74-71 lead and they held on for a 74-73 win.

That put the Gobblers into the championship game against Notre Dame, which was coached by Digger Phelps. Interestingly, Phelps reportedly had expressed interest in the Tech job while serving as the head coach at Fordham, but he wanted to see what Notre Dame officials were going to do first, and Moseley ultimately hired DeVoe.

It worked out for Phelps. In May of 1971, he got the Notre Dame job.

DeVoe, who now lives in Annapolis, Md., and serves on the NIT selection committee, quietly expressed joy at the Irish's beating of North Carolina in the semifinal. He thought a rematch with the Tar Heels, whom the Gobblers had played in the second game of the season, favored North Carolina.

“I thought North Carolina would be more

prepared mentally because we had played them before,” he said. “I didn't think the Notre Dame players would have as much respect for us.”

The game went like all of Tech's other games – back and forth. The Gobblers held 10-point leads on three different occasions in the first half. Yet the Irish's press caused problems, and the Gobblers led by just four at halftime.

In the second half, Notre Dame captured the lead and led by as many as 10 points with less than eight minutes to play. But the Gobblers rallied and cut it to two points with 5 seconds left. With the ball, the Gobblers got it to Lieder. He calmly stroked a 15-footer at the buzzer to tie the game and send it to overtime.

“In each game, someone else stepped up to the plate,” Stevens said.

Tech, though, appeared doomed in overtime, falling behind 91-87 with 55 seconds remaining. It looked like this fairy tale wasn't going to have the fairy tale ending.

Yet Stevens, all 5-foot-10 of him, refused to let the Gobblers go away. With 43 seconds left, he hit a jumper and was fouled. The free throw cut the lead to one. Then Thomas fouled Notre Dame's Gary Brokaw. Brokaw, who had scored 23 points, went to the free-throw line for a one-and-one. He missed.

Tech called a timeout with 12 seconds left. DeVoe knew exactly what he wanted to do.

“I wanted to get the ball back to Lieder again,” he said.

Notre Dame defended it well, and Stevens found himself with the ball and the season winding down. He dribbled to the free-throw line and gave a fake, getting Notre Dame's Dwight Clay off his feet just enough to let him launch a shot. The shot hit the right side of the rim and bounced away.

Bristow somehow got a hand on the ball among all the bodies in the post, and the ball ricocheted toward the perimeter. Stevens chased it down

He grabbed it, took two dribbles toward the right wing and let it fly. Somehow, Willie Townsend did not block it.

The ball stayed in the air for seemingly an

eternity, arcing through the humid air in the world's most famous building. It finally landed softly in the net just as the horn sounded. The two points gave the Gobblers a 92-91 victory over Notre Dame and the NIT championship.

"You practice that as a kid," Stevens said of the shot. "Back then, it was [former NBA great] Jerry West, and it's '4, 3, 2, 1 ...' You never think that is going to happen, but you practice it. I was fortunate to hit the game winner.

"A lot of people ask me, 'What were you thinking?' Well, you don't. Basketball is a reactionary game. I saw a loose ball, and then you're trying to scramble and get the shot off. That's all that was in my mind – getting a good shot off. When I look at the replay, that was a much better shot than the first one."

For Stevens, his 16th and 17th points of the game ended a personal curse of second-place finishes. His high school team, Norfolk Catholic, lost twice in the state finals, and Ferrum lost in the championship game of the junior college tournament the year before Stevens arrived at Tech.

His shot set off a wild celebration at Madison Square Garden, as players and coaches poured onto the court. Lieder and a couple of others mobbed Stevens, and the cheerleaders and even a few fans got into the fray.

Lieder finished with 27 points in the game, and Bristow scored 24 and grabbed 14 rebounds. But

neither cared about those numbers.

All that mattered to them was this – Tech became the first college in Virginia to win a major championship.

IMPACT ON THE PROGRAM

The celebration lasted well into the evening. In fact, it lasted for days. A crowd of more than 5,000 greeted the team when it arrived back in Blacksburg, and the state reveled in the team's accomplishment.

Even the governor at the time, Linwood Holton, got involved. He invited the team to Richmond for a dinner to celebrate the title. Not long after their return home, the players and coaches flew to Richmond for dinner at the governor's mansion.

More importantly, the impact would be felt for years to come. The win gave Tech an identity and name recognition. The program started getting better players, as evidenced by three postseason berths in a four-season span. Tech received bids to play in the NCAA Tournament in 1976 and 1979, and it also received another NIT bid in 1977.

The success led to an important moment in Tech's history – an invitation to join the Metro Conference, which came in the summer of 1978. The 1979-80 season marked an end to a 13-year run as an independent for the school.

Most credit the NIT championship for leading to conference affiliation.

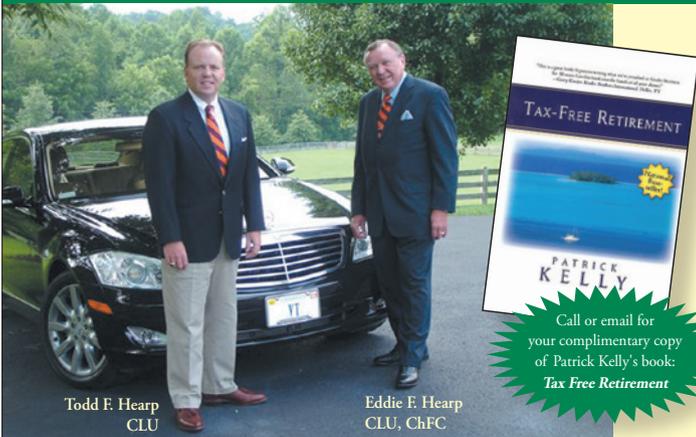
"I think it put us on the map and got people's attention," Sensibaugh said. "The next year, we didn't sneak up on anybody. We had the bulk of the team back, but we weren't sneaking up on anybody. But it [the title] helped us recruit and build, and after those years, we had quite a bit of success. We were able to move into the Metro Conference, so I think it helped us. It was a springboard for bigger things."

This past fall, several members of the squad returned to Blacksburg to celebrate their accomplishment and their role in Tech basketball history. The group included DeVoe, Bristow, Stevens, Sensibaugh and others. Stevens is still regaled among Hokie Nation as a hero. He regularly gets asked about "the shot." A physical science teacher at Rock Hill High School in Rock Hill, S.C., Stevens gets asked about the shot by his students, who somehow find out about his exploits each year. He breaks out the film when they ask him about it.

More than 40 years have passed since that March day in 1973. During a basketball practice that they attended to watch this year's squad, the former players laughed and carried on just as they did while in college. They joked that their hair is grayer and their midsections are wider than the current group of Hokies.

That may be true. But their memory – particularly of what happened in New York City that year – well, it's sharper than ever. 

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Monet Tellier finished her career as the ninth-leading scorer in Virginia Tech women's basketball history.



TECH WOMEN END HOOPS SEASON WITH LOSS TO CLEMSON

Four seniors depart, including Uju Ugoka, who earned second-team All-ACC honors, and Monet Tellier, who scored 1,331 points during her career

by Marc Mullen

Less than a week after dismantling Clemson 74-48 on senior night at Cassell Coliseum, the Virginia Tech women's basketball team came up well short of its first ACC Women's Basketball Tournament win since 2007, as the Tigers got revenge with a 69-56 win over the Hokies in a game that opened the 2014 tournament in Greensboro, N.C. and matched the No. 12 and 13 seeds.

Second-team All-ACC player Uju Ugoka, a senior who brought home the first ACC postseason honor for a Tech player since Utahya Drye earned honorable mention honors in 2009 and Brittany Cook was tabbed a second teamer in 2008, paced the Hokies with 20 points and 10

rebounds, notching her 16th double-double of the season, a single-season record at the school.

Junior Kelsey Conyers scored a career-high 10 points and tied for the team lead with three assists. Conyers came on late for the Hokies, averaging almost 22 minutes per game over the final six contests as opposed to playing just 34 total minutes the prior 24 games,

"It's disappointing on our end," Tech coach Dennis Wolff said in the press conference following the game. "But they [Clemson] rebounded from last week and came after the game the right way, so congratulations to them.

"I'm proud of the seniors. I'm proud of Uju, Monet [Tellier], Nia [Evans] and Porschia

[Hadley], but we're really disappointed. We had a bad start to the game. We had foul trouble and missed open shots, and that caused us to lose our composure. I probably didn't do a good enough job of trying to impress upon the kids that this could happen."

The Hokies ended the season with a 14-16 mark, their most wins in a single season since 2009-10, and they were 4-12 in the ACC.

FINAL GAME FOR FOUR HOKIES, INCLUDING TELLIER

The ACC tournament loss to Clemson marked the final game for a quartet of Hokies – Evans, Hadley, Tellier and Ugoka – and for Tellier, she certainly made a case for herself to be included in the discussion as one of the top 10 players ever at the school. Unfortunately, she played on some rebuilding teams, and that may limit people's perception of her true ability.

The Hokies went 42-76 during Tellier's four years, but the Charlotte, N.C., native played all four seasons in the highly competitive ACC. She finished with 1,331 points, ninth all time in the program's history, and seventh all time in scoring average at 11.3 points a game (min. 100 games played). Not one player on either of those top-10 lists played more than two seasons in the ACC.

Also, only one other member of the 1,000-point club – Amy Wetzel (1996-01) – can claim to have scored that many points and have added at least 500 rebounds, 300 assists and 150 steals in her Hokie career. Tellier's numbers are very similar to the Tech Hall of Famer's except when it comes to wins.

| | Tellier | Wetzel |
|----------|----------------|---------------|
| Games | 118 | 129 |
| Points | 1,331 | 1,444 |
| Average | 11.3 | 11.1 |
| Rebounds | 590 | 565 |
| Assists | 318 | 399 |
| Steals | 153 | 235 |
| Wins | 42 | 94 |

Tellier ended her career ninth all time in field goals made (468), fifth in 3-point field goals made (101), eighth in free throws made (294) and tied for 10th in assists (318). She also finished 28 rebounds and four steals shy of the top 10 in those categories.

HOKIES UPSET NATIONALLY RANKED TAR HEELS

In the midst of a three-game ACC winning streak, something that hadn't been done since the 2007 season, Tech upset then-No. 11 North

Carolina 50-47 at the Carmichael Auditorium in Chapel Hill, N.C., on Feb. 23, marking the first Tech win ever in Chapel Hill.

Freshman Vanessa Panousis tied a career high by scoring a game-high 24 points, while also handing out three assists. She hit 7 of 12 shots, including four 3-pointers to lead the team in what may have been her best game of the season. Ugoka added 13 points and nine rebounds in the victory, and Tellier pulled down 12 rebounds, one shy of her career high.

"I couldn't be prouder of how our kids played," Wolff said. "I think we did a good job of trying to control the tempo of the game to some degree. Vanessa Panousis was great, and I really give our kids credit. We've had a lot of close games like this. And unfortunately, we haven't closed some of them out. So today we were able to, and it's a great feeling."

It marked the third straight season that the Hokies have upset a nationally ranked team, as they beat No. 19 Florida State last year at Cassell Coliseum and upset No. 8 Maryland in College Park, Md., back in 2012.

The UNC victory was sandwiched around a 69-62 home win over ACC newcomer Pittsburgh and the Clemson win, which gave the team its first three-game winning streak in league play since 2007.

Back then, Tech won two games on the road – at Wake Forest and Virginia – before beating Miami at home during its three-game winning streak in January of that season.

PANOUSIS SETS SEVERAL FRESHMAN SCHOOL RECORDS

A native of Sydney, Australia, Panousis certainly started her career on the right foot. Playing in all 30 games for the Hokies, she set three freshman records at the school and was just 50 points shy of a fourth.

Two records by a freshman that stood for more than 20 years – 3-pointers both made and attempted – were broken by Panousis, as she connected on 58 of 177 during the season. Sarah Hillyer set both records during the 1989-90 season when she went 53 for 138 from behind the 3-point line.

Carrie Mason was knocked off the assists record, as Panousis led the team and handed out 121 this season, passing the mark of 106 set by Mason during the 2002-03 season.

Finally, Kim Seaver set the scoring record for a Tech freshman with 427 points back in 1996-97, as she led the Hokies that season.

Ugoka led Tech this year with 533 points – the fifth-most ever in a single season at Tech – but Panousis added 373 to finish second on the team in scoring. 

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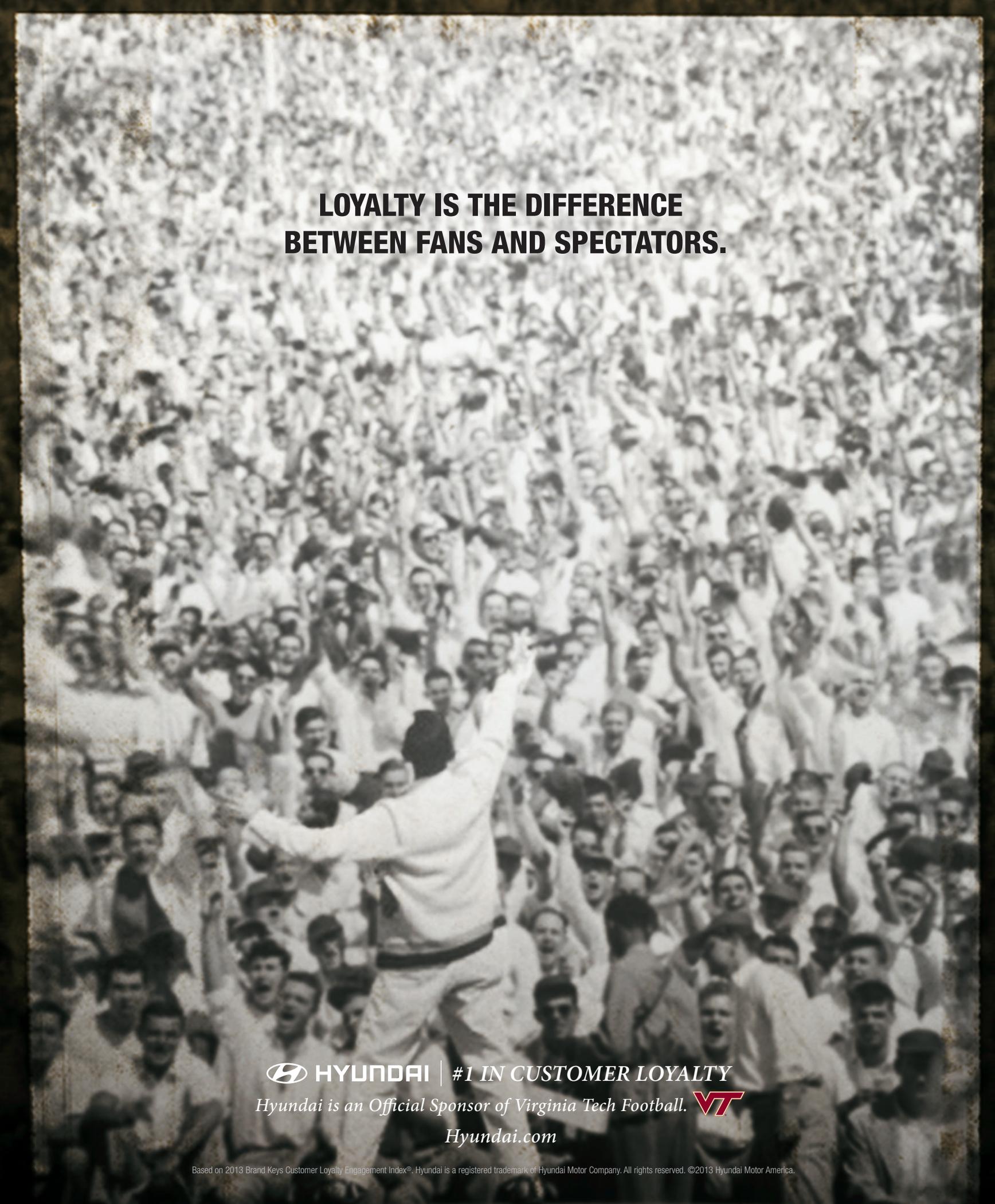
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Grant Pollock, a junior from Richmond, Va., won his first ACC indoor title by claiming gold in the one-mile race at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships.



TECH MEN AND WOMEN TAKE FIFTH AT ACC INDOOR TRACK MEET

Two men and two women capture individual titles in their respective events

by Jimmy Robertson

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The Virginia Tech men's and women's track and field teams recorded fifth-place finishes at the 2014 ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships held Feb. 27-March 1 in Clemson, S.C.

The men's team, paced by individual winners Torben Laidig and Grant Pollock, scored 65 points to finish two points behind fourth-place Duke in the team standings. Florida State, which amassed 96 points, claimed the overall title for the 10th time. The Hokies won the title a year ago.

On the women's side, Tech amassed 52 points, just 10 points behind fourth-place Miami, and improved its finish by four spots from last year's ninth-place showing. Florida State won the women's title as well, finishing with 96.5 points. It marked the Seminoles' second indoor title.

Laidig, a freshman from Schwaebisch Hall, Germany, soared to new heights in the men's pole vault. He set a personal best en route to a first-place finish. Laidig's mark of 17 feet, 10.5 inches (5.45 meters) was the highest jump set by an ACC competitor this season and the fourth-highest vault in Tech history.

Behind Laidig, the Hokies claimed four of the top six spots in the men's pole vault. Laidig's teammate, Chris Uhle, finished second, while Hokies' Stephan Munz and Jared Allison claimed fourth and sixth, respectively.

Pollock, a junior from Richmond, won the one-mile race in a time of 4 minutes, 9.3 seconds. It marked his first ACC indoor title.

Tihut Degfae and Tomas Kruzliak claimed bronze medals in their respective events. Degfae, a senior from Alexandria, Va., finished third in the 800-meter race in a time of 1:51.44, while teammate Martin Dally claimed seventh. Kruzliak, the defending national champion in the hammer throw during the outdoor season, claimed third in the weight throw with a toss of 64 feet, 8 inches (19.71 meters). The sophomore from Nitra, Slovakia, finished second in the event at last year's meet.

Other notable performances from the men included a sixth-place finish from Tadashi Pinder in the 60-meter dash and a sixth-place finish from Lee Degfae in the 3,000-meter race. Pinder, a sophomore from Locust Grove, Ga., ran his race in a time of 6.78 seconds. Degfae, a redshirt senior from Alexandria, Va., finished the 3,000 in a time of 8:21.05.

Also, the men's distance medley relay team of Juan Campos, Dante Price, Dally and Lee Degfae finished in fourth place with a time of 9:50.28. They were just nine-hundredths of a second from making it to the podium.

On the women's side, Tech's Martina Schultz continued her domination in the pole vault, winning her fourth straight ACC pole vault crown. She swept the event at both the ACC meets (indoor and outdoor) a year ago and won the event at the 2012 league outdoor meet.

This time, the junior from Uhingen, Germany,

won with a mark of 14 feet, 5.25 inches, which is her highest vault this season. She edged out Duke's Megan Clark, who hit the same height, but fell to second based on misses.

Tech's Amanda Smith, a junior from Chesapeake, Va., won her first ACC title, claiming first in the 800 and winning in a time of 2:06.69. Teammate Hanna Green, a freshman from Latrobe, Pa., claimed second with a time of 2:08.20, while Frances Dowd, a senior from Fairfax, Va., was fourth with a time of 2:08.49.

Other notable performances from the women came from Sarah Rapp, a junior from Raleigh, N.C., who finished second in the 3,000-meter race in a time of 9:21.03, and Jasmine Mitchell, a freshman from Amelia Court House, Va., who claimed seventh in the 400-meter race. Courtney Dobbs, a redshirt junior from Glen Allen, Va., who finished fifth in the 5,000-meter race. Dobbs ran the race in a time of 16:21.30 – a personal best at that distance.

Also, the women's distance medley relay team of Shannon Morton, Mitchell, Katarina Smiljanec and Rapp finished in fourth with a time of 11:19.21.

Both Tech teams now will await the conclusion of the rest of the conference championships throughout the nation to see which of its athletes qualified for the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships. That event will be held March 14-15 in Albuquerque, N.M. 

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Scott Vincent averaged a 71.6 a year ago and returns to Tech's lineup as one of the top golfers in the nation.



EXPERIENCE = EXPECTATIONS

The Tech golf team returns four players from a lineup that made the NCAA regionals last season and has high expectations for the spring campaign

by Jimmy Robertson

The Virginia Tech golf team opened its 2014 spring season in Puerto Rico, and on a couple of occasions during the three-day event, rain fell while they were out on the course.

Normally, rain affects golfers in a variety of ways. But the Hokies simply shrugged it off, and coach Jay Hardwick had the explanation as to why.

"It was the first time they had been out when something solid wasn't falling down on them," Hardwick joked.

Large quantities of snow and freezing rain totally wreaked havoc on the Hokies' pre-spring practice schedule, as they prepared for the spring-opening Puerto Rico Classic in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico. The foul weather all but confined Tech's practices to the Hokies' practice facility over at the Pete Dye River Course of Virginia Tech.

Yet in a field that featured five of the top 10

teams in the nation as ranked by Golfstat, the Hokies came in fifth – a respectable showing for a team that played all of just two or three practice rounds before leaving for San Juan on Feb. 20. Tech finished at 9-under par on the River Course at the Rio Mar Beach Resort and Spa.

"I thought we did okay," Hardwick said. "It was a little bit of the unknown for us. This was the least we had ever played. We'd only played two or three rounds of golf. We've hit a lot of balls. The kids have been dedicated in zero degree temperatures. We've just hit into the snow banks.

"The thing we were rusty in was our short game. That was what we hadn't been able to do [at Tech's practice facility]. We got there [Puerto Rico] and got an extra day [of practice], and I couldn't get the kids off the range. I was proud of them. They got better every round. In that kind of field,

considering we were one of the few teams that hadn't played in a tournament already and that we hadn't played any golf, I thought it was a good showing, and it was a confidence boost."

Hardwick hopes the performance was just the opening tee shot for a team with lofty expectations this spring.

The Hokies return four players from a program that received its seventh consecutive NCAA regional bid and is ranked 11th nationally by Golfstat and 18th by Golfweek in both publications' team rankings as of March 10. Unfortunately, last season ended on a sour note, as Tech got sent to Pullman, Wash., one of the more remote spots in college athletics, for its regional, and the Hokies finished in a tie for 10th place, failing to advance to the NCAA Championship. But the program only lost Mikey Moyers off the squad, thus fueling the talk of a big 2014.

"We've been consistent with our top four, but it's important to have all five guys if you're going to make a run at the national championship," Hardwick said. "We certainly think we can do that. You've got to get there first. You've got to get through the regionals and get to match play. So we just take it a tournament at a time, but I do have high expectations because four of these kids played in the NCAA tournament last year and three of them have played in our [NCAA] lineup

the past two years. Bryce [Chalkley] has played three. We have a lot of experience, with a senior, two juniors and a sophomore."

Scott Vincent, a junior from Harare, Zimbabwe, headlines the group, while Chalkley, a senior from Richmond, Va., serves as the team captain.

Vincent entered spring play ranked as the No. 17 player in the nation according to Golfweek and the No. 3 player in the ACC. He won three tournaments in the fall – the Golfweek Conference Challenge held in Burlington, Iowa; the VCU Shootout held in Manakin-Sabot, Va.; and the Bank of Tennessee Intercollegiate held in Johnson City, Tenn. He shot an average of 69.7 this fall, and he currently ranks first in all-time scoring at Tech with a 72.07 average.

Last year, Vincent led the Hokies in scoring with a 71.66 stroke average. He finished in the top 20 in nine of 11 events, including five top-five finishes and a seventh-place finish at the ACC Championship. He missed one event to compete for his native Zimbabwe in the World Amateur Team Championship held in Antalya, Turkey. He led Zimbabwe to a 17th-place finish, and he finished 32nd individually.

"He really doesn't have a weakness," Hardwick said of the All-ACC performer. "He's worried about his swing path and things of that nature, but 12 inches before the golf ball and 12 inches

after the golf ball is where it matters. He does a great job of repeating [his swing].

"He's got some shots he's working on. Our goal isn't to make him a better player. Our goal is to make him a more complete player, and that will do it. He's a pretty complete player now. If there's a weakness, it's just making sure he never doubts himself. When he gets it going, I've never had a player who is as streaky as he is and can make as many birdies as he can."

Chalkley, the lone senior in the lineup, will challenge Vincent as the Hokies' top golfer this spring. Chalkley fared well at the NCAA regional last May, finishing 11th in the individual race, and this fall, he finished in the top five on three occasions, including a runner-up finish to Vincent at the VCU Shootout.

Chalkley is ranked 44th nationally according to Golfweek.

"He reminds me of Johnson Wagner," Hardwick said. "He wasn't a highly ranked player coming in, but we certainly wanted him. He was a role player the first year, but he's worked on the things he's needed to work on, and he's gotten better at it. He's such a good student that it allows him to spend more time working on his game, and he's been fortunate to play a good summer schedule.

"He's just gotten better and better every year.



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He's pushed Scott. He'd have won a tournament this year if it hadn't been for Scott. His career has progressed a lot like Johnson's."

Trevor Cone and Maclain Huge round out the quartet that returns off last year's NCAA regional team.

Cone, a junior from Concord, N.C., got his spring started on a good note, shooting 4-under-par and tying Vincent for 16th place individually at the Puerto Rico Classic. He was a tad up and down last season, claiming 10th at the ACC Championship and yet tying for 64th place (with Vincent) at the NCAA regional in Pullman. But Cone played well this fall, with five top-20 finishes, including two top-10s, and he carried it over to Puerto Rico, where he tied Chalkley for the team's low round – a 67 in the second round.

Cone is ranked No. 92 nationally according to Golfweek, giving Tech three golfers in the top 100.

"Trevor is probably the most naturally talented player I've ever had," Hardwick said. "He picks up a golf club and makes a swing, and coaches go 'Wow, how easy and how good is that?'"

"Trevor likes to do his thing. He gets bored practicing. We have to give him games and things to do. One day, Coach [Brian] Sharp [Tech's assistant] told him to shoot for a flag that was about 180 yards away, and he told Trevor that if he hit it, he'd let him out of practice 15 minutes earlier. It didn't take Trevor 15 minutes to hit it. Guys might go a career and not do that.

"He's so talented, and it's so natural for him. We have to do things differently with him. But players are like that. He can shoot some numbers. He's got the type of golf swing that conditions don't bother him. He's just a natural player."

Huge, a sophomore from Lovettsville, Va., enjoyed a solid season as a freshman a year ago, particularly as the season went along. He

claimed 10th place at the ACC Championship and 11th at the NCAA regional in Pullman. This fall, he recorded two top-20 finishes, including a 13th-place finish at the Golfweek Conference Challenge. In Puerto Rico, he was 29th.

"He's still got to manage the golf course a little better," Hardwick said. "He made a couple of mistakes in Puerto Rico. He's so long that he doesn't know his strength at times. It's a great asset, but it still has to be saddled. He came into his own last year. He started maturing like we wanted him to, and he played well this fall. He's got a world of talent. He's going to get better and better."

Hardwick's biggest concern is finding that fifth guy, and the list of candidates includes junior Miles Curley and freshmen Drew Johnson, Ryan Mondy and Joey Lane. Curley, though, broke a finger while working out at Tech's Olympic sports strength and conditioning center shortly before the Puerto Rico Classic and will be out for several weeks.

Johnson, from Oak Ridge, N.C., got the nod in Puerto Rico and got better each round, shooting 78, 76 and 73 to finish 11-over-par. The other three played at least six rounds this fall, giving them needed experience.

"We usually qualify for one spot, and then Coach Sharp and I base it [the selection of the fifth player] on the type of course we'll be playing, how they're hitting it, that type of thing," Hardwick said. "But they always have a chance to play themselves in the lineup early, and if they play well, they can stay.

"We didn't have a qualifying round for Puerto Rico because of the weather, so we based it off of the fall and the course. The course was tighter and demanded a better short game, and Drew isn't as long as the other guys, but he's straighter, so that course fit his game better. It's different for

every course we go to. But our kids always have a chance to play."

Hardwick hopes to have his fifth guy decided by the time the Hokies play in the ACC Championship held April 25-27 in Badin Lake, N.C. Tech, though, will only play in three more tournaments before the conference tournament starts. Playing in the Golfweek Conference Challenge in the fall affected the Hokies' normal spring slate, leaving them without a tournament the weekend before the conference tournament.

"I thought it was important to represent the conference in the Golfweek Challenge because they took the top 15 golf conferences, and we got to represent the ACC," Hardwick said. "Right now, we play Augusta [the Augusta State Invitational] in the first week of April, and we don't play again until the ACC Championship. I've got a day available and I'd love to have a rainout [to get another day] because we've got a couple of [two-day] tournaments that would let us in [the weekend before the ACC Championships]. We've always done that, and the only year we didn't, we didn't play well. It just keeps you sharp.

"Hopefully, our guys are dedicated enough, and we'll practice enough, but there's nothing like playing competitively. So hopefully, it'll [the tournament before the ACC Championship] happen for us, but if not, we'll do some things. We might go to Primland [in Meadows of Dan, Va.] and play. They're going to have a college tournament there next year."

Tech figures to be in the mix at the 12-team ACC Championship. Only two ACC teams, Georgia Tech and Virginia, were ranked ahead of the Hokies at press time, though Florida State and Clemson were close behind in both polls.

But the Hokies have even higher goals. Time always will tell, but this experienced team may just be the one to accomplish them. 



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