

INSIDE

HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



ORANGE BOWL CHAMPIONS!

The 2008 season ended in grand style for the Hokies, who knocked off Cincinnati 20-7 to claim the 75th Orange Bowl crown

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INSIDE HOKIESPORTS

5 Hokie Club News

10 News & Notes

11 From the Editor's Desk

The final destination was great, but the
2008 journey should always be remembered

12 Kroger Roth Report

Taylor and his teammates set the bar high

14 Compliance

From getting in to staying in

16 Orange Bowl Recap

Hokies' 2008 season has a happy ending

18 Dustin Pickle Feature

Dream of playing for the Hokies became a reality

22 Redshirt Freshmen Feature

Young group ready to continue Tech's winning tradition

24 Season-Ending Depth Chart

26 Women's Hoops Notebook

Rookie Harrison developing into contributor

28 Lee Suggs Feature

Suggs embarks on a different type of professional career

30 Hokies in the Pros

Royal enjoys a banner rookie season in Denver

34 Men's Hoops Notebook

Hoops team hoping recent trend holds form

38 Laura Haskins Feature

Her sucessful balancing act: athletics and academics

41 Track & Field Preview

On your marks ... get set ... go!

45 New Years Resolutions

A few Hokie athletes share their goals for 2009

46 Olympic Sports Scoreboard

Wrestling team fares well over break

*Antoine Hopkins
is one of the many
young Tech players
with a bright future.*

Published by the
Virginia Tech Athletics Department

Inside Hokie Sports (ISSN 8750-9148, periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Va. 24022, and additional mailing offices) covers Virginia Tech athletics and is published 11 times annually – monthly from August through June. The publisher is the Virginia Tech Athletics Department, 460-E Jamerson Athletic Center, Blacksburg, Va. 24061-0502. **SUBSCRIPTION PRICES:** \$37.95 for one year (11 issues) and \$69.95 for two years. You can get an online subscription for \$25 and both the online and the print version for \$50. Mail all subscription inquiries, renewals, address changes, written inquiries and complaints to *Inside Hokie Sports*, 460-E Jamerson Athletic Center, Blacksburg, Va. 24061-0502 or call (540) 231-3908.

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ATTN POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Inside Hokie Sports, P.O. Box 110101, Blacksburg, Va. 24061-1101.

Printed by Color Q L.L.C., Miamisburg, Ohio

UPCOMING ATHLETIC EVENTS

J 16	16 & 17	TRACK & FIELD VT HOKIE INVITATIONAL	ALL DAY
A 17		WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. DUKE	6:30 P.M.
N 18		PACK THE HOUSE!! HOKIEBIRD BOBBLEHEAD DOLL GIVEAWAY!	
U 21		MEN'S BASKETBALL VS. BOSTON COLLEGE	4 P.M.
1 24		WRESTLING VS. RUTGERS & VMI	3 P.M.
2 25		WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. VIRGINIA	7 P.M.
3 28		ORANGE EFFECT GAME!! VT CROCS GIVEAWAY! SIMON SEZ AT HALFTIME!	
4 1		SWIMMING & DIVING VS. GT & UNCW	NOON
5 2		WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. LONGWOOD	2 P.M.
6 6		WOMEN'S TENNIS VS. ELON	2 P.M.
7 7		VS. LONGWOOD	6 P.M.
8 11		MEN'S BASKETBALL VS. CLEMSON	7 P.M.
9 12		LIGHTS OUT IN BLACKSBURG—WEAR BLACK TO THE GAME!!	
10 13		WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE! CALL 1 800 VA TECH4	

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B 6 & 7	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. USC UPSTATE	7 P.M.
R 6	BACK-TO-BACK NIGHT! FREE VT BACK SCRATCHERS!	
U 8	TRACK & FIELD VT ELITE MEET	ALL DAY
A 11	WRESTLING VS. OHIO	7 P.M.
D 12	WOMEN'S TENNIS VS. OHIO STATE	NOON
Y 13	MEN'S BASKETBALL VS. NC STATE	1:30 P.M.
	WRESTLING VS. MARYLAND HOKIEBIRD BOBBLEHEAD GIVEAWAY!	5 P.M.
	MEN'S BASKETBALL VS. GEORGIA TECH	7 P.M.
	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. MIAMI	7 P.M.
	THINK PINK— BREAST CANCER AWARENESS GAME! FREE PINK T-SHIRTS!	
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	VS. ST. BONAVENTURE	7 P.M.



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The Hokie Club is more than just a membership. It's taking a road trip to see the Hokies play. It's that desire to drive to Blacksburg to see a game just so you can be on campus. It's the pride you feel when the Hokies succeed. It's that feeling that overwhelms you and lets you know without a doubt ... yeah, I'm a Hokie!



WAYS TO GIVE: MAJOR GIFTS

Several giving opportunities exist that exceed the annual giving levels (such as Silver Hokie, Golden Hokie, etc.) outlined by the Hokie Club. Hokie Club members that are interested in committing a "major gift" to the Hokie Club have several opportunities. The university has defined a "major gift" as any amount pledged or paid in full of at least \$50,000 generally paid over a five-year period. After the gift is paid in full, a set annual gift is required to maintain Hokie Club benefits.

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

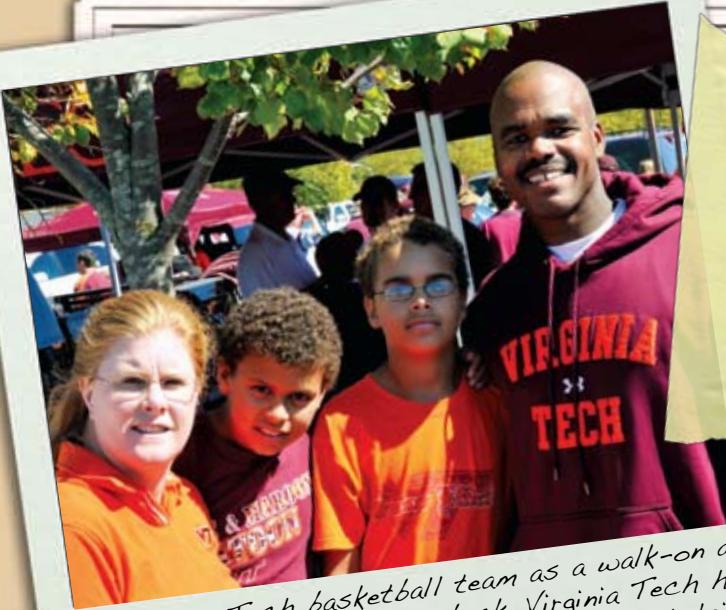
MAJOR GIVING LEVELS

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If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about making a "major gift," or if you would like to know more about the benefits that are associated with this type of gift, please call the Hokie Club at (540) 231-6618 for more information.



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



I made the Tech basketball team as a walk-on and have always wanted to give back. Virginia Tech has been good to me and played a large role in helping me become the person I am today.

Quinton J. Nottingham

Hokie Club Level:

Golden Hokie Champion

Family members:

Wife, Jacqueline and two sons, Sir (12) and Jacob (11)

Q: What year did you graduate?

A: 1989, BS; '91, MS; '95, PhD

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because...

A: It's a feeling/energy of the "people," where we are a cohesive group who cares for one another under any and all circumstances, good and bad. Hokie Nation is a family whose strength is in its numbers that continue to grow with alumni and friends worldwide. I've always been proud to be a Hokie and I wear my orange and maroon with pride.

Q: What is your best memory as an athlete while at Virginia Tech?

A: There are so many things that come to mind when I think about my time as an athlete at Virginia Tech. The time with the basketball team ... when we became a "fraternity" of our own; the camaraderie with the players of all sports while living in Cochrane Hall; playing in the Cassell, one of the toughest college arenas in which to play when it's packed; playing in arenas such as Freedom Hall, at the Pyramid in Memphis, and others; and playing in the Metro Conference against teams such as Louisville, Florida State, Memphis State, etc. I believe to this day that if the Metro Conference were still intact, it would be one of the toughest conferences in America. And last, but certainly not least, my fondest memories are the relationships and bonds that I developed over the years with athletes and the regular students that are still strong today.

Q: What is it like being a tenured professor at the university you attended and played for?

A: Amazing!!! I couldn't have written this script any better. I never thought I would be able to work for Virginia Tech as a faculty member after getting my Ph.D. However, after interviewing and receiving several job offers, this position became available and I was fortunate enough to be offered the job. I love academia ...teaching AND learning new things. In my opinion, when you love your job, then it's not really work. With that mentality, I haven't worked a day since the fall of 1995 when I joined the BIT Department. Plus, Jacqueline and I have always felt that raising our kids in a college town would be perfect, especially in Blacksburg.

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

A: Ace Custis. He's my cousin, grew up on the Eastern Shore of Virginia and attended Northampton High School, just as I did, and I love it that he chose to come to Virginia Tech, especially during the time that I was a color analyst for basketball radio broadcasts.

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

A: I've been attending Virginia Tech sporting events since the fall of 1984 and have seen some great athletes over that time. I never really had a favorite athlete, but I do enjoy attending football, women's basketball, and softball games (along with men's basketball games, of course).

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"I'm a senior at Virginia Tech and the experience you have given me here as a student-athlete has been amazing. My only regret is that I'm graduating. Thank you."

Tasmin Fanning

Senior, Women's Cross Country, Track & Field
- 3rd at the Cross Country National Championship
- Two time All-American

Important Dates to Remember

February 7, 2009	2nd Annual Baseball Night in Blacksburg w/ Jim Palmer
February 21, 2009	Hokie Club Winter Meetings
February 28, 2009	Hokie Celebration (Duke game)

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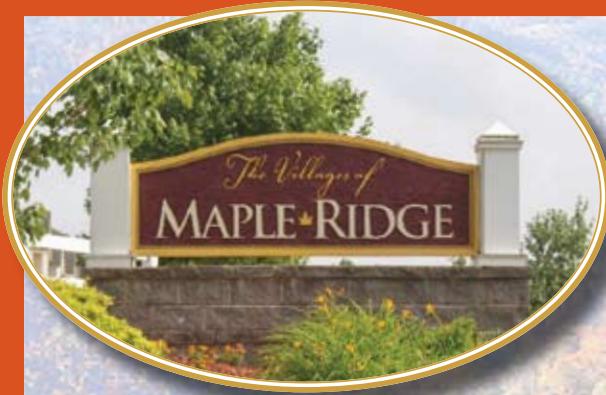
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Hokieclub.com

Hokie Club Orange Bowl Reception

The Hokie Club hosted its annual Bowl Game Reception on December 31 at the Westin Diplomat prior to the 75th FedEx Orange Bowl. Head football coach Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech president Charles Steger, and athletics director Jim Weaver addressed the crowd. The Marching Virginians and the Virginia Tech Cheerleaders were also present for this event, which was open to all Hokie Club members.



An Orange Bowl victory to top off a great season.
Many thanks to all of our Hokie Club members!



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THEHUDSONTEAM



News & Notes

By Jimmy Robertson

Palmer to headline baseball team's fundraiser

Tech baseball's second annual 'Baseball Night in Blacksburg' will take place on Feb. 7 and the featured speaker will be Hall of Fame pitcher and Baltimore Orioles legend Jim Palmer.

The event, sponsored by Bull and Bones Brewhaus and Grill, will be held from 6-9 p.m. in the west side stadium club of Lane Stadium. Tickets cost \$75 per person (\$35 for kids 13 and under), and can be purchased by calling the Virginia Tech baseball office at (540) 231-3674.

The event will also include a dinner, silent and live auctions for various sports items, and a chance to meet the entire 2009 Virginia Tech baseball team.

For those interested in a more intimate experience, a private, open-bar reception with Palmer and other notable figures will be held from 5-6 p.m. Access to the private reception is only available through the purchase of the 'Home Run Package,' which is a group of eight tickets that costs \$1,600.

Tincher earns NCAA's top honor

Former Tech softball superstar Angela Tincher won the NCAA's top honor when that organization named her as one of the winners of the Top VIII Awards, which is given each year by the NCAA to honor eight outstanding senior student-athletes of the preceding calendar year with weighted criteria including athletics ability and achievement, academic achievement and character/leadership. Recipients will be honored at the NCAA Honors and Delegates Celebration on Jan. 15 at the NCAA Convention in Washington, D.C.

Tincher's success in the softball circle is unprecedented. She earned the USA Softball national player of the year award and received first-team All-America honors. She led the Hokies to the Women's College World Series for the first time this past season and finished her career with a 123-35 record, a 0.78 ERA and 2,149 strikeouts (third most in NCAA history at any level). The Tech athletics department retired her number earlier this fall.

She's also an academic All-American, having graduated summa cum laude last spring with a degree in finance.

The Eagle Rock, Va., native became the second Tech student-athlete in school history to be given this honor. Football player André Davis, who is playing in the NFL for the Houston Texans, was a Top VIII award winner in 2002. Other recipients include John Elway, Rebecca Lobo and Peyton Manning.

Tincher will be heading to Japan in roughly

a month. She signed a professional contract to play for a team over there.

Harris an All-American

Tech cornerback Macho Harris capped his final season by earning first-team All-America honors by *Sporting News* and second-team All-America honors by The Associated Press. He became the 19th first-team All-American in Tech's football history.

Harris, a native of Highland Springs, Va., closed his season with 46 tackles (32 solo), including 3.5 for a loss. He also tied for the team lead with six interceptions, two of which he returned for touchdowns. He recovered a fumble and forced two fumbles as well.

Harris kept alive an impressive streak by defensive coordinator Bud Foster, who has had at least one All-American from the defense in each of his 14 seasons as either coordinator or co-coordinator at Tech.

Tech football injury report

During a practice at the bowl game, Mike Goforth, Tech's assistant AD for athletic training, reported that all of the Hokies injured over the course of this past summer and fall will be able to participate in spring practice, with the exception of Kenny Lewis, Jr. As most know, Lewis tore his Achilles tendon midway through the year and then re-toe it a few weeks later after slipping in the shower, thus requiring a second surgery. He probably would have been out for spring practice anyway.

However, two starters and a key reserve will be out for spring practice. Defensive end Jason Worilds (left shoulder) and whip linebacker Cam Martin (knee) will undergo surgery, as will back-up tight end André Smith. Also, the list could swell to three starters, pending upcoming tests on the left shoulder of offensive guard Sergio Render.

Chancellor to return for senior season

With his mom, Karen Lambert, watching her first bowl game, Tech safety Kam Chancellor played maybe his best game of the season, intercepting a pass and breaking up two more to lead the Hokies' tremendous effort on defense in Tech's 20-7 victory over Cincinnati in the Orange Bowl. The interception marked his second of the season.

After the game, Chancellor delivered good news to Tech fans. He told reporters that he planned on returning to school for his senior season. He had sent in his paperwork to the NFL advisory committee to determine his draft status, but the junior from Norfolk, Va., said he wanted to stay in school for his final year. The deadline for underclassmen to declare their intentions is Jan. 15.

Chancellor cited Macho Harris' impact on this year's team as one of the underlying reasons for his return.

"Just the way I saw Macho come back, and the way he led the team, being very vocal, that's something I want to do next year," Chancellor said.

Several impressive performances in scout-team testing

Tech's strength and conditioning staff conducted strength and conditioning testing among the Hokies' scout-team members – a group of freshmen redshirts, walk-ons and third-teamers who rarely play. The scout team runs the opposing team's plays during practice throughout each week, while also participating in the strength and conditioning program to get bigger and stronger in hopes of helping the program down the road.

This time around, a little-known walk-on named Josh Call earned the top honor, as Call was the only Tech player to earn Super Iron Hokie honors during the testing period. The 5-foot-10, 250-pound fullback came to Tech as a walk-on from Raleigh, N.C., who went to school at Woodberry Forest near Charlottesville, Va. He finished tops among scout-team players in the bench press (410 pounds) and the power clean (330), and second in both the front squat (420) and push jerk (340).

Several of Tech's scout-team linemen fared well, too. Will Alvarez, who redshirted this past fall, led the scout team in the front squat (430) and push jerk (341), and Vinston Painter, another who redshirted this past fall, finished in the top five in all the lifts.

In all, 19 scout-team members received recognition after the testing. Here's a look at the results:

SCOUT-TEAM TESTING

Bench press (pounds)	Front squat
Josh Call (410)	Will Alvarez (430)
Vinston Painter (410)	Josh Call (420)
Will Alvarez (400)	Antoine Hopkins (420)
Phil Sayer (390)	Courtney Prince (405)
Dwight Tucker (370)	Vinston Painter (405)
Push jerk	Power clean
Will Alvarez (341)	Josh Call (330)
Josh Call (340)	Antoine Hopkins (330)
Vinston Painter (321)	Vinston Painter (330)
Phil Sayer (320)	Joey Phillips (304)
Dwight Tucker (320)	Isaiah Hamlette (304)
Vertical jump (inches)	10-yard sprint (sec.)
Marcus Davis (39.5)	Alonzo Tweedy (1.6)
Alonzo Tweedy (37.5)	Allen Stephens (1.7)
Jeff Wardach (36)	Dean Hill (1.7)
Ryan Williams (35.5)	Joey Phillips (1.71)
Allen Stephens (35)	Jeff Wardach (1.73)

(Note: Hopkins also lifted 320 in the push jerk; Stephens finished with a 304-pound power clean; Hill and Lance Barbour both recorded a 35-inch vertical; and Sayer and Nobel Iyebote had times of 1.73 seconds in the 10-yard sprint.). 



FROM
THE
**EDITOR'S
DESK**

Jimmy Robertson

Tech fans will certainly remember this bowl game. You'll remember the opponent. You'll probably remember the score.

You'll remember Darren Evans, who was unbreakable; Tech's defense, which was unbendable; and Tyrod Taylor, who was unflappable.

Hopefully, that's not all you'll remember. Because Tech's 2008 season deserves better than that from our all-too-abbreviated attention spans.

The Hokies closed a season unlike any other when they methodically disposed of Cincinnati to capture the Orange Bowl. It marked Tech's first "major" bowl victory since 1995. It concluded their fifth straight season of at least 10 wins. And it reeled in the ACC from the sea of recent BCS embarrassment (eight straight losses).

Following the game, head coach Frank Beamer wasted little time in placing his 2008 version of Hokies on the pole position in the race for the crown of "best" Tech team. That might be an exaggeration, and yet, understandable given the moment.

"I like this football team and I think maybe this is the best football 'team' we've ever had," he said moments after the game. "We had some tough losses, but no one split up. Everyone hung in there together."

"We've had some great, great seasons here, but I really think this is the best 'team' we've had at Virginia Tech."

For sure, this program swallowed the sweet

The final destination was great, but the 2008 journey should always be remembered

taste of success on New Year's Day night in Miami, and finally spat out the bitter after-taste of two bowl defeats. Yet this season deserves to be remembered for not only the end result, but also how it transpired.

Beamer quickly set the tone in the offseason by telling donors, alums and fans that the Hokies let one slip away with that 24-21 washout against Kansas last year in the Orange Bowl. He let it be known that change was coming.

He tired of Branden Ore's shenanigans and booted him. Zach Luckett and Ike Whitaker eventually followed.

He firmly held the tiller, too, steadily navigating the Hokies' ship even as it took on water following a season-opening loss, a quarterback change, three losses in a four-game span in the middle of the season and a list of injuries that kept doctors over at Montgomery Regional well-heeled this fall.

Eleven went down for the season; Brandon Dillard, Kenny Lewis, Jr., and Davon Morgan among them. Then at the end of the season, rising star Jason Worilds and gritty Brett Warren joined them, both missing the Orange Bowl.

As if that wasn't enough, a wave of criticism, relentless at times, engulfed the program, though more centered toward the Hokies' offense. But Tech's hardened staff understood it came with the territory. Tech's freshmen and sophomores were too young to know any better; and the seniors were too old to care.

"It's not about what anybody else says," Evans said. "It's not about what it seems like. We know what's going on in our locker room, and it's really about us. We couldn't listen to

what other people were saying; that we weren't that good, weren't moving the ball, didn't have any passing game – things like that."

"We just kept working together, week in and week out," defensive end Orion Martin said. "Even when we were losing, at our lowest points, we just kept working as a team. That's what really helped us this year."

Of course, it helped, too, that Beamer made an audible in regards to his bowl preparations. He delivered on his change mantra, changing virtually every single aspect of the Hokies' bowl routine. Tech practiced more. The Hokies practiced more intensely. Beamer shackled any potential late-night mischievousness with a midnight curfew, and he moved his team to a different hotel the night before the game to eliminate any potential distractions.

The end result was a 20-7 dominance, an Orange Bowl for the ages for Tech fans and one that has this team, which returns 18 starters from the game for the 2009 season, looking for bigger and better things in the future.

"I told them to start talking national championship," Martin said. "I don't see why not. With Tyrod and the boys on offense, the defense has everybody back basically. I don't see why they can't do that. Start thinking about it because it's possible."

Let's not get ahead of ourselves here. It's certainly way too early to be talking about that. That's a column for another day.

For now – and for a long time hereafter – Tech fans should treat this season as a fine wine. Smell the fragrance. Swirl it easily in your glass. Sip it slowly and savor it.

After all, this type of vintage doesn't get made every year. 

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Bill Roth

TAYLOR AND HIS TEAMMATES SET THE BAR HIGH THIS SEASON,

but continued improvement is needed to leap to the next level

The Orange Bowl championship trophy is likely the biggest – and heaviest – that Virginia Tech has ever won.

It took two managers and a pushcart to get the massive trophy and glass bowl into the lobby of head coach Frank Beamer's office – and that's after the real oranges were replaced with hollow plastic replicas.

But as heavy as that trophy is, the weight of winning the 2009 Orange Bowl will get even heavier for the Hokies once next season begins.

Hey, if you can win the Orange Bowl with a starting lineup that included six freshmen and will return 18 starters from the game, what can you do for an encore, right?

If your powerful running back can ramble for 153 yards en route to the Orange Bowl MVP as a redshirt freshman, what does his future hold?

And if your 19-year-old quarterback has already played in two BCS games and won an ACC championship game MVP, and now returns for his junior season ...well you get the picture.

These kids have set the bar very high for themselves and for a football program that's won three ACC titles in the past five years.

"We're getting better, but I think a lot of teams in our league are getting better, too," said the always diplomatic Frank Beamer following the game. "If you look around the ACC, you saw a lot of young quarterbacks and young players. We weren't the only one."

While Beamer is correct, his team is also the only one that won a BCS game and one of two that returns at least 18 starters in the ACC (Georgia Tech returns 19). And that makes the Hokies the preseason 2009 favorite in their conference, even if they barely squeaked out their



Tyrod Taylor

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division in 2008 and would prefer to fly under the radar again.

"We could be better on offense and defense next year and not win the division," Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster said. "Look at how close those games were. We beat Georgia Tech by three. We beat North Carolina by three. We beat Virginia by three. It's just a very balanced, even conference."

And for Tech to win it again and reach even greater heights, Taylor becomes the 2009 focus.

There will no longer be a question about who is Tech's starting quarterback. It will be Taylor, who barring injury, will be the Hokies' man this fall.

No more redshirt talk. No more Sean Glennon comparisons. His name is on the office door as the QB in Hokieland.

While he made some amazing plays with his feet and rushed for over 61 yards per game, Taylor threw a grand total of two touchdown passes in 2008. Yup, just two. Coupled with seven interceptions, Taylor's passing efficiency rating was 103.3, which won't cut it this fall.

"In a way, we've been unfair to Tyrod because we've been getting him ready to win a game each week instead of focusing on developing his skills," Tech quarterbacks coach Mike O'Cain said.

This offseason stands as the most critical in his development. Taylor needs to work on his reads. He needs to learn to check down. And he needs to tighten his throwing motion.

"The reason we wanted to redshirt Tyrod was to work on those things," O'Cain said. "Yeah, he has a little hitch, but you don't work on those things during a game week. We were getting him prepared to win a game on Saturday. We'll get to his mechanics in the spring."

And this spring, Taylor no longer has to concern himself with competing for the starting job. His focus and goals: improve as a quarterback, in both meeting rooms and

on the field so that when the Hokies take the Georgia Dome field in 34 weeks, they've improved at the quarterback position.

"He's good now," Beamer said of Taylor after the Virginia game in November. "But before he leaves here, he's going to be really good."

To this point in his career, Taylor has shown plenty of flash and dash. But in recent games, an upgrade: Taylor showed poise and savvy, two traits that are vastly more important to his coaches and for his development at the position.

Some perspective here: Taylor was one of the most highly recognized and heavily recruited prep stars in Virginia over the past 20 years. Up there with the Terry Kirbys, Allen Iversons, Ronald Currys, Bryan Randalls and the Vick brothers from the Hampton Roads area. He turned down Urban Meyer and the Gators, the Ol' Ball Coach at South Carolina, JoePa at State College, and Coach Bowden down at Florida State to play for the Hokies. He was a five-star prospect only because they don't give out six stars in those rankings.

He was set to redshirt in 2007, but was too good to sit. He led the Hokies to a touchdown drive at eventual national champion LSU in his second college series and eventually helped Tech win an ACC title.

He was set to redshirt in 2008, but again, was too good to sit. He led the Hokies to the ACC title where he was the championship game MVP. Then he quarterbacked the team to the Orange Bowl win.

But as great as those accomplishments are – and you must admit his two-year resume is eye-popping – he can be better. He's got to be better.

The cold-water-in-the-face stats don't lie. He's thrown only seven career touchdowns, has 10 interceptions, and has been sacked 43 times. Stats can be misleading, and Taylor's are certainly skewed towards the negative because of a) his inexperience and b) the relative youth of his teammates this season.

But when he looks at the film, he sees that he missed wide-open receivers, threw the ball to the wrong side, or ran with the ball just as a receiver was breaking open. Yet he's eager to learn and excited to improve.

That's what makes the future so promising. We've just scratched the surface with what Taylor can do from a passing standpoint.

Now it's true, that had he redshirted in 2007 or 2008, he might be further along with his mechanics or better with his reads. He might understand the intricacies of the passing game better. And of course, he'd have three years of eligibility remaining, not two.

But don't second-guess the decision to play him. Tech's won two ACC titles with him at quarterback and Taylor enters 2009 with more big-game experience than any other quarterback in the ACC.

Baton Rouge or Lincoln? He's seen it.

ACC Championship games – done that twice.

BCS games – ditto.

And he's played some of his best football in Tech's biggest games.

"Tyrod is in a position now where he starts taking over some games, where he's the best player on the field at times," Tech's offensive coordinator Bryan Stinespring said. "He goes down and plays in the ACC championship and he's the player of the game. He comes out in the Orange Bowl and does a great job. He's got a lot of confidence now and he should have that."

Does the weight of the 2009 Orange Bowl trophy become an albatross for next year's team? Will it be a burden for the young players, like Taylor, who found success so early in their careers and now will be expected to take this program to greater heights?

Or have the Hokies just started what could be a tremendous run?

A lot of that rides on Taylor's continued improvement.

And that journey starts this spring. 



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From getting in to staying in

Compliance Corner focuses on continuing eligibility *By Jimmy Robertson*

The Compliance Corner in the last issue dealt with initial eligibility, or in simpler terms, the NCAA's requirements that a high school prospect needs to meet before being admitted into a school and eligible to participate in a sport. Once a prospect meets those requirements, then comes the next challenge – staying eligible for competition, according to the NCAA's continuing-eligibility guidelines.

These guidelines state that student-athletes must pass 18 hours combined over the spring and fall semester each academic year. This can be any combination of, say, 10 hours in the fall and eight in the spring or seven in the fall and 11 in the spring. But they must pass at least six hours per semester – in other words, they can't pass all 18 hours in one semester and meet the requirement. They also cannot use summer school hours to meet this requirement.

At the end of their second year, they must declare a major. Then comes the tough part. All hours after the second year must be applicable toward a student-athlete's major (declared degree program). Entering their third year, student-athletes must have met 40 percent of their degree requirements. Then entering their fourth year, they must have met 60 percent, and entering the fifth year, 80 percent.

All the while, they must maintain at least a 2.0 grade-point average.

"The goal is clearly graduation," said Tim Parker, Tech's assistant AD for compliance. "The rules are not as flexible as they once were. They're more stringent. But if you remain eligible to compete each semester, it's almost assured that you're going to graduate in five years or less."

Making sure that Tech's student-athletes meet these continuing-eligibility requirements requires in-step coordination between the compliance team, the student-athlete aca-

demic support services (SAASS) group, the university's registrar's office, and of course, the student-athlete.

At the semester's end, the compliance team works with the registrar's office to make sure each student-athlete meets the NCAA requirements and gets certified for competition for the next semester (student-athletes are certified after each term). That makes the end of the semester a hectic time, particularly in December when the athletics department is trying to get athletes certified in time for post-Christmas competition (bowl games and basketball games).

The NCAA's rigid requirements, though, haven't affected Virginia Tech's student-athletes very much. In fact, in 2008 (spring and fall), only two did not earn at least six hours in the most recent semester (out of more than 600 student-athletes) and only three did not earn at least 18 hours in the two most recent semesters. Only three did not meet the GPA requirement and nine did not meet the percentage of degree requirements (four of those nine were transfer students).

"I think one good thing about the rules are that they hold student-athletes accountable on an annual basis," said Heather Robertson, coordinator of athletic academic eligibility and the primary person who works with the registrar's office on the certification process. "When looking at these numbers, the percentage of degree is the most common issue because students who transfer to Tech have to use transfer credits to meet the requirement – and obviously not all degree programs from other schools match requirements within the same degree program here at Tech."

"These rules demand academic consistency," Parker said. "You have to accomplish something every semester, and the student-

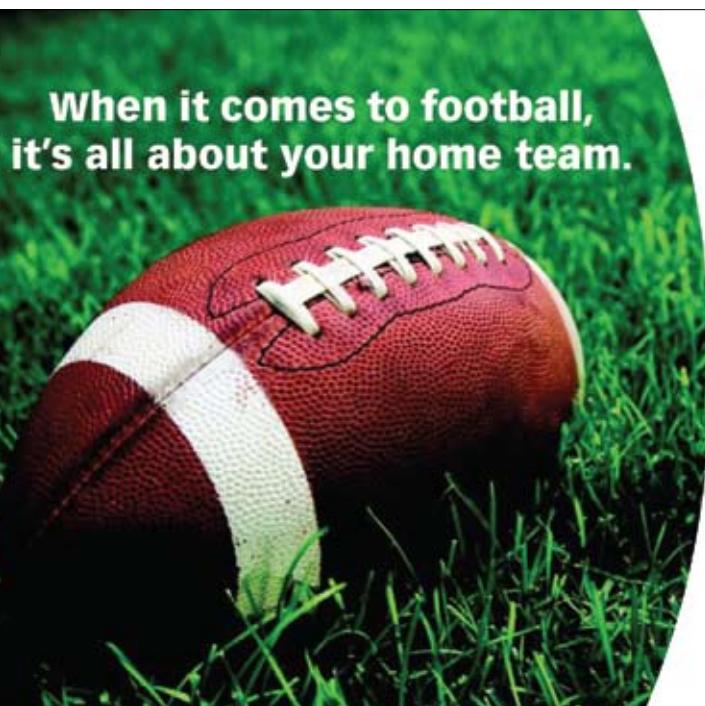
athletes know this up front. They are given the requirements in orientation their freshman year, and then the SAASS representative for each sport gives them the requirements annually. So everyone should be on the same page."

Of course, like most NCAA regulations, there are some detriments. The NCAA's continuing-eligibility requirements make it difficult for incoming transfers to immediately establish competitive eligibility unless the school has the degree program that the transfer was majoring in at his or her previous school. It also eliminates the "luxury" of having a terrible semester or year. But the big thing is that it hinders a student-athlete's ability to change his or her major and still meet the hours and percentages requirements.

"But that's not to say you can't change majors and still maintain your eligibility," Parker said. "If a student-athlete changes majors and runs into a problem, we can file a successful progress-toward-degree waiver with the NCAA, as long as we map out a reasonable academic plan to meet the goal of graduating within five years. The NCAA can be flexible on that."

"Fortunately, the NCAA's continuing-eligibility requirements aren't a big issue at Virginia Tech because our university's requirements are as tough, or tougher. While there was some fear nationally when these stricter NCAA standards went into effect, I think nearly everyone involved with intercollegiate athletics sees them as beneficial now. Our graduation rates have improved since the new requirements were implemented, and we expect that long-term trend to continue."

After all, that is the goal. And the NCAA is making sure that schools around the country know it. VT



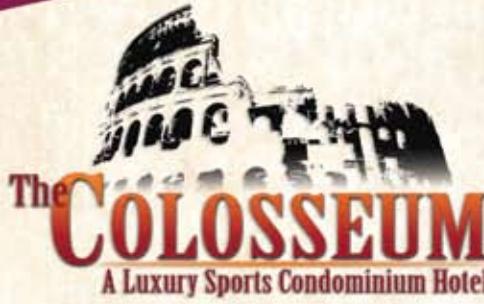
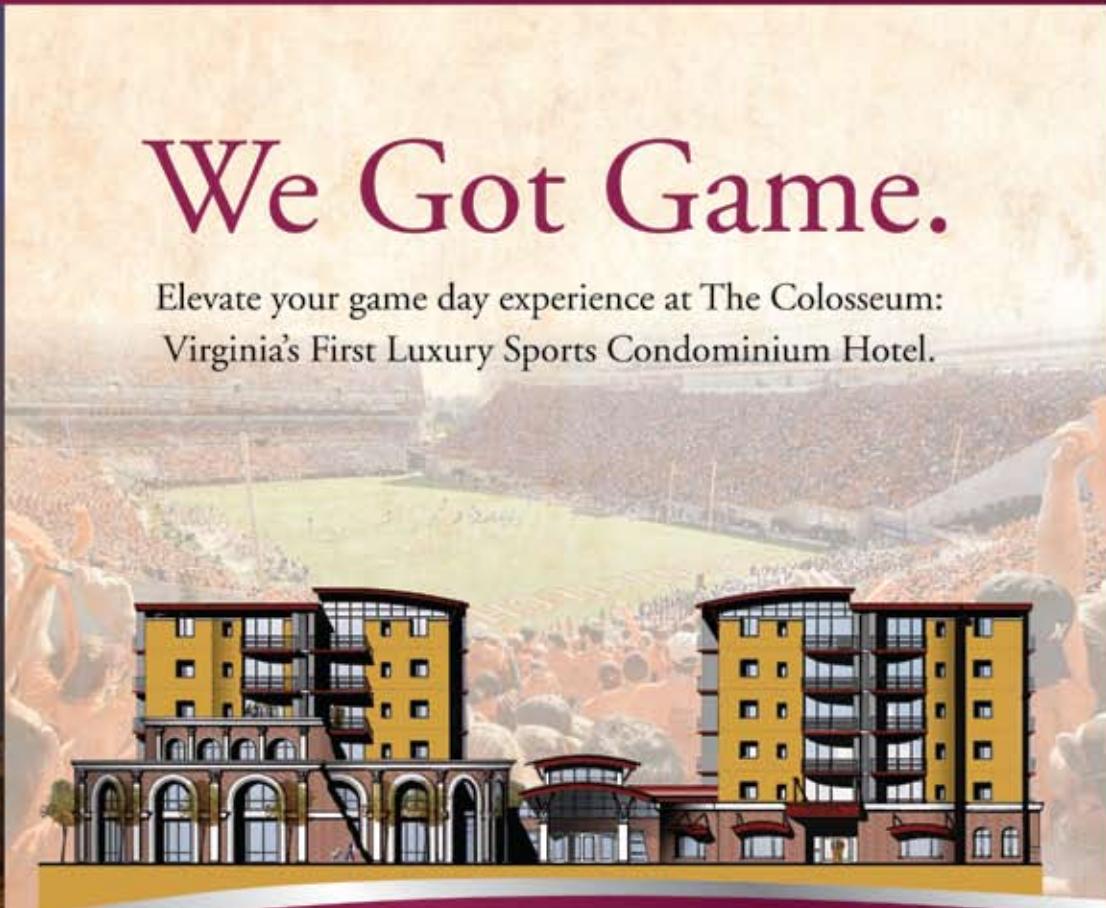
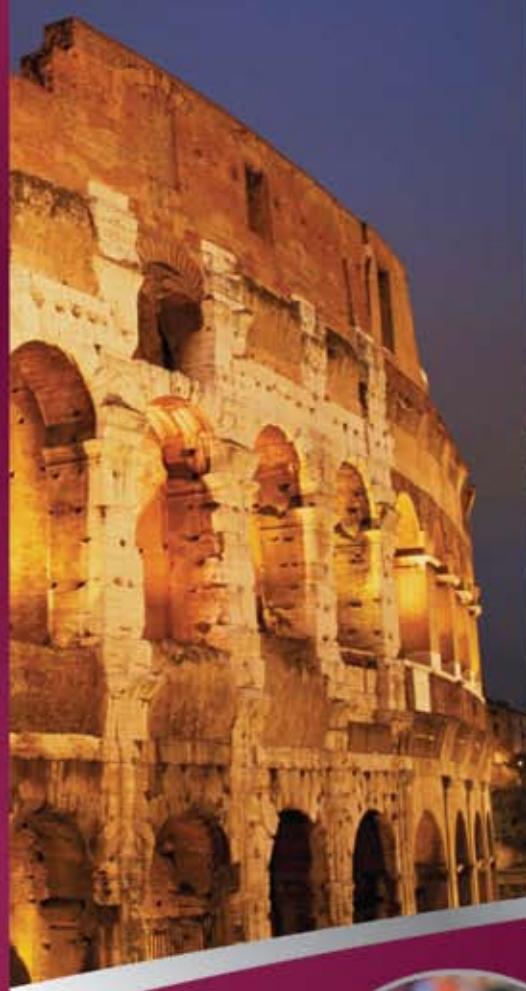
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ORANGE BOWL RECAP

Darren Evans was named the Orange Bowl MVP after rushing for 153 yards and a touchdown in the Hokies' 20-7 win over Cincinnati.

HOKIES' 2008 SEASON HAS A HAPPY ENDING

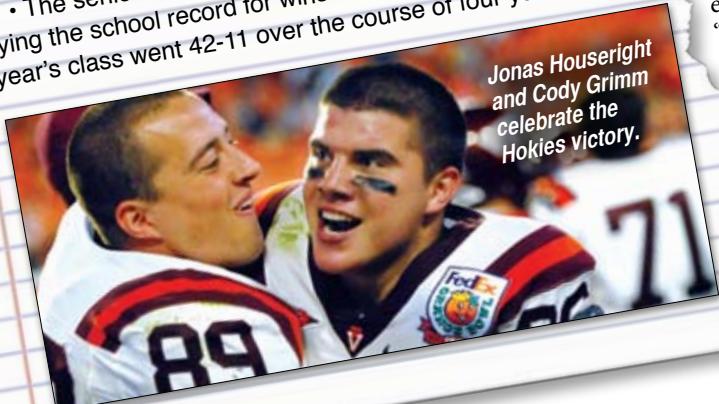
TECH REAPS THE FRUITS OF ITS LABOR WITH AN ORANGE BOWL WIN OVER CINCINNATI

By Jimmy Robertson



ORANGE BOWL NOTEBOOK

- Darren Evans finished with 1,265 yards rushing on the season, which is a Tech freshman record and the third-highest total in school history. He scored his 11th touchdown of the season, another Tech freshman record. His 28 carries set a new Tech bowl record and his 153 yards tied the school bowl record (Kevin Jones vs. Cal).
- Tech picked off four passes in a game for the second time this season. The four interceptions are a new Tech bowl record. In addition to Orion Martin and Cody Grimm, Kam Chancellor and Stephan Virgil intercepted passes in the game.
- Dustin Keys broke the school's single-season mark for field goals with his 43- and 35-yarders, snapping the previous mark of 22 field goals held by Chris Kinzer and Shayne Graham.
- The senior class finished with a four-year record of 42-12, tying the school record for wins over a four-year span. Last year's class went 42-11 over the course of four years.



Jonas Houseright and Cody Grimm celebrate the Hokies victory.

It was the celebration you would have expected. As the final seconds ticked off the digital scoreboard at Dolphin Stadium, some players tore into boxes filled with hats and t-shirts proclaiming them Orange Bowl champions.

Others laughed and danced. Some hurled oranges up into the crowd. A couple simply soaked it all in. And a few started the waning-moments-of-victory ritual of the pouring of Gatorade on the coaches' heads, first with head coach Frank Beamer and then the rest.

For the players, it was a party. For the coaches, it was sheer relief. Those Gatorade showers – well, they cleansed away all thoughts of a recent string of poor bowl performances.

Tech manhandled Big East champion Cincinnati for the final 57 minutes en route to a workmanlike 20-7 mild upset of the favored Bearcats in the 75th Orange Bowl on an absolutely perfect New Year's Day night in Miami. The victory – the Hokies' fourth to conclude the season – snapped Tech's two-game losing streak in bowls (they actually had lost four of five bowl games) and purged their home conference, the ACC, of its wretched eight-game Bowl Championship Series losing streak. It also enabled the Hokies to win 10 games for the fifth straight year, a claim of which only powerhouses Southern Cal and Texas can boast.

"I think this is the best football 'team' we've ever had," said a soggy, exhausted and euphoric Beamer, who improved to 7-9 in bowl games. "We had some tough losses, but no one slipped up. We hung in there together. We always practiced hard. I can't say enough about our players and our coaches."

"We have had some great, great seasons here at Virginia Tech. But I believe this is the best 'team' we've ever had."

Beamer's analysis of his team fit perfectly into an analysis of this Orange Bowl game.

Simply put, this was vintage Virginia Tech, a 'Beamerball' display at its near finest.

At first, the game took on the sordid look of bowl games past when Cincinnati smoothly marched 72 yards on the opening drive of the game. On third-and-9 from the Tech 15, Bearcat

quarterback Tony Pike lofted a 15-yard touchdown strike over the head of Tech's Kam Chancellor to Mardy Gilyard, who deftly got a foot inbounds, and Cincinnati took a 7-0 lead two minutes into the game.

"I didn't think they would run all over us," Chancellor said. "Our heads went down for a second, but we lifted them up and said, 'This is the first two minutes of the game. We've got four quarters.' I think we all stepped up to the challenge and stepped up to Tony Pike's challenge. We did what we needed to do."

That meant getting back to Beamerball. The Hokies methodically chewed up 258 yards worth of Dolphin Stadium sod and hogged the ball for a Beamer-record 39 minutes, 39 seconds. They finished with 398 total yards – just six feet from their season high of 400 (Maryland). Tech got a couple of field goals from Dustin Keys, whose lone slip-up was a missed 26-yard chip shot. Defensively, Tech held the Bearcats to 50 yards under their rushing average and picked off Pike four times, none bigger than Orion Martin's snare with 12:55 remaining in the game.

Martin, a senior and former walk-on who embodies the Tech program more than any player, stepped in front of Cincinnati running back John Goebel and made a diving interception at the Cincinnati 10. It turned out to be the play of the game.

And maybe of the past year.

"That play for me," Martin said of his interception. "is like an exclamation point for the season."

Darren Evans handled things from there. Tech's sledgehammer of a tailback carried three straight times, the final one coming when he bulled in behind guard Jaymes Brooks – making his first career start – and then made two Bearcat defenders look as if they were trying to tackle the fog lazily coming in off the Atlantic. His 6-yard scamper to payday gave the Hokies a 20-7 lead with 11:29 left.

Evans left Cincinnati defenders foggy, garnishing the game's MVP honors after rushing

for 153 yards on 28 carries. The redshirt freshman from Indianapolis, Ind., became the first player to rush for more than 100 yards against Cincinnati's defense this season.

"It [the MVP] means a lot to me, with this being my freshman year," Evans said. "I've got to give a lot of props to the offensive line. They made a lot of holes out there for me, and really, it was just out there for me to take. Coach [Beamer] put the ball in my hands a lot and I appreciate that."

This game – and this season – pretty much ended the only way it could, with the Hokies' defense salting it away. On Cincinnati's next possession, the Bearcats drove to the Tech 1. But on fourth down, Tech linebacker Barquell Rivers – another redshirt freshman making his first career start – stoned Pike at the goal line on a quarterback keeper. The Bearcats' final possession ended with Tech's Cody Grimm, one of the unsung stars of this team, intercepting Pike for the fourth and final time.

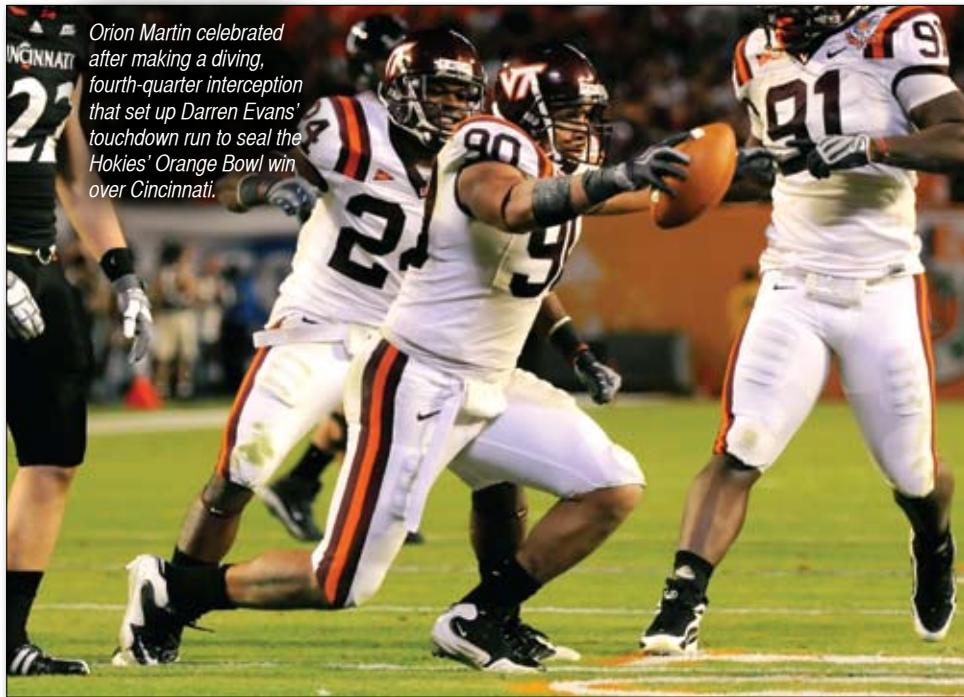
Tech lined up in the victory formation to run out the clock – and a season filled with youth, injuries, controversies and tough losses ended on a much sweeter note than last year's when the Hokies' yellow brick road to a great season was blocked by Kansas.

"It says a whole lot about the character of our team," Tech cornerback Macho Harris said. "The younger guys, I tell you, I can't be more impressed with those guys. When they stepped in, since Day 1, they knew what the expectations were. And they met the expectations and passed them by three. So a lot of credit and respect for them boys."

The future looks blinding bright for 2009, with 18 starters from the bowl game set to return. But as Beamer cautioned, "There are no guarantees in this business."

For the time being, he'd rather recline and immerse himself with the feeling of a sticky Gatorade shower.

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TUNNEL VISION

Dustin Pickle's dream of running out of the Lane Stadium tunnel and playing for the Hokies became a reality

By Jimmy Robertson

No. 35
Dustin Pickle

Most home improvement shows these days deal with ways to spice up a bland living room or bedroom. They can focus on ways to spruce up worn decks or sidewalks, or even narrow things down to something as simple as jazzing up a dull wall.

Occasionally, some of these home improvement presentations concentrate on the ceiling – that normally white, wide expanse of plaster in each room resting unobtrusively over one's head that is largely ignored. It can be enhanced with an array of hues and pastels, or decorated with flowery borders, or even adorned with hardwood molding and trim.

One Tech football player, though, took a rather innovative way of garnishing his ceiling as a kid growing up in a town near Blacksburg.

He unpretentiously taped his dream on it.

Dustin Pickle doesn't remember the exact age when the dream spawned in his mind. But at some point over the days, months and years of his formative years, he came to the realization that he wanted to run out of the tunnel at Virginia Tech's Lane Stadium as a contributing football player for the Hokies.

So as a teenager, he secured a photo of the tunnel that leads into the stadium. He carefully taped it to the ceiling above his bed,

right next to some photos of his favorite Tech players and some cutouts of articles following big Hokie victories.

That tunnel entrance was the last thing he saw before he fell asleep at night – and the first thing he gazed at when he woke up the following morning.

"I wanted it to be the first thing I'd see," Pickle said. "Then I thought, 'OK, what can I do today to make my chances better so that I can play for that team?'

"It was important. It was my dream."

Call it a dream fulfilled for the 5-foot-10, 185-pound running back whose Orange Bowl appearance marked the conclusion of that dream. Pickle doesn't leave Virginia Tech as the leading rusher (he rushed for all of 61 yards in his career) or leading receiver (he caught just four passes in his career) or the leading tackler (he finished with 21 total, all of those on special teams) in school history.

But he may leave as the most grateful to get the opportunity to play at Tech. And he may have put more into getting to this point than anyone else.

Pickle has been playing football all of his life and desperately wanted to follow in the footsteps of one of his idols, Brandon Semones, who piled up the gridiron accomplishments at Glenvar High before doing the

same at Tech back in the mid-1990s. Pickle starred at Glenvar, too, but made the arduous decision to leave Glenvar following his junior season and transfer to Salem High, with the thought of playing against better competition and elevating his chances in his pursuit of playing at Tech.

Religious to the core and loyal to a fault, Pickle prayed constantly about his decision before making it. Stay loyal to his teammates – and more importantly, his friends – or take a step to better pursue his dream? His friends' support eased his mind and he bolted for one of the best football programs, year in and year out, in the Commonwealth headed by coach Stephen Magenbauer, who, coincidentally, was the head coach at Glenvar during Pickle's freshman year and knew him well.

"I remember walking into that weight room [at Salem] one day [that summer] and it was all business," Pickle said of his newfound Salem teammates. "It was like, 'We're glad to have you here, but if you're not here to win, then get out.'

"I told Coach Magenbauer that I was coming to play for him, but that I didn't want any favoritism. You know you're going to get that from some of the players who might say, 'Well this isn't fair. He's coached him before.'

He likes this kid. He's going to give him a starting position.'

"But I let everyone know up front that I was there to win football games and to do what I could for the team. If I got a starting position, great, but if I didn't, I'd stand on the sideline and cheer us to victory every game. I made sure everyone knew that."

The move worked out splendidly for Pickle. He won a starting job in the defensive backfield for the Spartans and finished with 145 tackles and seven interceptions, and he also got some time in the offensive backfield, rushing for around 350 yards. Salem cruised to a sporty 13-1 record and won the Group AA championship that season.

"He came here and was mature enough to fit into the situation," Magenbauer said. "He knew he wasn't going to get preferential treatment, but he wouldn't have wanted it. We knew what type of kid he was. In his mind, he felt he would disrespect the game and Salem if he were to get preferential treatment. That's just how he is."

After that season, few recruiters showed an interest in Pickle, which puzzled Magenbauer – "I'm shocked that they'll [recruiters] choose certain kids and not others. It's such a crapshoot," he said. But Pickle was really only interested in one school. He was just waiting for the offer from Tech.

The offer to come as a walk-on, that is.

"I'm from Salem. It's 20 miles [from Blacksburg]," Pickle said. "I mean, you could ride your bike here if you really wanted to."

"It was always Virginia Tech for me. I went to Glenvar and Brandon Semones played here. That was cool. He went to Glenvar and then went to Tech, and I thought, 'If he could do it, then I could do it.'

"I remember seeing his picture in the paper and then reading stories about what walk-ons had done there. I thought, 'This would be cool.' I was 5-nothing, 100-nothing, but I liked to play the game. I wanted to try it. God blessed me with the chance."

Bryan Stinespring, Tech's offensive coordinator, finally told him that he would reserve a spot in Cochrane Hall for him, a place where a lot of athletes board, and Pickle jumped at the chance. Then he set about doing whatever it took to run through that tunnel.

He would have painted the lines on the field, or even washed the team's laundry. Yet his versatility, his willingness to do whatever the coaching staff wanted, even if it meant getting his brains beat in routinely during practices, and his love of the game – and the university – was enough.

All of that ultimately got him on the field. After a year spent on the scout team and playing in a couple of junior varsity games his freshman year, Pickle ran out of the tunnel on Sept. 2, 2006, when the Hokies took to the field in the season opener against Northeastern his sophomore season.

"My first goal was to get on the practice team and wear a helmet," he said. "Be a tackling dummy. Just get out here somehow. The second step was to get a chance to dress and run out of that tunnel. That was the ultimate goal at first because that means you're on the team and have a chance to get in the game. You've got a number with a name on it, and it's yours. No one else has it."

"Once I was able to accomplish that, I wasn't satisfied. But it was the best moment. I remember running out there for the first time like it was yesterday."

He ran out there for every game thereafter,

eventually working his way into a number of support roles and gradually earning a scholarship in August of 2007. When he walked out of Frank Beamer's office that day, he was nearly speechless.

"I was certainly proud of Dustin [for earning the scholarship], but I was probably more proud of Virginia Tech," Magenbauer said. "It's not like they [the coaches] had to do it. Dustin wasn't going to quit if they didn't offer him a scholarship. He would have poured his heart and soul into that program even if he hadn't gotten one. I really felt good about that program because they could have kept him for free – and he would have been just as happy."

Of course, don't be led astray about Pickle's athletic abilities. He wasn't exactly some modern-day Rudy without a speck of athleticism during his Tech career. He ran well, he caught the ball well and he wasn't afraid to lower his shoulder into some unsuspecting defender's trunk.

He served as the third-team tailback, but saw extensive action in the Hokies' two-minute offense this past season. He also volunteered for all the special teams and wound up on most of them, becoming one of Beamer's favorites.

"He's dependable," Beamer said. "I think anybody that would say something negative about Dustin Pickle doesn't know that kid very well. One of the hardest-working, greatest-effort, most-dependable, you'd-like-to-have-a-son-just-like-him type of guy."

"If you asked me in high school to write my dream down, I couldn't have written it any better than the way it's panned out," Pickle said. "It all goes back to being raised in a Christian home. My mom and dad



Touching the Hokie stone and running out of the Lane Stadium tunnel never got old for Tech's Dustin Pickle.

instilled the Christian walk in me and I've tried to combine that with FCA [Fellowship of Christian Athletes] and the things I've learned, and how you can use athletics and Christianity to do great things. I can't thank God enough for the things he's given me."

Pickle's impact off the field will be missed just as much as what he contributed on it. His

upbeat nature kept things light, and his infectious attitude for FCA – and for the Lord,

You realize that if you give God the opportunity, He's going to bless you as much as He is the people who are listening to your words."

Dustin Pickle is the first to admit he's been blessed. He enjoyed some gridiron success, earning a scholarship in the process. He is slated to graduate in May with a degree in interdisciplinary studies and minors in both construction and real estate. He plans on moving Coast following graduation to latch

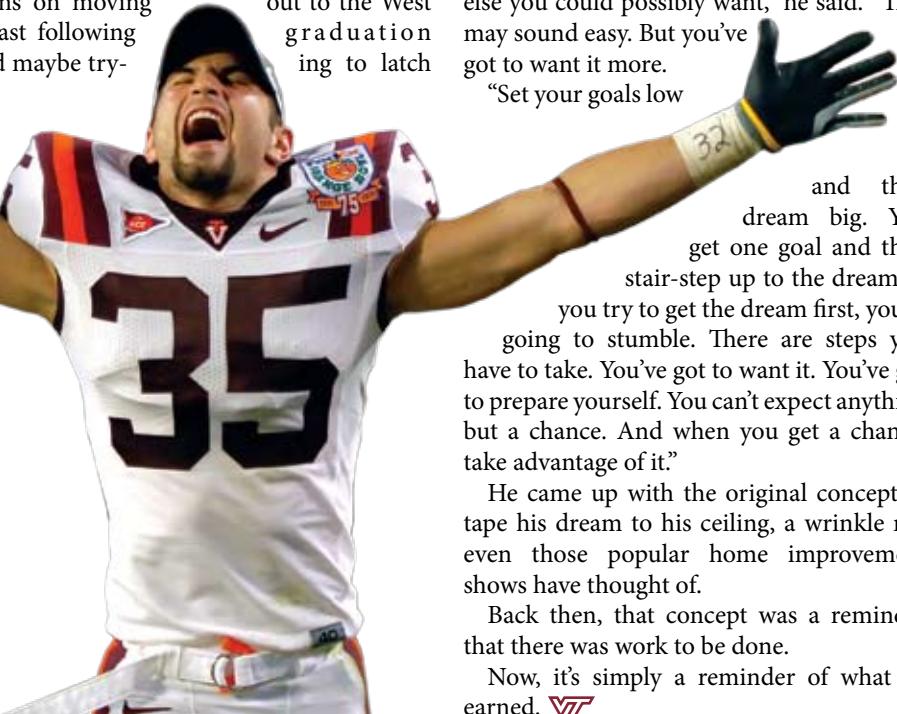
on to an Arena League team. If not, he'll get a job and be closer to his longtime girlfriend, Lauren Barnette, who was the 2007 Miss Virginia and currently is pursuing a career in acting and modeling out in Los Angeles.

Yes, in several months, he'll be off to pursue another dream, his next one.

It's a task in which he's an expert.

"You've got to want it more than anything else you could possibly want," he said. "That may sound easy. But you've got to want it more."

"Set your goals low



in general – rubbed off on his teammates. He took that to the community as well, often traveling with a few other players to Roanoke and other locations in the New River Valley to speak at FCA functions.

"I remember when I was in the sixth grade and Nick Sorensen and Dave Meyer came to speak to us," Pickle said. "I don't remember what they said, but I knew they were there, they spoke to us and they were Christians. I remember telling myself that if I ever get a chance to do that, that's what I'm going to do."

"When you speak to people, you think maybe they get something from it, but it's more rewarding for you than it is for them.

and then dream big. You get one goal and then stair-step up to the dream. If you try to get the dream first, you're going to stumble. There are steps you have to take. You've got to want it. You've got to prepare yourself. You can't expect anything but a chance. And when you get a chance, take advantage of it."

He came up with the original concept to tape his dream to his ceiling, a wrinkle not even those popular home improvement shows have thought of.

Back then, that concept was a reminder that there was work to be done.

Now, it's simply a reminder of what he earned. VT

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LARGE GROUP OF REDSHIRTS READY TO CONTINUE TECH'S WINNING TRADITION

By Jimmy Robertson

Shortly after an Orange Bowl practice on Dec. 30, members of Tech's scout team – a group that consisted mainly of freshmen who are redshirting – piled onto bus 4 and started laughing and carrying on, as 18-year-olds often do.

They probably did so in anticipation of the evening's festivities. But had they thought about it, the better reasoning would have been because that particular practice marked the end of the redshirting ritual for a majority of them.

Tech's coaching staff signed an astounding 31-member class last February. Out of the 23 who arrived in August (two delayed enrollment, three others went to prep school and three either didn't qualify or will not be enrolling for a number of reasons), 17 of them redshirted or will receive medical hardship waivers because injuries ended their seasons early. For them, the bowl season marked the end of several months of thank-

less toiling on the scout team, knowing that there would be no reward of playing time on Saturdays.

Now, everything they do moving forward will be scrutinized closely by the Hokies' coaching staff.

Perhaps no one will be analyzed more than Joseph "Ju-Ju" Clayton, a quarterback from Richmond, Va. Right now, the 6-foot, 218-pounder goes into spring practice as the lone true quarterback behind incumbent quarterback Tyrod Taylor. Finding a back-up is imperative for Tech's staff because Taylor has missed a combined three games with injuries each of the past two seasons.

"I don't feel the pressure," Clayton said. "I'm anxious to get out there and compete. I'm behind one of the best and elite quarterbacks and I'm excited to learn from him. I feel like I can learn a lot by watching him."

Marcus Davis, another who redshirted, could figure into the mix. Davis possesses pro-type size at 6-3, 227 pounds. But in August practices, Tech's staff worked him at receiver. Then Davis injured his shoulder, an injury that required surgery and shelved him for the season.

That leaves Clayton ahead in the race. He sat in all the quarterbacks meetings this past fall, so he at the least possesses a basic understanding of the offense.

"If I were to be thrown in there right now, I still feel like I could run most of the plays," Clayton said. "Not all the plays, but most of

them. That's what I need to do this spring – learn the rest of the offense."

A lack of complete understanding of the offense kept Ryan Williams from playing this season. The 5-9, 204-pounder from Manassas, Va., dressed for the first few games, though he never saw any action. Williams excelled when the play called for him to run the ball, but he struggled with blitz pick-ups, and Tech's staff ultimately convinced him to redshirt.

It wasn't a popular move with Williams, who fully planned on playing his first season – it was one of the main reasons he chose Tech.

"It was kind of discouraging because that's what I wanted to do my first year," he said. "But my redshirt year is over and I'll be on the field this spring. Time flew by, so I'm happy with that."

"People were spreading rumors that I was going to transfer because of the situation and stuff like that. I picked Virginia Tech because I liked Virginia Tech. It wasn't just because of the football factor. A lot of it was, but Virginia Tech was the school I wanted to go to. I never gave it [leaving] a thought."

Tech's staff loves Williams' big-play potential – "He's the quickest back we faced this year," defensive end Orion Martin said. Williams figures to add some sizzle to Tech's offense, and he goes into spring practice as the Hokies' punt returner as well.

"I'm very excited," Williams said. "Hopefully, I'll be able to get on the field. It'll be a lot of



Ryan Williams received rave reviews for his work this fall and should see some time at tailback in 2009.

competition. That would be the case wherever I would have gone. Hopefully, I'll be able to show the coaches that I belong on the field somewhere and can help us put some points on the board."

That's the goal for a Tech offense that struggled with consistency this season. Tech's staff will combine Jarrett Boykins and Dyrrell Roberts – two kids who played as true freshmen this season – with Williams and receivers Randall Dunn and Xavier Boyce, who played this season, but suffered a knee injury and figures to easily secure a medical hardship waiver. The group should give the offense some additional firepower.

And Tech's offensive line situation looks bright as well. Offensive line coach Curt Newsome loves tackles Vinston Painter (6-5, 315) and Nick Becton (6-5, 293), two gigantic prospects.

"Don't forget about my man, Michael Via," said graduate assistant Jamel Smith, who worked with a lot of these kids on a daily basis while coordinating the scout-team defense, at the Orange Bowl. "He's going to be a good one, too."

Via possesses a nice 6-6 frame and athleticism. He just needs to get a little bigger and stronger – he weighs 255 pounds.

On the defensive side of the ball, Tech appears to be loaded with tremendous young prospects. The staff played defensive backs Eddie Whitley and Lorenzo Williams and linebackers Jake Johnson and Quillie Odom as true freshmen this season. They also played Bruce Taylor, a 6-1, 240-pound defensive end, but Taylor injured a shoulder and missed the rest of the season. Like Boyce, he, too, figures to receive a medical hardship waiver.

The defensive prospect who drew the most raves from his teammates was Antoine Hopkins, a 6-0, 293-pound defensive tackle from Highland Springs, Va. Tech's staff nearly pulled the trigger on Hopkins this year before

deciding to redshirt him because he didn't quite understand the complexities of Tech's schemes. But some of Tech's other young defensive tackles – e.g. Justin Young and Kwamaine Battle – will need to pick up their play to hold off Hopkins in the battle for playing time.

"I went against our offensive line every day and they told me what I needed to work on," Hopkins said. "It's like 'You need to work on this move or you need to do this or this.' All that helps me out. In the spring, the toughest thing is going to be learning those plays. I really couldn't get them down when I first got here. It was tough. It was more than I expected. In high school, the basic scheme is to get up the field and tackle the guy with the football.

"So the plan is to try and get at least 15-20 plays a game [next fall]. But it all depends on how I perform in the spring."

Three other freshmen will be hunting for playing time on the defensive line this spring as well – ends Isaiah Hamlette (6-4, 242) and Joe Jones (6-2, 258) and tackle Dwight Tucker (6-1, 288). Jones sat out the entire fall after undergoing shoulder surgery, so his progress is naturally a little behind the others. Hamlette needs to get a little bigger and stronger, while Tucker needs to improve his conditioning.

Another freshman who certainly deserves mentioning is Jeron Gouveia-Winslow, a 6-2, 195-pound rover from Ashburn, Va. He didn't play this season, but Tech's staff loves his instincts. He needs to get stronger, but with his range and knowledge of the game, he could be a tremendous player down the road.

The key to Tech's future on defense may be the progress of those young linebackers. The Hokies lost Purnell Sturdivant, Brett Warren and top back-up Jonas Houseright at the backer and mike linebacker spots. Barquell Rivers, a redshirt freshman, played well in the Orange Bowl in place of an injured Warren, but some

of the younger generation needs to come to the forefront this spring – and quickly.

Will it be Johnson, who got the majority of the back-up reps in Orange Bowl practices behind Rivers? Will Odom come along? Does Allen Stephens, a 6-0, 243-pound hitting machine, or Lyndell Gibson, a 5-10, 227-pounder, burst onto the scene as a surprise? Or does the staff move Taylor back to linebacker from defensive end?

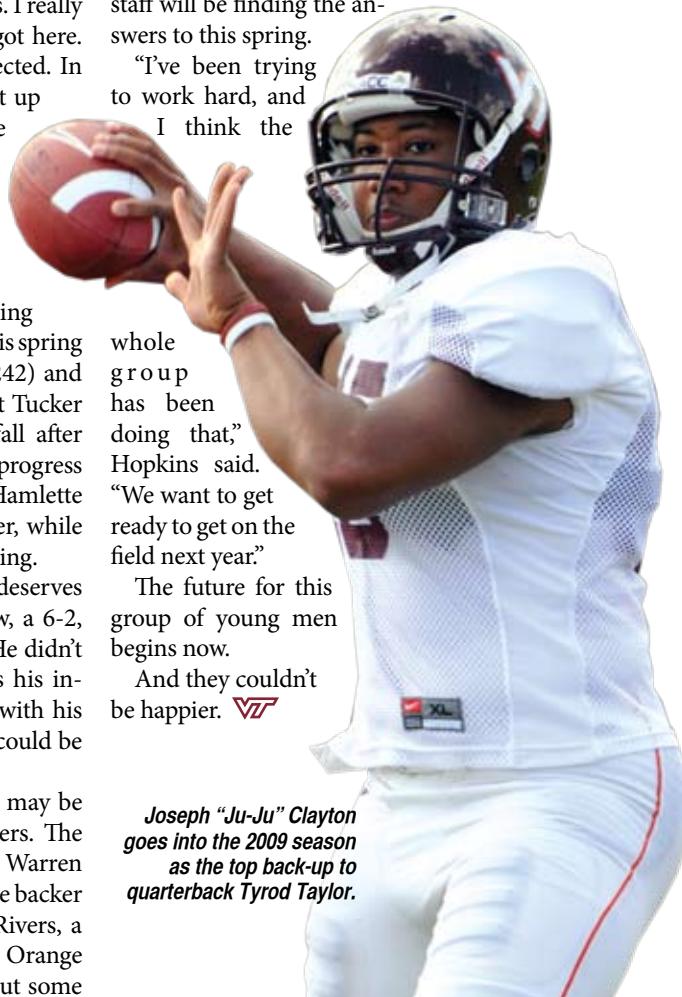
These are some of the questions that Tech's staff will be finding the answers to this spring.

"I've been trying to work hard, and I think the

whole group has been doing that," Hopkins said. "We want to get ready to get on the field next year."

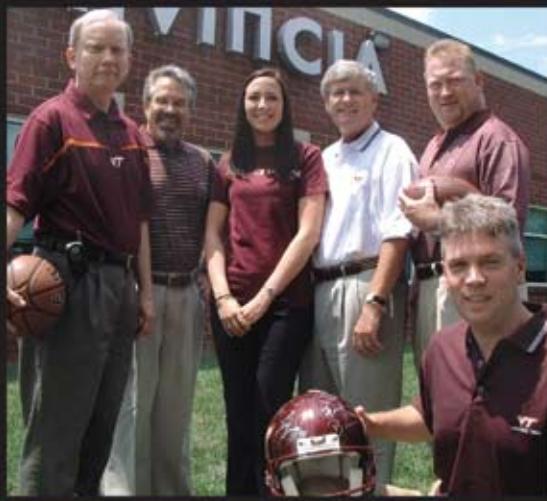
The future for this group of young men begins now.

And they couldn't be happier. VT



Joseph "Ju-Ju" Clayton goes into the 2009 season as the top back-up to quarterback Tyrod Taylor.

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SEASON-ENDING DEPTH CHART

By Jimmy Robertson

Here is the season-ending depth chart. The number of plays is through the ACC title game (the coaches have not graded the film from the bowl game), but the stats are for the entire season. The number before the slash indicates plays from scrimmage, while the number after the slash indicates plays from special teams. The number of plays came from the coaching staff.

OFFENSE

QUARTERBACKS

5 Tyrod Taylor (6-1, 206, Soph.) – 545/0. Started 10 of the 12 games in which he played. Completed 99-of-173 for 1,036 yards, with two touchdowns and seven interceptions. Also finished second on the team in rushing with 738 yards and seven touchdowns.

7 Sean Glennon (6-4, 224, r-Sr.) – 307/0. Played in nine games, starting four. Completed 65-of-108 for 743 yards, with three touchdowns and five interceptions.

12 Cory Holt (6-4, 215, r-Sr.) – 15/0. Saw all of his game action at quarterback in the Florida State game. Completed 3-of-6 for 28 yards, with a touchdown.

TAILBACKS

32 Darren Evans (6-0, 215, r-Fr.) – 583/6. Finished with 1,265 yards on 287 carries (4.4 ypc) and scored 11 touchdowns. Had the third-best single-season rushing total in Tech history. Also caught 17 passes for 117 yards.

25 Josh Oglesby (5-11, 211, r-Fr.) – 96/12. Played in 12 games, rushing for 88 yards on 38 carries. Also caught six passes for 14 yards.

27 Jahre Cheeseman (5-10, 204, r-Jr.) – 10/48. Played in 12 games and rushed for 21 yards on four carries. Has decided to leave the program.

35 Dustin Pickle (5-10, 184, Sr.) – 49/221. Played in every game, with most of his snaps coming on special teams. Did rush for 17 yards on five carries, and caught four passes for 21 yards. Had 13 tackles on special teams.

20 Kenny Lewis, Jr. (5-9, 200, Jr.) – 145/19. Started the first six games before going down for the season with an Achilles tear. Rushed 64 times for 237 yards and three touchdowns. Caught six passes for 30 yards and a touchdown.

FULLBACKS

44 Devin Perez (5-8, 242, r-Jr.) – 126/40. Started five games at fullback and played in 13 overall. Caught one pass for two yards.

42 Kenny Jefferson (5-9, 216, r-Jr.) – 110/53. Started one game and played in all of them. Rushed once for two yards and caught three passes for 19 yards.

31 Kenny Younger (5-11, 230, Jr.) – 14/16. Played in two games (ECU and Furman) before going down for the season with a knee injury.

WIDE RECEIVERS

19 Danny Coale (6-0, 203, r-Fr.) – 820/5. Started every game this season – the only receiver to do so. Led the team with 36 catches and finished second with 408 yards. Also ran the ball six times for 14 yards.

81 Jarrett Boykin (6-2, 201, Fr.) – 596/27. Started eight games and played in all of them. Finished second on the team with 30 catches, but led the team with 441 yards. Also hauled in two touchdown receptions.

11 Dyrell Roberts (6-1, 183, Fr.) – 468/38. Started five games and played in all of them. Caught 17 passes for 227 yards. Led the team with 22 kickoff returns for 545 yards, an average of 24.8 yards per return.

12 Cory Holt (6-4, 215, r-Sr.) – 7/0.

1 Macho Harris (6-0, 194, Sr.) – 70/0. Caught eight passes for 63 yards. Also rushed five times for 48 yards.

87 Prince Parker (6-5, 236, r-Soph.) – 2/26.

13 Xavier Boyce (6-3, 205, Fr.) – 39/0. Played in two games before going down with a knee injury. Had surgery and missed the rest of the season. Should be able to receive a medical hardship waiver.

RIGHT TACKLES

62 Blake DeChristopher (6-5, 299, r-Fr.) – 671/31. Started 12 games this season, missing two games with an injury.

64 Richard Graham (6-6, 284, r-Jr.) – 177/12. Started two games and played in four total.

RIGHT GUARDS

70 Sergio Render (6-4, 308, Jr.) – 864/54. A second-team All-ACC selection. Started every game this season.

68 Jaymes Brooks (6-2, 304, r-Fr.) – 4/0. Made his first career start in the Orange Bowl, starting at right guard, with Render moving to left guard to replace Nick Marshman, who was academically ineligible. Played three snaps in the Furman game and one in the BC game.

CENTERS

58 Ryan Shuman (6-3, 293, r-Sr.) – 829/19. An honorable mention All-ACC selection. Started every game.

60 Beau Warren (6-3, 281, r-Soph.) – 44/0. Played in five games, seeing most of his action in the Duke game when Shuman left because of an injury.

61 Barrett Mears (6-5, 291, r-Soph.) – 2/0. Played in the Furman game.

LEFT GUARDS

67 Nick Marshman (6-5, 339, r-Sr.) – 863/54. An honorable mention All-ACC selection. Started 13 games, but missed the bowl game after failing to pass an NCAA-mandated six hours in the fall.

69 Hivera Green (6-3, 304, r-Jr.) – 2/0. Saw his lone action in the Furman game.

LEFT TACKLES

77 Ed Wang (6-5, 310, r-Fr.) – 866/54. Started every game this season.

75 Greg Nosal (6-6, 281, r-Fr.) – 21/0. Played in two games – ECU and Furman.

TIGHT ENDS

8 Greg Boone (6-3, 280, r-Jr.) – 634/125. Started 13 games and played in all of them. Hauled in 22 passes for 278 yards and two touchdowns. Also ran the ball 21 times for 76 yards, scoring once.

88 André Smith (6-4, 260, r-Soph.) – 389/214. Started six games and played in all of them. Caught 10 passes for 129 yards and a touchdown.

86 Chris Drager (6-3, 238, r-Fr.) – 83/175. Started once and played in every game. Caught three passes for 37 yards.

18 Sam Wheeler (6-3, 269, r-Jr.) – 0/6. Played in the ECU, Georgia Tech and Nebraska games.

DEFENSE

STUD ENDS

6 Jason Worilds (6-2, 254, r-Soph.) – 579/61. A second-team All-ACC selection. Started 12 of 13 games this season, missing the Orange Bowl with a shoulder injury. Recorded 62 tackles (37 solo), which ranked fourth on the team. Led the team with eight sacks and 18.5 tackles for a loss.

82 Steven Friday (6-4, 240, r-Soph.) – 79/6. Played in nine games this season. Had six tackles (two solo).

51 Bruce Taylor (6-1, 241, Fr.) – 9/7. Played in the Furman and UNC games before going down with a shoulder injury and missed the rest of the season. Should be able to receive a medical hardship waiver.

ENDS

90 Orion Martin (6-2, 255, r-Sr.) – 546/169. A second-team All-ACC selection. Started every game this season. Finished with 56 tackles (28 solo), including 13 for a loss. Also had 7.5 sacks, forced two fumbles, recovered a fumble and had an interception.

47 Nekos Brown (6-2, 245, Soph.) – 290/16. Played in every game, starting two, including the Orange Bowl. Had 22 tackles (11 solo), including three for a loss, and also had two sacks.

NOSE TACKLES

91 John Graves (6-3, 282, r-Soph.) – 612/58. Started every game this season. Tallyied 26 tackles (15 solo), including four for a loss. Recovered two fumbles and blocked a team-high three kicks.

56 Demetrius Taylor (6-0, 256, r-Jr.) – 232/7. Played in every game. Had 12 tackles (six solo), including 1.5 for a loss. Also recovered a fumble.

TACKLES

95 Cordarrow Thompson (6-2, 303, r-Jr.) – 542/11. Started every game this season. Registered 27 tackles (10 solo), including 6.5 for a loss, and had three sacks.

96 Justin Young (6-3, 280, r-Fr.) – 64/2. Played in six games and had a solo tackle.

93 Kwamaine Battle (6-0, 271, r-Fr.) – 26/0.

MIKE LINEBACKERS

33 Brett Warren (6-1, 237, r-Sr.) – 739/61. Started 13 games, missing the Orange Bowl with a torn ACL. Finished second on the team with 86 tackles (37 solo), including five for a loss. Also had two interceptions.

52 Barquell Rivers (5-11, 229, r-Fr.) – 28/26. Started in place of Warren in the Orange Bowl and played in 10 games this season. Had 10 tackles (five solo).

94 Mark Muncey (5-11, 231, r-Jr.) – 0/53. Played in all 14 games on special teams.

36 Jake Johnson (6-1, 238, Fr.) – 0/49. Played in 11 games. Had a solo tackle.

BACKERS

45 Purnell Sturdivant (5-10, 225, r-Sr.) – 746/62. Started every game this season and led the team in tackles with 99 (43 solo), including eight for a loss, and 3.5 sacks.

89 Jonas Houseright (6-0, 224, r-Sr.) – 12/174. Played in every game and had seven tackles (one solo).

38 Quillie Odom (6-1, 237, Fr.) – 9/36. Played nine snaps from scrimmage in the Furman game and in seven games overall. Had two assists.

WHIP LINEBACKERS

41 Cam Martin (6-1, 204, r-Jr.) – 385/90.

Started 13 games and played in all 14. Recorded 51 tackles (28 solo), including 5.5 for a loss. Also had two sacks and forced three fumbles.

26 Cody Grimm (5-11, 198, r-Jr.) – 371/209. Started one game, but played in all of them. Finished third on the team with 71 tackles (45 solo), including 14 for a loss (second on the team). Also had 7.5 sacks and two interceptions. Forced two fumbles.

46 Dylan McGreevy (5-11, 215, Sr.) – 0/24. Played in eight games and had a solo tackle.

ROVERS

24 Dorian Porch (5-11, 211, r-Jr.) – 532/37. Started nine games and played in 13. Registered 48 tackles (34 solo), including four for a loss. Also had a sack and an interception.

23 Matt Reidy (6-1, 217, r-Jr.) – 9/217. Played in every game this season. Had 18 tackles (13 solo) and recovered a fumble and forced a fumble. Led team with 15 special teams tackles.

2 Davon Morgan (6-0, 196, Soph.) – 234/40. Started the first five games before tearing the ACL in his knee during the Nebraska game. Had 18 tackles (nine solo).

FREE SAFETIES

17 Kam Chancellor (6-4, 224, Jr.) – 743/75. Started every game this season. Finished with 52 tackles (27 solo) and two interceptions. Also recovered two fumbles and forced a fumble.

24 Dorian Porch (5-11, 211, r-Jr.) – 17/0.

14 Lorenzo Williams (6-2, 200, Fr.) – 0/0. Played in seven games before going down with a knee injury. Had six tackles (four solo).

BOUNDARY CORNERS

1 Macho Harris (6-0, 194, Sr.) – 636/97. A first-team All-ACC selection. Started 13 games, missing the opener with an injury. Recorded 46 tackles (32 solo), including 3.5 for a loss. Tied for the team lead with six interceptions – two of which he returned for

touchdowns. Returned 25 punts for 233 yards, an average of 9.3 per return.

21 Rashad Carmichael (5-10, 190, r-Soph.) – 133/106. Started one game and played in all of them. Had 12 tackles (eight solo).

37 Jacob Sykes (6-0, 189, r-Fr.) – 0/72. Played in every game. Had five tackles (three solo).

FIELD CORNERS

22 Stephan Virgil (5-11, 186, Jr.) – 697/101. Started every game this season. Tallied 43 tackles (31 solo), including 2.5 for a loss. Tied for the team lead with six interceptions. Recovered a fumble, forced a fumble and blocked a kick.

9 Cris Hill (5-11, 183, r-Fr.) – 27/155. Played in every game this season. Had 15 tackles (nine solo).

15 Eddie Whitley (6-0, 179, Fr.) – 9/104. Played in every game. Had eight tackles (four solo).

SPECIAL TEAMS

PLACEKICKERS

29 Dustin Keys (6-2, 212, r-Sr.) – 0/65. Connected on 23 of 29 field-goal attempts this season, with a long of 50. Set the Tech single-season record for field goals made in a season. Made 32 of 34 extra-point attempts.

48 Justin Myer (6-1, 200, Fr.) – 0/53. Booted 62 kickoffs for an average of 62.8 yards. Had six touchbacks.

28 Tim Pisano (5-9, 169, r-Fr.) – 0/4. Kicked off four times and averaged 58 yards per kick.

PUNTER

97 Brent Bowden (6-3, 212, r-Jr.) – 0/124. Averaged 40.4 yards per punt on 69 punts. Placed 24 inside the 20.

SNAPPER

50 Collin Carroll (6-3, 220, r-Fr.) – 0/119.



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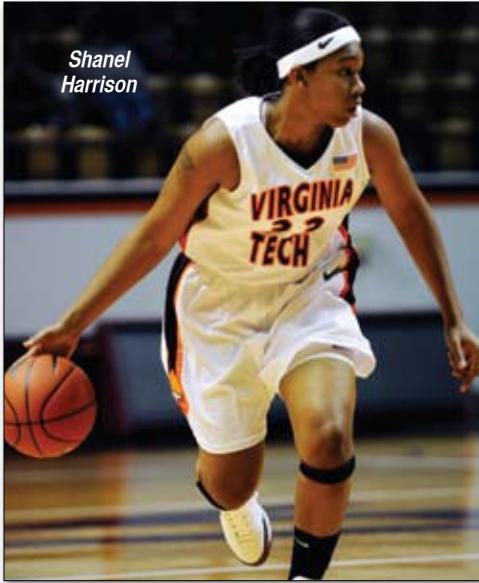
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ROOKIE HARRISON DEVELOPING INTO CONTRIBUTOR FOR HOKIES

By Matt Kovatch



Shanel Harrison

Since last checking in with the women's hoops team following a nine-point loss at Wisconsin on Dec. 4, the Hokies have played .500 ball by going 3-3 prior to the start of ACC play, a six-game stretch that was bookended by wins over James Madison and Presbyterian. Those wins were notable for their own reasons – the 72-70 victory over JMU came in overtime and was Tech's most clutch performance of the season, while the Hokies limited Presbyterian to a program-low 31 points – but also because each game saw an impressive effort out of freshman Shanel Harrison.

Harrison, a native of Olney, Md., broke out against the Dukes on Dec. 14 by scoring a then-personal-best 14 points in a season-high 27 minutes, including the game-tying free throws that sent the game into overtime.

"I've watched Shanel play for years and the thing that I like about her is that she wants the ball in her hands at the end of the game," Tech head coach Beth Dunkenberger said. "I've seen her in that situation time and time again in AAU. When her team is down, she doesn't run from it; she wants the ball. I felt pretty good about her going to the line."

Harrison also grabbed 10 rebounds in that game to record her first collegiate double-double, and over that same six-game span, she has averaged 7.5 points, 5.8 rebounds, 1.5 blocks and 1.3 steals per contest. She tallied nine points and eight boards in her first start in a 66-44 win over Lafayette on Dec.

29, and she poured in a new career high of 15 points in just 20 minutes of action against Presbyterian on Jan. 5. So what's caused the sudden increase in production?

"She has come out of her shell," Dunkenberger said. "After our loss at Wisconsin, I said that everything was wide open and that everyone was going to earn their playing time based on what they did for the next week. She responded with the best week of practice that she's had since coming here. She was at the front of the line when we ran sprints versus being one of the stragglers coming in last. It was just a different level of energy over the week, and because of that, she was the first person off the bench.

"She's been very aggressive and she's so versatile. It's tough to put a label on her because she is a guard/forward and we've seen her get down on the low block and get some confidence with her back to the basket. It's good to see her become so well rounded."

A RARE LOSS

The Hokies played host to North Carolina A&T, Lafayette and Liberty on Dec. 29 and 30 in the Hokie Hardwood Classic at Cassell Coliseum. Though known by various names throughout the years, this year's tournament was the 19th of its kind, and the Hokies claim the championship trophy nearly every time.

After a 22-point win over Lafayette in the opener, it looked like Tech would capture its 11th straight tournament title as it prepared to battle 4-7 Liberty, a team that hadn't defeated Tech in 14 previous tries. The Flames thought otherwise, as tournament MVP Megan Frazee scored 20 points, including the game-winning jumper with 49 seconds remaining, to lift Liberty to a 45-43 triumph.

The loss not only snapped Tech's 10-year title reign – it had won 21 straight games in the tournament dating back to 1997 – but it also snapped a 33-game home winning streak in the month of December.

A RECORD LOW

The Hokies' 64-31 win over Presbyterian was more than just an easy win; it was also a school record. The 31 points was the fewest Tech has ever allowed to an opponent, narrowly edging the 33 given up to Winston-Salem State on Dec. 28, 2006. The Blue Hose scored just eight points in the first

half and needed six points over the final 4:07 of the period to do so. Amazingly, the 31 points scored by the Blue Hose was not the fewest they've scored this year – Wake Forest also limited them to 31 and East Carolina held them to 28.

ALSO OF NOTE

The 10th annual Hokie Hardwood Club dinner and auction is set to take place on January 24 at the German Club Manor in Blacksburg. For tickets or more information, please call the women's basketball office at (540) 231-4998 ... Sophomore transfer Nikki Davis made her Hokie debut in the South Padre Island Shootout in losses to IUPUI and Southern Methodist on Dec. 19 and 20. She then made her first start against Lafayette and has started each game since. The 5-foot-7 guard has averaged 6.8 points, two assists, 2.2 rebounds and 1.6 steals in 22.2 minutes over her first five contests ... Junior Lindsay Biggs began the season outside of the top 10 on Tech's all-time 3-pointers made list, but has since shot all the way up to fourth. She had drained 88 treys following the Presbyterian game, 39 behind Jeni Garber's third-place mark of 127.

2008-09 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time
Nov. 10 Mon.	PEACH STATE (Exh.)	L, 70-79
14 Fri.	UNC GREENSBORO	W, 59-53
18 Tues.	RADFORD	W, 78-54
20 Thurs.	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL	W, 81-45
23 Sun.	at George Mason	W, 69-52
<i>Vanderbilt Thanksgiving Tournament</i>		
28 Fri.	vs. St. Joseph's	W, 66-63
29 Sat.	vs. #17 Vanderbilt	L, 43-72
Dec. 4 Thurs.	at Wisconsin (ACC/Big Ten Challenge)	L, 52-61
14 Sun.	JAMES MADISON	W, 72-70 (OT)
<i>South Padre Island Shootout</i>		
19 Fri.	vs. IUPUI	L, 52-64
20 Sat.	vs. SMU	L, 56-63
<i>Hokie Hardwood Classic</i>		
29 Mon.	LAFAYETTE	W, 66-44
30 Tues.	LIBERTY	L, 43-45
Jan. 5 Mon.	Presbyterian	W, 64-31
8 Thurs.	FLORIDA STATE*	7 p.m.
11 Sun.	at Boston College*	2 p.m.
16 Fri.	DUKE*	6:30 p.m.
18 Sun.	at Maryland*	4 p.m.
21 Wed.	VIRGINIA*	7 p.m.
25 Sun.	LONGWOOD	2 p.m.
28 Wed.	at Clemson*	7 p.m.
Feb. 1 Sun.	NC STATE*	4 p.m.
2 Mon.	USC UPSTATE	7 p.m.
5 Thurs.	at North Carolina*	7 p.m.
8 Sun.	at Virginia*	2 p.m.
12 Thurs.	MIAMI*	7 p.m.
15 Sun.	at Wake Forest*	3 p.m.
19 Thurs.	at Duke*	7 p.m.
22 Sun.	WAKE FOREST*	2 p.m.
26 Thurs.	GEORGIA TECH*	7 p.m.
<i>ACC Tournament</i>		
5-8 Mar.	Greensboro, N.C. (Greensboro Coliseum)	

*ACC game - Home games in CAPS

HOKIES RESPECT

WHETHER IT'S CHEERING YOUR HEAD OFF IN LANE STADIUM, CELEBRATING A DUNK IN CASSELL COLISEUM, OR SUPPORTING ANY OF THE OTHER TECH SQUADS, SPORTING EVENTS ARE WHERE WE GATHER TO SHOW OUR HOKIE SPIRIT.



AND WE HOKIES KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT HOSPITALITY. IT'S WHAT WE'RE KNOWN FOR.

Here are a few tips to make sure everyone around you can have a good time too.

- Before, during, and after the game, win or lose, be classy. Help opposing fans enjoy their visit. Maybe even invite them back to your tailgate.
- Remember that you're representing all of Hokie nation.
- Go ahead and cheer loudly—it's what sets Hokie sporting events apart from the rest.
- Always be respectful and aware of the fans around you. Make sure they can enjoy the game too.

"Their crowd at Virginia Tech is exemplary of what you want crowds to be. That was the most sportsmanlike group I've been around in 30 years."

—Bobby Bowden, Coach, Florida State football

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SUGGS EMBARKS ON A DIFFERENT TYPE OF PROFESSIONAL CAREER

By Jimmy Robertson

Photo courtesy of The Plain Dealer

It's advice parents often give their children once they graduate from college and start searching for a job – you have to start at the bottom and work your way toward the top.

Certainly, Lee Suggs can attest to that. This past fall, he began his pursuit of a coaching career at the bottom – and savored every minute of it.

Suggs, a former outstanding tailback at Tech, spent this past autumn toiling as the running backs coach at tiny Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, just 40 minutes west of Cleveland. Oberlin is a Division III school that doesn't offer scholarships for athletics, features only three full-time football coaches – Suggs wasn't one of them – and plays in front of a few hundred fans. That's about 66,000 less than the number who used to watch Suggs gallop across goal lines at Lane Stadium only a short six years ago.

"It's a lot of fun," Suggs said of his new coaching gig. "I'm enjoying it. Obviously, I'm coming at it [football] from a different perspective now. I'm trying to get guys to play the way I want them to play, and sometimes, I wish I could just go out there and do it myself."

"When you know a player can do it and he doesn't, then that's frustrating. But it's also very fulfilling when everything does click and he gets over that hump and has some success."

Suggs, now 28, certainly knows about success. While at Tech, he rushed for 2,767 career yards. In 2000, he set a single-season record for rushing touchdowns and total touchdowns with 27 and 28, respectively, on his way to being named the co-Big East offensive player of the year. He finished his career with 53 rushing touchdowns and 56 total touchdowns – school records that still stand.

Injuries marred his pro career. He went in the fourth round to the Cleveland Browns in the 2003 NFL Draft, but spent the better part of three seasons hurt. The Browns tried to trade him to the New York Jets in 2006, but that trade fell through when Suggs failed a physical because of an ailing knee and he went back to the Browns, who subsequently released him. The Dolphins picked him up in September of 2006, but they released him a little over a month later.

Suggs tried out for other teams, but ended up coming back to Blacksburg to finish up course work for his degree. He got his degree in residential property management in the spring of 2007.

"I decided to move back here," Suggs said, referring to Olmsted Township, Ohio, where he had built a home while he played for the Browns and which is roughly 20 minutes from the rural Oberlin campus. "I had a house here that I had been trying to sell for two years. But I found work here and decided to stay."

Suggs got a job working for New York Life Insurance Company, selling insurance and annuities. But as he put it, "That was not my thing."

While working for New York Life, he got a call from a friend named Manzie Williams, who used to be an intern with the Browns and was working as an assistant trainer at Oberlin. Williams told Suggs about an opening on the staff, and Suggs immediately expressed interest. He interviewed with Oberlin coach Jeff Ramsey and ultimately got the job.

"I knew that I wanted to be around football in some way," Suggs said. "I always have, and if you can't play,

then this [coaching] is the next best thing.

"Of course, I'd like to be playing. You ask any ex-player and he'll tell you that. But coaching is a way to keep involved in football and I enjoy it."

Suggs took the job thinking that he would get the pleasure of coaching one of the best backs ever to play at Oberlin and one of the best in the Division III ranks in R.V. Carroll – the 2007 North Coast Athletic Conference offensive player of the year. But Carroll, a senior, tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his knee in the team's fourth game this past season. Largely as a result, Oberlin finished the year with a record of 2-8.

But that didn't put a damper on Suggs' coaching debut.

"I think the biggest difference [between playing at Tech and coaching at Oberlin] is just the caliber of athletes," he said. "Oberlin has high academic standards and a lot of the players come here for that, and not for football. They put a lot of attention on their schoolwork, which is what they need to do because that's going to get them where they want to go in life."

"There are other differences, obviously. The amount of money spent is a lot less here

and there's a lot less time at practice. And numbers, we only have about 45 players on the team. But we've got a new president here and we're working on things. Things are looking up."

Suggs' hiring created quite a stir among those at the small school. Ramsey knew it would and instructed Suggs to hold a question-and-answer session during one of training camp's first team meetings to "get it out there."

"It's a lot of fun. I'm enjoying it. Obviously, I'm coming at it [football] from a different perspective now. I'm trying to get guys to play the way I want them to play, and sometimes, I wish I could just go out there and do it myself. When you know a player can do it and he doesn't, then that's frustrating. But it's also very fulfilling when everything does click and he gets over that hump and has some success." – Lee Suggs

to take a job at Oberlin High School. There, he runs the in-school suspension room and substitute teaches when needed. Once he got off work from there, he headed over to the college for the team's 4:40 p.m. daily practice.

"You know, I really have a lot of fun doing that," Suggs said of the job at the high school. "We're trying to work it out so I could be the strength and conditioning coordinator during the winter months and I hope that works out."

"But I'm trying to be a role model at that school. It's a predominantly black school and I'm trying to get those kids to hit the books and do something

instead of being a gang member or something like that. I want them to do something positive with their life. It's a lot of fun."

Suggs has learned that coaching and being a role model is the same at every level. Like every other coach, he wants to coach at the Division I level. It's the ultimate goal.

Yet he's also learned one other thing – when you're doing what you love, starting at the bottom isn't so bad after all. 

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ROYAL ENJOYS A BANNER ROOKIE SEASON IN DENVER

By Jimmy Robertson

When a member of the Denver Broncos' media relations office approached Eddie Royal one day and informed him that Jim Rome wanted to have him on his show, Royal gave said member a wary eye.

"He [Rome] wants to talk to me?" Royal remembered saying. "I had to ask him twice."

Such things tend to happen when one puts up the numbers that Royal did this season.

The former Tech standout, a second-round pick of the Broncos in last April's NFL Draft, recently went on Jim Rome is Burning, and he made a case for the NFL's offensive rookie of the year honor after having caught 91 passes for 980 yards, with five touchdowns, in his inaugural campaign. His receptions total – a number that ranked seventh in the NFL – was more than the likes of Randy Moss, Terrell Owens, Santana Moss, Steve Smith and Marvin Harrison.

Most NFL rookie receivers struggle from day 1. But not Royal. Thanks to a suspension of the team's leading receiver,

adjust to things, and Brandon Marshall, just seeing the drive in him. He sets the tempo every day in practice."

Royal was a model of consistency, which came as a surprise considering his rookie status. He caught a pass in every game he played but one and has caught at least five passes in 11 others. His best game came in the season opener against Oakland – a game in which he got the better of former Tech defensive back DeAngelo Hall by catching nine passes for 146 yards and a touchdown. He also caught nine passes in a losing effort to Kansas City and a losing effort to New England. He caught six passes for 164 yards, including one that went 93 yards for a touchdown, in a Denver win over Cleveland.

You want big plays? Well, he made his share. In addition to that 93-yarder against Cleveland, he also caught a 59-yarder for a score against the Jets. He recorded a 71-yard run on an end-around in Denver's loss to Buffalo late in the season. And he returned a kickoff 95 yards in the Broncos' loss to Miami midway through the year. He led Denver in kickoff returns with 23 for 600 yards, a 26.1 average.

"I wouldn't say I'm surprised," Royal said of his success. "I wanted to come in and make an impact. I set my goal to start, and I've worked hard and made the most of my opportunities."

"The thing with this league is that everyone is good. You hear that all the time when you're preparing for the draft and then in training camp, but it really is true. No matter what the team's [opponent's] record is, you've got to be ready to compete."

Not surprisingly, Royal took a proactive

Brandon Marshall, for the first game, Royal started from day 1 – and never gave up the job.

"I think it just gets back to hard work and good coaching," Royal said. "And I've had a lot of veteran players who have helped me. They've been there for me on and off the field."

"Each guy has played a different role. Brandon Stokley has helped me set up routes and with my release off the line, and he's also helped me find people to cut my grass and fix my blinds – things like that. Darrell Jackson has shown me what to expect and how to

season, constantly took care of his 5-foot-10, 185-pound body. As a result, he never really hit the 'rookie' wall.

"The big thing was the playbook," he said. "I didn't want the reason I wasn't playing to be because I didn't know the plays. We have a ton of different plays and formations, so I came in and learned it quickly. That way, I could get on the field as early as possible."

"And I've been fortunate in keeping my body straight. I have some nicks and bruises, and you're sore the majority of the week. But usually, you feel good by game day. I took advantage of the hot and cold tubs after practice, and I got a massage twice a week. That helped me a lot."

Royal has a couple of friendly faces in Denver to keep him company, including defensive end John Engelberger. Now in his fourth season in Denver, the media-shy Engelberger makes sure to give Royal plenty of grief at every opportunity.

"I try to ignore him for the most part," Royal laughed. "I heard so many stories about him when I was at Tech that I felt like I knew him. But he's a good guy and a great teammate. It's nice to have him and CP [Carlton Powell] around."

Royal reports that Powell, a former Tech defensive tackle who was drafted by Denver in the fifth round in April's draft and missed the entire season with a torn Achilles tendon, is recovering well and should be ready for organized team activities in the offseason.

He also reports that his mother, Pearl, is doing well and still living in northern Virginia, and that his sister, Christina – a Tech grad who once served in the Corps of Cadets – recently got back from Iraq in time for Christmas.

Overall, Royal loves Denver. He has bought a home there and he speaks glowingly of the fans.

"I really like it," he said. "I didn't know what to expect when I got here, but the fans here are great. They are very supportive and the stadium [Invesco Field at Mile High] is so loud. It reminds me of Lane Stadium." 

approach in getting ready for this season. Though shocked the Broncos took him in the draft, he wasted little time in getting his hands on Denver's playbook, immersing himself in the Broncos' complex scheme under [former] head coach Mike Shanahan. He also came to camp in great shape, and throughout the

HOKIES IN THE PROS

(30 overall as of Jan. 8)



BUFFALO BILLS

93 Chris Ellis - Ellis, whom the Bills took in the third round of April's NFL Draft, played as a back-up this season. He was not activated for the first five games, but the Bills activated him for the sixth game (he did not play), and for the season, he played in seven games. His year came to an end with four games left because of an ankle injury, as the Bills put him on injured reserve. He finished with three tackles – all solo.



CHICAGO BEARS

27 Kevin Jones -

Jones signed with the Bears in the off-season and played a little in the early going. But he was not placed on the active roster in five of the final six games of the season. As a result, he rushed for 109 yards on 34 carries (second on the team in both categories) and caught two passes for five yards.



CINCINNATI BENGALS

17 Shayne Graham -

Graham, a former Tech kicker, started 14 of 16 games with the Bengals this season, missing two games because of a groin injury. He made 21 of his 24 field-goal attempts, with a long of 45 yards, and all of his 15 extra-point attempts.



CLEVELAND BROWNS

27 Nick Sorensen -

Sorensen just wrapped up his eighth NFL season, participating mostly on special teams for the Browns, while also serving as a back-up at the safety spots. He played in all 16 games and had 26 tackles (20 solo) and a half of a sack.



DENVER BRONCOS

60 John Engelberger -

Engelberger, a former defensive lineman at Tech, started the first six games this season at defensive end before missing a game with an injured knee. After the injury, he worked in a reserve role and played in 15 of 16 games for the season. He finished with 31 tackles (24 solo) and a sack on the season.

75 Carlton Powell - The Broncos took the former Tech defensive tackle in the fifth round of this past April's NFL Draft, but he did not play this season. Powell tore his

Achilles tendon during an offseason workout and missed the entire season.

19 Eddie Royal - Royal started 15 games, missing one game with an ankle injury. He caught 91 passes for 980 yards and five touchdowns. He also returned 14 punts for an average of 10 yards per return and rushed 11 times for 109 yards. And he returned 23 kickoffs for an average of 26.1 yards per return, including a long of 95 yards.



GREEN BAY PACKERS

37 Aaron Rouse -

Rouse, a third-round pick in 2007, started six games and played in 14 overall for the Packers this season. He missed separate games with an ankle and knee injury. He recorded 53 tackles (39 solo) and two interceptions this season, one of which he returned 99 yards for a touchdown.



HOUSTON TEXANS

11 André Davis - Davis,

who just wrapped up his seventh NFL season, served as the third receiver for the Texans and played in 12 of the Texans' 16 games this season – he missed four games because of an injured finger. He caught 13 passes for 213 yards

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and returned 43 kickoffs for 993 yards, an average of 23.1 yards per return.

76 Duane Brown – Brown went to the Texans in the first round of this past April's NFL Draft and started every game at left tackle for the team. He played pretty well – he only committed four penalties this season.

52 Xavier Adibi – The Texans drafted the former Tech linebacker in April, and after a slow start to the season, he worked his way into the starting lineup, starting five games in a row. He missed the last two games with a groin injury, though. He tallied 35 tackles (27 solo) on the year – 15 of those coming in a game against Indianapolis.



JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

20 Pierson Prioleau

Prioleau signed with the Jaguars in the offseason to be a back-up at both safety spots and to play on special teams. He played in every game this season, starting one of those, and had 26 tackles (25 solo) on the season.

75 Jonathan Lewis - The former Tech defensive tackle landed with the Jaguars in mid-August and expected to add depth to their line. But Lewis suffered a knee injury

in the preseason finale against Washington and missed the season.



KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

24 Brandon Flowers

Flowers, a rookie, started 12 games for Kansas City and played in 14 – he missed two games with a hamstring injury. The 2008 second-round pick ranked fifth on the team with 69 tackles (62 solo) on the season and two interceptions.



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

68 Matt Lehr

Lehr's contract was terminated in early September, but the Saints re-signed him shortly thereafter. The former Tech offensive lineman and nine-year veteran started three games and played in 13 this season.



NEW YORK JETS

17 David Clowney

Clowney, who just finished his second season in the NFL, was activated for the first time this season when the Jets activated him for their game against Kansas City. For the season, the former Tech receiver played

in three games and caught one pass for 26 yards.



OAKLAND RAIDERS

64 Jake Grove

The former Tech center finished his fifth season with Oakland and started 12 of 16 games of the season. He suffered an injured calf midway through the year and missed four games. For the season, he committed just three penalties.



SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

84 Josh Morgan

Morgan, a 2008 sixth-round pick, started one game and played in 12 overall, missing four games with a groin injury. He caught 20 passes for 319 yards (16 ypc) and three touchdowns – including a "Hail Mary" against St. Louis that won the game for the 49ers. He also played on special teams, finishing with four tackles, including three solo ones.



SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

55 Darryl Tapp - After starting all of last season, the former Tech defensive end finally broke into the starting lineup this season after playing as a reserve in the first five

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games. He started the final 11 games of this season and had 55 tackles (43 solo) and four sacks.



ST. LOUIS RAMS

69 Anthony Davis - The former Tech offensive tackle started the season

with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and played in four games. But the Bucs released him on Oct. 25th. He went unemployed for nearly a month until the Rams signed him on Nov. 18. He was not activated for any of the Rams' games this season.



WASHINGTON REDSKINS

23 DeAngelo Hall - Hall was abruptly released by the Oakland Raiders on

Nov. 5th, but signed a one-year, \$429,000 deal with the Washington Redskins just two days later. He played in seven games for the Redskins, starting two of those. He registered 25 tackles (20 solo) and two interceptions with the Redskins. For the season, he recorded 73 tackles (63 solo) and five interceptions.

63 Will Montgomery - Montgomery started the season with the Jets, but the Jets cut him on Oct. 14. The former Tech center signed with the Redskins on Dec. 9, but was not activated for any of their games.



HOKIES IN THE PLAYOFFS

(The following Hokies have participated in or are participating in the NFL playoffs.)



ARIZONA CARDINALS

25 Eric Green -

The former Tech cornerback has played in 14 games for the Cardinals this season, starting nine of those. He missed one game because of a knee injury and was not activated for two others. Overall, he has 32 tackles (27 solo) and an interception, the second of his career, this season.



BALTIMORE RAVENS

Justin Harper -

Harper, a seventh-round pick of the Ravens, stuck with Baltimore throughout training camp, but was dropped during the last series of cuts before opening day. The Ravens ultimately signed him to their practice squad and he spent the entire season there.



CAROLINA PANTHERS

50 James Anderson -

Anderson serves as a back-up at the weak-side linebacker spot for the Panthers this season. He was not activated for the first six games this season, but has played in the final six games and in eight games overall. He has three tackles (all solo) on the season.

87 Jeff King - King serves as the starter at tight end for the Panthers and has started 11 of 12 games this season. He has 21 catches for 195 yards, an average of 9.3 yards per catch, and has one touchdown. He caught his first touchdown reception of the season in the Panthers' 31-22 win over the Lions.



MIAMI DOLPHINS

18 Ernest Wilford - Wilford,

Tech's all-time leading receiver, signed a big deal with the Dolphins in the offseason, but never got it going under new coach Tony Sparano. He caught just three passes for 25 yards and played in just seven of Miami's games.

76 Brandon Frye - Frye started the season with the Houston Texans, but has landed with the Miami Dolphins, who signed him in early November. The former Tech offensive tackle played in eight games with the Dolphins – the first game action of his young NFL career – with most of his action coming on the field-goal and kickoff return teams.



TENNESSEE TITANS

22 Vincent Fuller - The

former Tech defensive back has excelled in Tennessee for the Titans, having seen action in every game (one start). He has 47 tackles, including 37 solo stops, and has recovered a fumble and forced a fumble.

Jason Murphy - Murphy, a former Tech guard, ended up being cut by the Titans in late August. But the Titans signed him to their practice squad a couple of days later and he spent the rest of the season there.

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HOOPS TEAM HOPING RECENT TREND HOLDS FORM

By Jimmy Robertson

With the spring semester set to begin, it's time for a little refresher course concerning the Virginia Tech men's basketball team.

During the 2006-07 season, the Hokies, led by guards Zabian Dowdell and Jamon Gordon, started the season 10-4 heading into January. They had lost to the likes of Western Michigan, George Washington and Marshall.

How did that season wind up? The Hokies finished 10-6 in the ACC and made it to the NCAA Tournament.

Last season, the Hokies, with a plethora of freshmen seeing extended minutes, started the season 8-6 after 14 games and headed into January with losses to Penn State, Old Dominion and Richmond.

How did last season wind up? You know the story. The Hokies went 9-7 in league play and received an NIT bid.

This season, the Hokies find themselves in a parallel situation. Tech sat at 9-5 after 14 games, with an 0-1 mark in the league following a migraine-inducing performance against Duke, a game the Hokies lost by 25 points at Cameron Indoor Stadium on Jan. 5.

The pessimists view the season as half empty. The optimists hope the recent trend holds form.

"I hope that's true this year, too. I guess I'm not very smart," Tech coach Seth Greenberg joked one day after the Duke debacle. "It takes me a while to figure it out."

An examination of the rubble following the Duke game revealed some positives. Tech got off to a horrid start, falling behind 11-0. Yet with 17 minutes and change left, the Hokies cut that lead to four, 39-35, on a bucket by Cheick Diakite.

After that, of course, the landslide began. Duke outscored Tech 30-9 the rest of the way, as the Hokies scored just 13 second-half points in their lowest output (44 points) of the season and lowest since 2000.

Still, positives could be found. Diakite, a senior from Mali, played well in the post (more on him below). And maligned sophomore guard Hank Thorns, seeing his first action in three games (knee injury), played 21 turnover-free minutes. That enabled Malcolm Delaney to play his more natural shooting guard spot, and he scored 12 points on a solid 6-of-12 from the floor.

"I felt like we could attack them the whole

game, and I think in the second half, after we went on that 4-0 run [to start the second half], we kind of went away from it," Delaney said. "We started reacting to them more. I think we just got out of what we were doing good and started responding to them."

Perhaps more importantly concerning this loss, Greenberg came away with some knowledge regarding his team. And that falls in line with the Hokies' second-half performances the past two seasons.

"We've got to figure out rotations and roles, and you really can't get that figured out until you get to league play," Greenberg said. "I think, in general, when we get into league play, we get into that mindset of having a little chip and having something to prove. I think it's a process to figure your team out and sometimes it takes a little longer."

"I think we're close to figuring it out and I think we took a step closer in terms of figuring out how we're going to guard. Each year, we're going to do something a little different defensively, and I think I've got a better handle of how this team needs to guard without Deron [Washington]. I've got one part of the problem resolved. Now we've got to figure out where we're going to get another guy who can score the ball."

Greenberg plans on playing more of a containment defense as opposed to pressing and chasing. On offense, the Hokies need their big three – Delaney, Jeff Allen and A.D. Vassallo – to score. Allen and Vassallo didn't get in double figures against the Blue Devils (of course, they only took 13 shots combined), but Greenberg worries little about them. He's referring to finding that fourth guy.

Tech needs not to panic. It possesses three players capable of filling it up on

Malcolm Delaney and the Hokies are expecting to see even better results the second half of the season.



any night, and the Hokies play solid defense (Duke only shot 40 percent). Plus, the Hokies have been in this situation before, including last season when they lost 92-53 to UNC in Chapel Hill. They won four straight following that one.

"This game is not going to kill us," Delaney said. "This could be like one of the Carolina games last year where it takes this to help us respond, so hopefully that's what it does."

"It's one game," Greenberg said. "We've got 16 more conference games for sure, including the conference tournament. Going into the 16-minute timeout, we had a chance to win and then we stunk it up. There's no magic dust. It's a process. It's one league game."

There is plenty of time left in the season. The Hokies know they usually get better as the season winds along.

Need proof? Just look at the recent trends. They tell the story.

DIAKITE A BRIGHT SPOT AT DUKE

Diakite was one of the lone bright spots for the Hokies in their game at Duke. The Mali native scored a season-high eight points, hitting 4-of-6 from the floor. He also grabbed five rebounds and blocked three shots in 20 minutes.

Diakite has been getting more minutes in the post in place of freshman Victor Davila. Davila started against St. John's, Charleston Southern and Duke, but in the latter two games, played just two and seven minutes, respectively, and did not score.

"Cheick's played well," Greenberg said. "He was playing hard. So he earned it."

That's not to say Greenberg is down on Davila by any means.

"We've got to throw him the ball," Greenberg said. "He can score. I believe he can be another double-figure scorer. We've got to empower him and give him the ball. He's got good hands and he's got good footwork. He's got an array of offensive moves around the block, and we've got to get more confidence in getting him the ball."

"He's not as mature as Cheick and he doesn't block shots the way Cheick does. He's got to get tougher and put a body on someone and rebound the ball. But I do think that he can give us another scoring option."

DELANEY NAMED MVP OF HOLIDAY FESTIVAL

Delaney played every single minute in the Holiday Festival held at Madison Square Garden because of a knee injury to Thorns. But that didn't bother the sophomore from

Baltimore, who was named the most valuable player in the tournament – which the Hokies won by downing Columbia 64-52 and then knocking off St. John's 81-67.

In the championship game against the Red Storm, Delaney scored 22 points, hitting 7-of-16 from the floor. He also dished out eight assists and nabbed five steals.

His assist total tied his career high (Charleston Southern, last January), while the steals total marked his career high. His previous high of four steals came in losses at North Carolina and Wake Forest last season.

In the first game of the tournament, Delaney tied his career high with 25 points in Tech's 64-52 win over Columbia. He hit 8-of-15 from the floor. He also dished out four assists and grabbed a career-high nine rebounds, surpassing his eight rebounds in Tech's win over BC last February.

Vassallo also made the all-tournament team. He scored 16 points in the Columbia game and 24 in the victory over St. John's. Vassallo averaged 8.5 rebounds and 3.5 assists per game in the tournament.

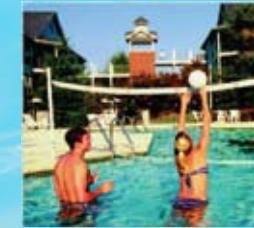
Vassallo did not start the game against Columbia while being punished for a violation of team rules, snapping his consecutive starts streak. The senior from Toa Baja, Puerto Rico, had started 49 consecutive games.

2008-09 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
Nov. 14 Fri.	GARDNER-WEBB	W, 65-62
17 Mon.	MOUNT ST. MARY'S	W, 62-57
O'Reilly Auto Parts Puerto Rico Tip-off		
20 Thurs.	vs. Fairfield	W, 74-57
21 Fri.	vs. Xavier	L, 62-63 (OT)
23 Sun.	vs. Seton Hall	L, 73-77
26 Wed.	ELON	W, 76-67
Big Ten/ACC Challenge		
Dec. 1 Mon.	Wisconsin	L, 72-74
BB&T Classic		
7 Sun.	vs. Navy	W, 79-70
9 Tues.	at Georgia	L, 66-67
14 Sun.	LONGWOOD	W, 79-57
Aeropostale Holiday Festival		
20 Sat.	vs. Columbia	W, 64-52
21 Sun.	vs. St. John's/Marist	W, 81-67
29 Mon.	at Charleston Southern	W, 75-66
Jan. 4 Sun.	at #5 Duke *	L, 44-69
10 Sat.	VIRGINIA *	4 p.m.
14 Wed.	RICHMOND	7 p.m.
17 Sat.	BOSTON COLLEGE *	4 p.m.
21 Wed.	at Wake Forest *	7 p.m.
25 Sun.	at Miami *	5:30 p.m.
29 Thurs.	CLEMSON *	7 p.m.
31 Sat.	at Boston College *	8 p.m.
Feb. 8 Sun.	NC STATE *	1:30 p.m.
11 Wed.	GEORGIA TECH *	7 p.m.
14 Sat.	at Maryland *	4 p.m.
18 Wed.	at Virginia *	8 p.m.
21 Sat.	FLORIDA STATE *	8 p.m.
25 Wed.	at Clemson *	7:30 p.m.
28 Sat.	DUKE *	3:30 p.m.
Mar. 4 Wed.	NORTH CAROLINA *	7 p.m.
8 Sun.	at Florida State *	2 p.m.
ACC Tournament		TBA
12-15 Thu-Sun	Atlanta (Georgia Dome)	

*ACC game - Home games in CAPS

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THOMPSON WORKING HIS WAY BACK

After missing the first 10 games of the season because of injuries (eight because of a hernia, two because of a sprained foot), J.T. Thompson made his season debut in the Hokies' victory over Columbia. The sophomore from Monroe, N.C., played 24 minutes in the game and scored two points, but grabbed four rebounds.

He was much better in the St. John's game. He came off the bench to grab 10 rebounds in 18 minutes of action. He scored four points, hitting 2-of-6 from the floor.

He scored a career-high 15 points against Charleston Southern, hitting 5-of-7 from the floor. His previous career high of 14 points came last season at BC.

"He still needs to get a feel for the flow of the game," Greenberg said. "He missed the whole preseason. Just learning what we're doing. Defensively, being alert to get to the right spot quickly enough. He's an 'X' factor for our team. We need him playing at a high level."

ALLEN TOPS 20-BOARD MARK

On Dec. 14, the Hokies downed Longwood 79-57 in a non-conference game at Cassell Coliseum, and the story

of the game was the performance of Jeff Allen.

Allen, a 6-foot-7, 240-pound sophomore from Washington, D.C., dominated the smaller Lancers inside. He scored 19 points, hitting 7-of-11 from the floor and 5-of-9 from the free-throw line. But more impressively, he dominated on the glass, grabbing a career-high 21 rebounds. He surpassed his previous career high of 17 rebounds, which he recorded in the Seton Hall game at the Puerto Rico Tip-Off in San Juan earlier this season.

"They were a small team," Allen said of Longwood. "Coach [Greenberg] told us we needed to pick up our rebounding and I felt like I needed to get a lot more rebounds. So that's what I did."

His rebounding performance marked the best by a Tech player since 1986 when Russell Pierre grabbed 22 rebounds in a loss to Florida. Pierre transferred to Tech from N.C. State, but played in just three games as a Hokie. He was ruled ineligible after it came to light that he had not met the NCAA's minimum hour requirement. Tech forfeited two wins as a result of the games in which Pierre played. 



Jeff Allen has been leading the Hokies in rebounding in just about every game this season.

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JUGGLING ACT

HASKINS SUCCESSFULLY BALANCES ROLES AS A
STARTING POINT GUARD AND AN ACE STUDENT *By Matt Kovatch*

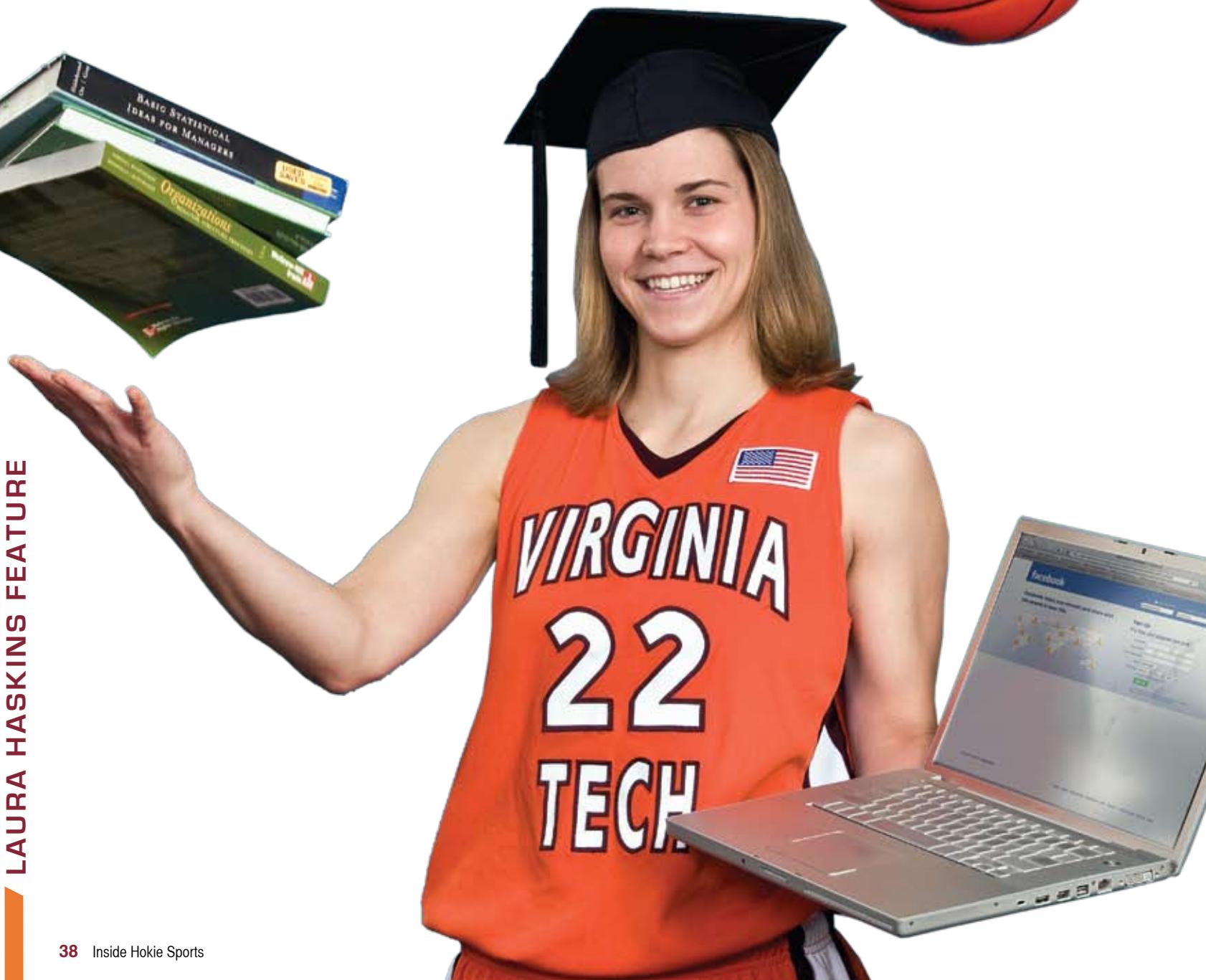
"I have a friend who is a juggler. If I'm at his house, I don't like to take food from him if it's in threes. If he has three apples left, I guess I can't have one. I wouldn't want to screw up his practice routine."

-Mitch Hedberg, standup comic

You might not think that quote has anything to do with Virginia Tech point guard Laura Haskins, and maybe you're right – maybe it's just an excuse to give a shout out to a hilariously non-sequitur comedian.

But try hard enough and you actually can relate Hedberg's random one-liner to the senior from Alexandria, Va. For one, her hidden talent is that she can literally juggle. But more importantly is the way that she's figuratively juggled the duties of being a three-year starter on the women's basketball team, as well as a dean's list student in the classroom. And how has she done it? By never screwing up her dedicated practice routine.

Haskins has always been a standout on the court and in the classroom – she was an all-state



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hoops player and the valedictorian at West Springfield High School – but it's what she's done since arriving at Tech that has been so impressive.

"When Laura first came here, I noticed how fundamentally sound she was as a player," Hokie head coach Beth Dunkenberger remembered. "Two things that really stood out were how hard she competed and how bright she was. She picks up on things very quickly, and she always gives 100 percent when she plays. Her intensity and competitiveness set her apart."

Haskins has never been the fastest or most talented player on the court since putting on the orange and maroon, but it's the mindset that Dunkenberger raves about that has helped Haskins to produce a rather noteworthy career. She's started all but two of Tech's games over the past three years and is on pace to finish her career ranked fourth on Tech's all-time assists list, having finished third in

floor and I frequently spot her helping out her teammates in practices and games."

As hard as one must work to be an elite basketball player, it's easy to forget that they need to work just as hard to fulfill the other half of the student-athlete moniker, something that Haskins has mastered as well. In fact, she is one of the rare student-athletes to graduate in three years, having completed her bachelor's degree in business management, with a concentration in human resources management, last summer. She has since begun work on a master's in business administration that she expects to finish in May of 2010.

It's a lot to handle in an efficient manner, and while Haskins has been a yearly member of the All-ACC Academic Women's Basketball Team, she admits it's not the easiest thing in the world to maintain.

"I think it's hard in that you don't feel like you have a lot of time to get things done," Haskins said of trying to mix homework and

"I think Laura has been a key for us in many ways. She is one of the hardest workers ever to play at Virginia Tech and she sets the standard for younger players to follow. She's also a coach on the floor and I frequently spot her helping out her teammates in practices and games."

-Head women's basketball coach Beth Dunkenberger

the ACC in that category her junior year.

The 5-foot-10 guard isn't a superb shooter – she's averaged just around four points per game on 34 percent shooting for her career – but her work ethic has made her into arguably the most well-rounded player on the team. She's turned in some eyebrow-raising stat lines over her four seasons, having recorded career highs of 11 rebounds, nine assists, seven steals and two blocks. It's a rare game when she doesn't lead the team in one of those categories, and that's a direct result of her hustle, something she takes pride in.

"Any time I play, I don't want anyone to out-work me on the court," Haskins said. "That's why you see me get a lot of rebounds, steals and assists because if my shot's not falling, there are other things that I can do. If I know I have a certain weakness in my game, then over the summer, I try to work on it and make it into a strength."

Not only has that mentality helped Haskins to contribute to the box score each night, but also to earn the respect of the players and coaches on what has been a young and injury-plagued team for the past two seasons.

"I think Laura has been a key for us in many ways," Dunkenberger said. "She is one of the hardest workers ever to play at Virginia Tech and she sets the standard for younger players to follow. She's also a coach on the

exams in with all of the practice, film study, traveling and games. "That's the hardest thing – all of the commitments that you have from both areas. Basketball takes away from the time that you would have to study. I guess I don't have as much free time as the normal student does because I want to do well in school."

But just like she's done on the court, Haskins made sure to put equal effort into her studies.

"I've always put a big emphasis on doing well in school, so it wasn't like I wasn't used to having to study and get my work done," she said. "I'd say my first semester was a little stressful because college basketball puts more on you than high school does, so my first semester took a little bit of an adjustment time. But it helped having a study hall that we were required to go to and they gave us tutors if we needed them, so I was able to come around pretty quickly."

So she's molded herself into one of the better point guards in the ACC and she's upheld her status as an elite pupil, but like Hedberg said, you need three things to be a true juggler. So what is Haskins' third apple? It's trying to figure out what to do with all the knowledge and experience she's acquired over the years.

She's currently juggling three different

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plans of action. She's thought about using her undergrad degree and going in the direction of human resources, but she can't deny the fact that she might miss sports once her Hokie career comes to an end.

"I'm also thinking about maybe trying to combine my love of sports with my business background," Haskins said. "I could see myself working in a college athletics department one day or for a pro sports team. I'm really trying to decide between those two areas."

Haskins has inquired about obtaining a graduate assistantship or internship position in Tech's athletics department – she mentioned maybe learning from senior women's administrator Sharon McCloskey – to further explore the possibilities of that realm. She's also looking into applying for internships around the Washington, D.C., area for the summer, either with one of the local professional teams or with Octagon, a sports agency that sets up employment options within the sports and entertainment business.

She very well may do both a sports-related internship and one in HR as a means of comparing the two to see which suits her better – that was a recommendation from a teacher in a career-planning class – but if neither of those works out, there's always her third interest.

"I've also thought about law school,"

Haskins said. "I know there are schools out there – Marquette and Tulane are two of them – that have a sports law program where you can get a certification in sports law. I would consider one of them or a school that at least has a sports law and society program. Then I could use a law degree to get into the sports field, as opposed to just having the business background."

"Maybe I could be a sports agent or work in the general counsel's office for a pro sports team. I'm pretty interested in that as well. I figure you can never have too much education, especially with the way the economy is. I might just keep going to school until it turns around!"

She still has the summer and the next academic year (while she finishes her M.B.A.) to figure it out, but if she brings the same intensity and dedication to the process as she has to the rest of her collegiate career, it's a good bet that things should work out just fine.

"I have no doubt that Laura will be a success in whatever she decides to do," Dunkenberger said. "She's smart and driven and that will make her successful in whatever field she chooses."

Besides, if none of those options – human resources, athletics administration or sports law – pan out, there's always the circus. We hear she's a pretty good juggler. 



Laura
Haskins

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WITH A NEW TRACK SEASON UNDERWAY, THE MEN'S TEAM AIMS TO BECOME MORE BALANCED AND THE WOMEN'S TEAM LOOKS TO MAINTAIN ITS EXCELLENCE *By Matt Kovatch*

It was just back in August when Virginia Tech's Queen Harrison was among track and field royalty, competing in the 400-meter hurdles for Team USA at the 2008 Olympic Games. It's the pinnacle of what any track and field athlete would ever hope to accomplish, and Harrison did it after a mere two years as a collegian.

Well, fast forward five months and it's back to reality for Harrison and the Tech squad, as the 2009 indoor season got underway in early January with the Virginia Tech Invitational at Rector Field House. The Hokies' women's team has won the past four Atlantic Coast Conference championships (both indoor and outdoor in 2007 and 2008), as well as back-to-back NCAA East Region titles, and the quest to keep the string alive is about to begin.

The man in charge of leading that quest, Director of Track & Field and Cross Country Dave Cianelli, recently sat down to share his thoughts on the state of the program – both the ultra-successful women and the ever-improving men. Here's what he had to say:

IHS: The sprint crew was one of the most important parts to the success of last year's women's team, and you must replace three departed seniors in Sherlenia Green, Patrice Potts and Britni Spruill. Who is going to be able to do that?

INDOOR SCHEDULE

Date	Event	Location
Jan. 9-10	VIRGINIA TECH INVITATIONAL	Blacksburg, Va.
16-17	VT HOKIE INVITATIONAL	Blacksburg, Va.
30-31	Penn State National Invitational	State College, Pa.
Feb. 6-7	VIRGINIA TECH ELITE MEET	Blacksburg, Va.
20-21	VT CHALLENGE	Blacksburg, Va.
26-28	ACC INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS	Blacksburg, Va.
Mar. 7	FINAL QUALIFIER	Blacksburg, Va.
13-14	NCAA Championships	College Station, Texas

OUTDOOR SCHEDULE

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

DC: We're counting on the freshmen in that group – Leslie Aririguzo, Aunye Boone and Ogechi Nwaneri – to come in and step up to the plate. It's always tough any time you lose a seasoned veteran to graduation and you're hoping a freshman can fill the gap because it's unusual for a freshman to come in and be at that type of level; there's a pretty big disparity in the maturity level.

But that puts a little more emphasis on the upperclassmen to provide the leadership for those newcomers. If [the freshmen] are going to have a chance to truly help us at the conference level, the responsibility really lies with the upperclassmen to make sure that the youngsters are doing the proper things and have the right outlook and mentality. A coach can certainly have an influence, but when you have a group of upperclassmen that provides that direction, I think it's a lot stronger coming from them. I think it really sinks in when they hear it from their teammates.

IHS: Is it a good thing that two of those upperclassmen are Queen Harrison and Kristi Castlin, a pair of women who have accomplished a career's worth of things in just two years?

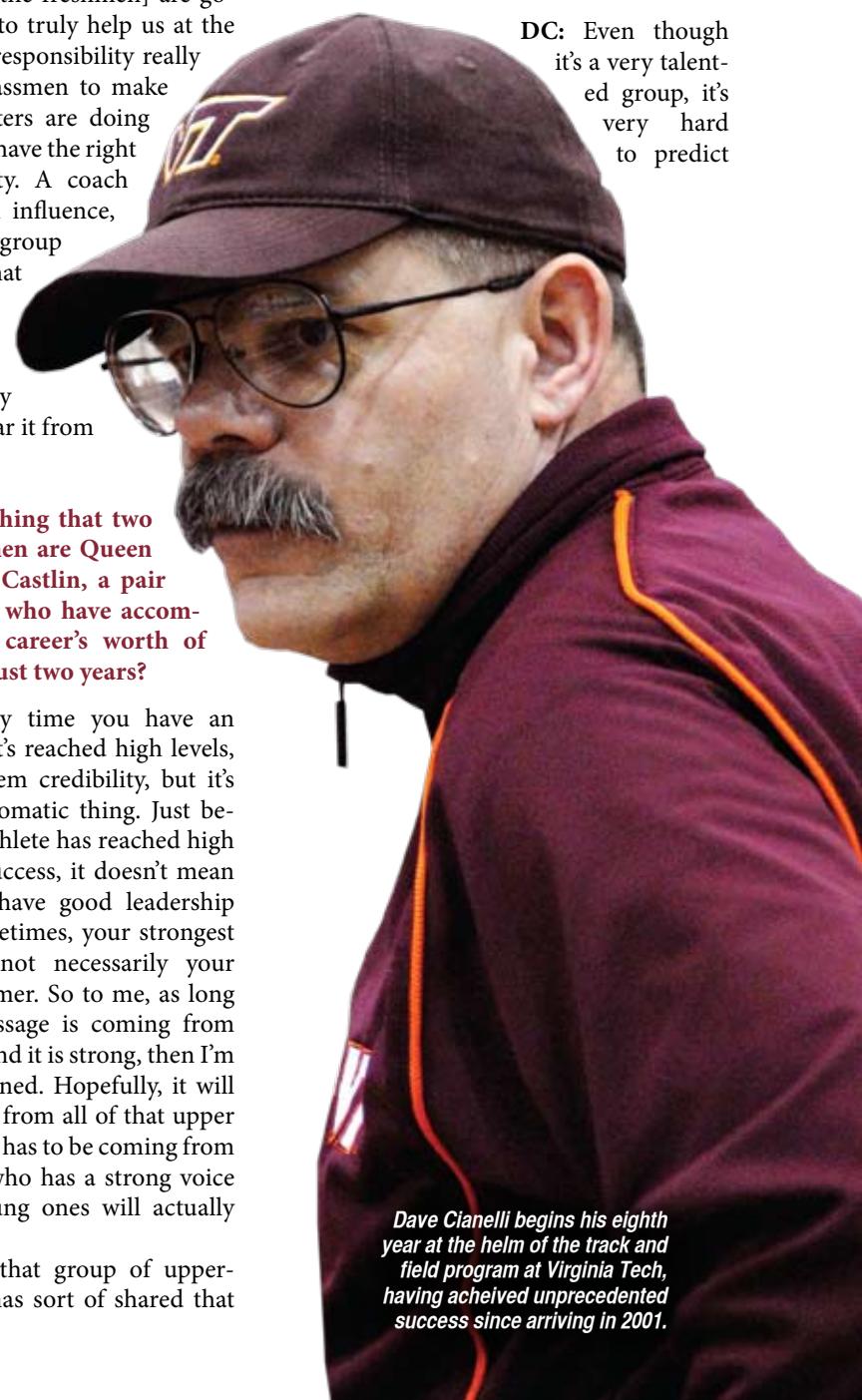
DC: Any time you have an athlete that's reached high levels, it gives them credibility, but it's not an automatic thing. Just because an athlete has reached high levels of success, it doesn't mean that they have good leadership skills. Sometimes, your strongest leader is not necessarily your top performer. So to me, as long as the message is coming from someone and it is strong, then I'm not concerned. Hopefully, it will be coming from all of that upper class, but it has to be coming from someone who has a strong voice so the young ones will actually listen.

I think that group of upperclassmen has sort of shared that

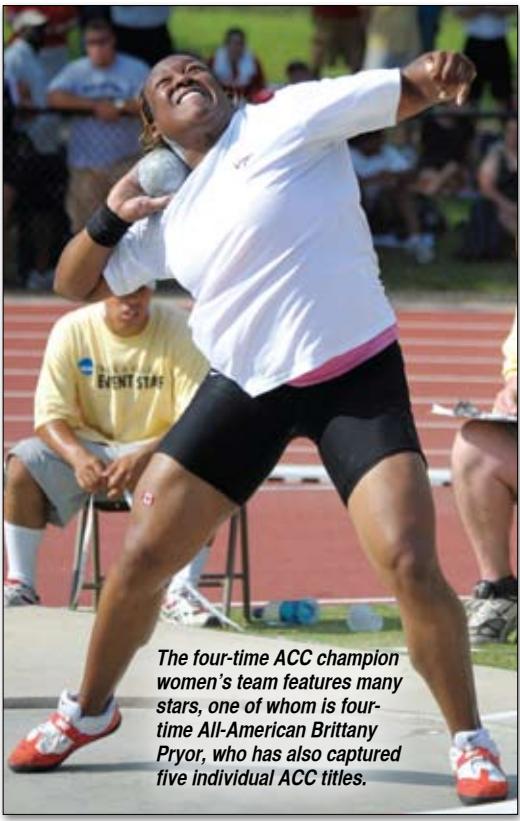
responsibility. They've stepped in and taken a leadership role with the newcomers, and that's good because it doesn't just fall on one individual where they feel like they have to be the person all the time. I think it can be spread throughout that group of Queen, Kristi, Asia Washington and Shakirra Pinnock.

IHS: So do you think the freshmen can pick up the slack if given the right direction?

DC: Even though it's a very talented group, it's very hard to predict



Dave Cianelli begins his eighth year at the helm of the track and field program at Virginia Tech, having achieved unprecedented success since arriving in 2001.



The four-time ACC champion women's team features many stars, one of whom is four-time All-American Brittany Pryor, who has also captured five individual ACC titles.

what's going to happen. Even though they've had a lot of success at the high school level, moving to this level for the first time can be pretty rough. Queen and Kristi and Asia just so happened to step in and contribute a great deal in their first years, but that doesn't guarantee that this group is going to be able to do that. I believe the talent is there with them, but it's a matter of whether they make the mental adjustments once they start competing.

IHS: Emmanuel Daux has replaced Lawrence Johnson (who left to head up Clemson's program) as the sprints, hurdles and jumps coach, but don't you also have

three former athletes who have stayed with the program to help out?

DC: Yes. Sherlenia Green, Kristen Callan (throws) and Erin Mahony (pole vault) are all still here as volunteer assistant coaches. They will continue to train for their own purposes, but any time you have someone who's been through your program and has had success, as all of three of them have, that certainly can help with stabilizing some of the newcomers. I think it adds stability and maturity to the group. I like having those kinds of people around. They are much closer to what some of these freshmen are going through right now than we are as coaches. I think they can sometimes relate a little bit better to some of the issues that the newcomers face.

IHS: Do you think the women have a good chance at repeating as ACC champs? How do you feel this year as opposed to last year when you were trying to repeat for the first time?

DC: That's a funny question because I look at it a little differently when people talk about repeating or defending a string of championships in a row. I look at it as each year standing alone by itself individually – each year has its own unique challenges. We have a lot of returnees who experienced what we accomplished last year, but this year is a new year with different things to face as a team. I allow the program to enjoy the success we've had, but then there's a point where you have to put it out of your mind and look forward. I've never used the word 'defend.' This group isn't defending anything; that's done and that trophy is ours. I look at it as starting over completely from scratch and having to climb a completely different mountain. I don't allow them to look back.

If you try to defend a title, I think it adds an unnecessary dimension to what the team is trying to do.

I think Mack Brown (head football coach at Texas) did a great thing this year. When Texas beat Oklahoma at the beginning of October and had that four-week stretch against top-10 teams, in order to guard against a letdown the following week, he got the team together and they physically buried the game ball from that win in the ground to ensure that they would put that game out of their minds and focus on the next game. They eventually lost a few games later, but I think that was really brilliant on his part. I like to take that same approach. I don't like to talk about last year. We can only change what we're doing today to get better.

IHS: What would you say will be the biggest challenge facing such a talented women's team?

DC: The biggest challenge for this group and this coaching staff is to continue to have the hunger to want to get better. It's a hard thing to do because I think it's human nature to relax. No matter what endeavor you're in, once you've reached or maintained a certain level of success, it's very easy to sit back and relax and not have the same intensity that you had when you started. So everything that I do when I talk to this group is geared toward maintaining the same mindset that we had before any of this happened.

IHS: We know who all of your star athletes are, but who might step up and be the surprise contributor?

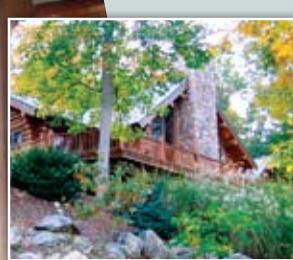
DC: The one name that pops to the top of my mind is Abigail Schaffer, a freshman pole vaulter from Pennsylvania. She has actually already competed in a meet (she

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won first place at the Liberty Kickoff on December 4). I think she's got all of the components, physically and mentally, and she's looked

tremendous in training. She was one of the better vaulters in high school, so she might not necessarily be considered a surprise, but I think she can be a huge contributor. And others whom I think will carry more of a load are going to be Asia and Shakirra from the sprint crew, and Erika Schroeder in the throws. The core of the distance crew is seniors, but there are a couple of freshmen who I think can step in and help us in Samantha Dow and Lauren Pinkston.

IHS: How about on the men's side? Who might carry a bigger load for them, or who might be a rookie to watch out for?

DC: I think [junior thrower] Igor Mislenovic will continue to move up. He was much more of a player in the conference last year by getting second in the discus, and I think he'll be at a higher level this year and will be a big help to us. Matthias Treff is a freshman who will certainly help us quite a bit in the javelin during the outdoor season, and Keith Ricks is a rookie who will contribute in the sprints.

In the distance area, the two guys who had really good freshman years were Eddie Judge and Ryan Witt (who finished fourth and fifth in the 1,500 meters at USA junior nationals in June). They showed me some good things as freshmen, and they can move up to the next level and be among the top in the conference. Also, Devin Cornwall scored for us last year and he had a great cross country season. Typically, that carries over to the track, so he'll be a player in the longer distances. We need the distance crew to become a larger factor for us at the conference level, and they have the right mix to do so.

IHS: Of the four main groups (sprints, throws, distance, pole vault) for the men, which do you feel most comfortable with and which need some work?

DC: I'd have to say that I'm most confi-

dent in the pole vault and the throws. Those two groups are a little bit more mature and they've been with the program. Those two groups will be very consistent. The distance group had a strong fall in cross country, and I think they'll be able to make a much larger contribution this year at the conference level, and that's been our goal. The sprint crew is pretty much all freshmen with the exception of Ebenezer Amegashie. They're still in more of a developmental stage, but

Pole vaulter Yavgeniy Olhovsky burst onto the scene for the Tech men's team in 2008, earning All-America honors during both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

with someone like Keith Ricks or Keare Smith, who knows? You don't put limits on freshmen. They could come in and be players, but you don't know for sure.

IHS: You mentioned the freshmen sprinters, and that's a group that hasn't had a whole lot to offer in recent years for the men, correct?

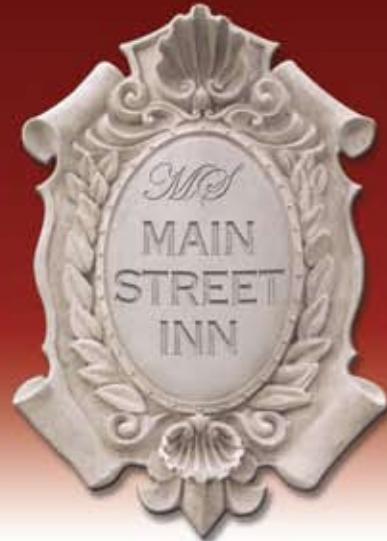
DC: No, we haven't, so hopefully we're going to be able to develop that area over the next couple of years. There are a couple of very talented guys there, but again, well see how those freshmen perform. The one who kind of sticks out in my mind is Ricks. I think he's got the maturity and the talent to do something as a freshman, so I'm pretty excited to see him compete. While we're talking about freshmen, I should also re-mention Matthias Treff, the javelin thrower. He's coming in at a pretty high level and he's going to be able to help us immediately in the conference and hopefully at the national level.

IHS: So what is your overall impression of the men's team?

DC: It's a pretty young team. We've only got three seniors and they are all distance runners: Billy Berlin, Phil Padilla and James Scheiner. We have a little bit more balance

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on the men's side than in years past and that will enable us to be a better conference team. And we also have enough high quality that we can still possibly attain a top-20 finish at the national meet. They don't necessarily go hand-in-hand. Our goal is to be more balanced so we can score some points from all areas. The teams that are most successful at the conference level typically have more balance. So overall, I like where the men's team is, because our goal of becoming a better conference team is starting to materialize. But it's not an overnight thing – it takes a while to develop that talent.

IHS: Finally, you guys have four home meets this indoor season before serving as hosts of the ACC Indoor Championships. How exciting is that and how much of an advantage will that be?

DC: I'd like to think it's an advantage to be in our own facility because I think the team takes pride in the way it competes at home, so that's an advantage over going somewhere else. Aside from that, I think that our facility is the best facility for the athletes in terms of performance, so I like that factor. If someone is ready to run fast, jump high or throw far, I think our facility is a good place to do it. 

KEY LOSSES (WOMEN)

Kristen Callan
All-American thrower
Sherlenia Green and Britni Spruill
All-American sprinters
Erin Mahony
ACC champion pole vaulter
Patrice Potts
ACC champion sprinter
Ciera Ayangbile
All-ACC thrower

KEY RETURNNEES (WOMEN)

Queen Harrison
All-American hurdler and Olympian
Kristi Castlin
All-American hurdler
Brittany Pryor
All-American thrower
Tasmin Fanning & Jessica Fanning
All-American runners
Asia Washington
All-American sprinter
Kelly Phillips
All-American pole vaulter
Natalie Sherbak
ACC champion runner
Dorotea Habazin
ACC champion thrower

Ashley Early

ACC champion pole vaulter

Shakirra Pinnock

ACC champion sprinter

KEY LOSSES (MEN)

Justin Clickett
All-American thrower

KEY RETURNNEES (MEN)

Yavgeniy Olhovsky
All-American pole vaulter

Matej Muza
All-American thrower

Igor Mislijenovic
All-ACC thrower

Jared Jodon
All-ACC pole vaulter

Billy Berlin, Devin Cornwall and Paul LaPenna
All-ACC runners



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2009

My New Year's Resolution Is ...

By Matt Kovatch



To have my best year ever academically and baseball-wise. Also, to win the ACC

Championship.

- Rhett Ballard, Baseball

To learn how to dance.

- Martha Blakely, Women's Tennis

To become an athlete who puts her heart into every race. I am no longer on the high school stage of sports, and I must prove myself to be worthy to be on an ACC team. Track and field must become what I breathe, and to do that, I have to dedicate my thoughts to the reason that I'm here. I must realize that track is no longer my hobby; it's a lifestyle.

- Aunye Boone, Track & Field

To win the ACC.

- Kyle Cichy, Baseball

To spend every possible day in the "Iron Palace" working on my traps.

- Richard Graham, Football

facebook

Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life.



To stop letting Facebook interfere with my homework.

- Hasheem Halim
Track & Field

To break four minutes in the mile.

- Eddie Judge
Cross Country and Track & Field

To not sweat the small stuff, and to try to incorporate less negativity in my life and people around me!

- Joanna Kiser, Lacrosse

To train for and run my first marathon after I graduate.

- Natalie Kretzer
Cross Country and Track & Field



To start buying lottery tickets at a luckier store, to save electricity by taking less showers and using more deodorant, and to "check for paper" after I use the restroom.

- Matt Rosen
Wrestling



To work on the little things that will make me a better person and athlete.

- Jacob Sykes, Football



To grow a sweet face and neck beard and to learn better pacing so that I can run a smarter and more effective race.

- Matt Kroetch
Cross Country and Track & Field

To compete in a triathlon!

- Mauri Liberati, Women's Soccer

To increase my work ethic in academics and athletics. I want to become better.

- Daniel Martin, Swimming & Diving



To learn how to throw a boomerang.

- Erin Ota, Softball

To learn how to make it in the real world and to complete a triathlon.

- Ashley Owens, Women's Soccer

To go to all of my classes (haha)!

- Taylor Parrish, Volleyball

To learn to make all of my mom's recipes.

- Michelle Lang
Volleyball

To be a better student-athlete in class and on the field, and to stop dipping.

- Sergio Render
Football



To cut down on the unhealthy foods I eat to help me perform better on the track.

- Nicholas Vaughn, Track & Field



To become a better person in every aspect of my life.

- Dyrell Roberts, Football

MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION IS...

OLYMPIC SPORTS SCOREBOARD

SWIMMING AND DIVING

Oct.	25	NC STATE (Men) *	W, 183-126
	25	NC STATE (Women) *	W, 202-107
	25	WEST VIRGINIA (Men)	W, 200-109
	25	WEST VIRGINIA (Women)	W, 199-93
	29	at #15 Virginia (Men) *	L, 108-189
	29	at #10 Virginia (Women) *	L, 110-188
Nov.	8	CLEMSON (Men) *	W, 187-103
	8	CLEMSON (Women) *	W, 182-118
	19-22	at Volunteer Invitational	All Day

Seniors' & Parents' Day

Jan.	24	GEORGIA TECH *	Noon
	24	UNC WILMINGTON	Noon
	31	at Pittsburgh	11 AM
Feb.	6	at Maryland (Men) *	5:30 PM
	18-21	at Women's ACC Championships	All Day
	25-28	at Men's ACC Championships	All Day
Mar.	13-15	at NCAA Zone B Diving Championships	All Day
	19-21	at Women's NCAA Championships	All Day
	26-28	at Men's NCAA Championships	All Day

*Indicates ACC match/meet; Home games in CAPS

WRESTLING

Nov. 8	at NC State Open	
9	GEORGE MASON	W, 22-18
16	at Hokie Open	
22	at Navy Classic	
30	vs. Anderson	W, 42-3
30	at Chattanooga	W, 37-0
Dec. 5	at Las Vegas Invitational	
6	at Davidson Open	
6	at Las Vegas Invitational	
29-30	at Southern Scuffle	

Lone Star Duals at Dallas, Texas

Jan. 3	vs. Brown	W, 36-9
3	vs. Central Oklahoma	W, 34-9
3	vs. Cal Poly	W, 34-9

Bulldog Duals at Boiling Springs, N.C.

Jan. 10	at Gardner-Webb	11:30 AM
10	vs. The Citadel	1 PM
10	vs. Davidson	2:30 PM

Jan. 16 at Appalachian State

16	vs. Campbell at Boone, N.C.	5 PM
18	RUTGERS	7 PM

18 VMI

24	vs. Binghamton at Ann Arbor, Mich.	3 PM
24	at Michigan	4 PM

25 vs. Nebraska at Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

25	at Central Michigan	11 AM
31	vs. Virginia * at Glen Allen, Va.	3 PM

Feb. 1 at North Carolina *

1	MARYLAND *	1 PM
8	NC STATE *	5 PM

15 DUKE *

15	DUKE *	7 PM
19	at Old Dominion	7:30 PM

Mar. 7 ACC CHAMPIONSHIPS

19	at NCAA Championships	All Day
20	at NCAA Championships	All Day

21 at NCAA Championships

All Day

Tech wrestlers fare well over break

Tech's wrestling team got in a lot of work over the holidays, participating in the Southern Scuffle in Greensboro, N.C., and the Lone Star Duals in Dallas.

Tech won three matches at the Lone Star Duals, knocking off Cal Poly 34-9, beating Central Oklahoma 34-9 and clobbering Brown 36-9.

Freshman Jesse Dong highlighted the bout against Cal Poly with a 2-0 victory over 12th-ranked Chase Pami at 157 pounds and went undefeated on the day. Freshmen Jarrod Garnett at 125 pounds and Pete Yates at 149 pounds, and sophomores Matt Epperly at 165 pounds, DJ Bruce at 197 pounds and David Marone at 285 pounds also went undefeated in the three duals.

Six Hokies placed at the Southern Scuffle, including a fourth-place effort by Epperly. Chris Diaz and Tommy Spellman each finished in fifth place, while Yates and Marone came in sixth place.

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You could say that long-time Hokie Club members Jack and Sandy Davis are stuck in the past. After all, in addition to their ongoing support for Hokie athletics, their generosity plays a key role in supporting the Virginia Tech Center for Civil War Studies where Jack serves as director of programs. But they also understand a thing or two about the future and how to invent it. That's why they are among the university's most dedicated volunteers, rallying behind causes all across campus, including Virginia Tech's ambitious Arts Initiative.

Like the Davises, you can support the university in any number of ways. Your gift, whether it's through the Annual Fund or directed to a specific scholarship or program, helps Virginia Tech reach All-American status all across campus.

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