

INSIDE

# HOKIESPORTS

Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

## GOLDEN GIRL

Rachel Culp has overcome adversity to shine as both a lacrosse player and a student

Vol. 1 No. 9, April 2009 • \$4



**INSIDE:** Despite some personnel losses, coordinator Bud Foster feels good about Tech's defense as spring ball begins

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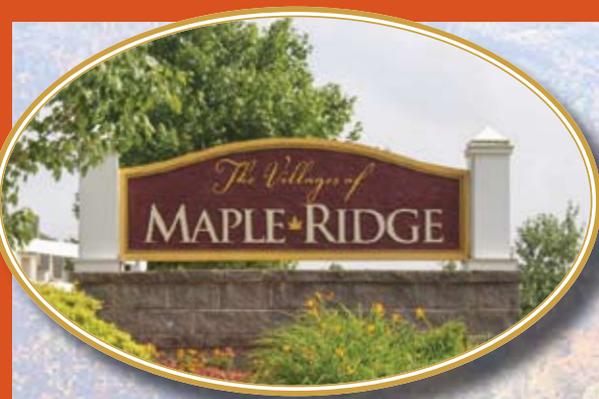
**UPCOMING ATHLETIC EVENTS**

**APRIL**

17	BASEBALL VS. CLEMSON <i>*VT Thermal Mug Giveaway to first 100 fans!</i>	5:30 P.M.	21	BASEBALL VS. WILLIAM & MARY	5:30 P.M.
18	LACROSSE VS. MARYLAND <i>*HomeBnd Bogglehead Doll Giveaway to first 100 fans!</i>	1:00 P.M.	23	LACROSSE ACC CHAMPIONSHIP	ALL DAY
	BASEBALL VS. CLEMSON <i>*30's Men's! First 200 fans receive VT Retro t-shirt!</i>	5:30 P.M.	24	LACROSSE ACC CHAMPIONSHIP	ALL DAY
19	BASEBALL VS. CLEMSON <i>*Monday Day! First 200 fans receive VT Camp t-shirt!</i>	1:00 P.M.	25	SOFTBALL VS. MARYLAND (DH)	NOON
21	SOFTBALL VS. LONGWOOD (DH)	5:00 P.M.		FOOTBALL SPRING GAME	2:00 P.M.
			26	LACROSSE ACC CHAMPIONSHIP	ALL DAY
				SOFTBALL VS. MARYLAND	1:00 P.M.
			28	BASEBALL VS. HIGH POINT	5:30 P.M.
			29	BASEBALL VS. RADFORD	5:30 P.M.

**MAY**

5	BASEBALL VS. LIBERTY	7:00 P.M.	16	BASEBALL VS. UVA <i>*VT Mini Day Giveaway to first 200 fans!</i>	1:00 P.M.
10	BASEBALL VS. DELAWARE STATE (DH)	NOON		<i>*Boy/Girl Scouts Appreciation Day!</i>	
14	BASEBALL VS. UVA	5:30 P.M.		<i>*First Responders Appreciation Day!</i>	
15	BASEBALL VS. UVA <i>*HomeBnd Bogglehead Doll Giveaway to first 200 fans!</i>	5:30 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!**

The Hokie Club, supporting Tech athletics since 1949.



## WAYS TO GIVE: MATCHING GIFTS

One way to maximize your gift to the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund is by utilizing our matching gift option. Many companies provide a matching gift program to their employees as a benefit to encourage employees to make charitable donations. Upon making this donation to a charitable organization, the company will "match" the employee's original gift, and in some instances, even doubling or tripling the amount originally pledged by the employee. To determine if you are eligible to make a matching gift, check with your employer.

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#### 1. When should I submit a matching gift form?

You should submit your matching gift form from your employer at the same time you make your gift. If you make your contribution by bank draft or with quarterly payments, we will process the matching gift form with the final payment for that calendar year.

#### 2. What if you have already made your gift and just realized that your company will match. Is it too late?

Probably not. Policies vary, but for the most part, companies allow anywhere from six months to a year after the gift is made for their employees to request matching funds. Go ahead and send the form to us with a note and we will handle it for you.

#### 3. My company does not match, but my spouse's company does. How does this effect my giving?

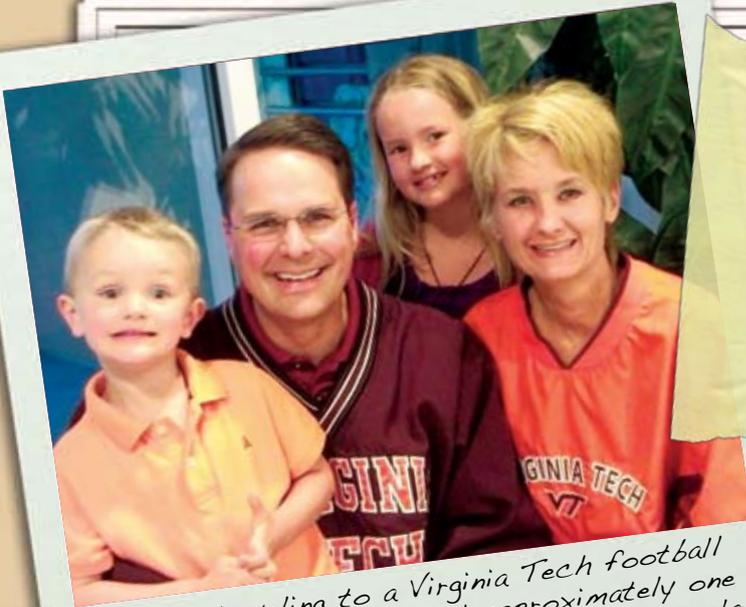
When you submit your gift, make sure the spouse eligible for matching completes the gift form and signs the check. We will take it from there and see that the matching gift is properly applied.

#### 4. My company has always matched my gifts - why have they changed their policy now?

The university will make every effort to comply with both the letter and intention of companies' matching gift policies. If you have questions regarding your company's matching gift policies for athletic gifts, please consult with your Human Resources/Matching Gift representative.



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



*While traveling to a Virginia Tech football game, we make sure that approximately one hour prior to our arrival at tailgating we play GAME DAY by the Marching Virginians.*

T. Eric  
Siceloff  
D.P.M.

**Hokie Club Level:**

Golden Hokie

**Family Members:**

Wife, Sam Siceloff; Daughter, Alexandra; Son, William

**Currently Lives:**

Clemmons, NC

**Q: What year did you graduate?**

**A:** 1990

**Q: A Hokie is ...**

**A:** A loyal supporter of Virginia Tech evidenced by the smile on their face and excitement in their voice when asked about what makes our university unique.

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

**A:** My best memory of Virginia Tech athletics was the 2000 national football championship at the Sugar Bowl. The outcome was not what every Hokie would have liked, but the excitement surrounding the game and the acknowledgement by the nation that Virginia Tech was a legitimate football team made me very proud to be a Hokie.

**Q: How did you get involved with the Hokie Club?**

**A:** I started out as an Orange and Maroon member upon completion of my post-graduate training and return to the North Carolina area. Within a short span, I upgraded to Golden Hokie to increase my ability to contribute to all the athletic programs at Virginia Tech and continue the success we all enjoy watching.

**Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.**

**A:** Our perfect day on the Virginia Tech campus would begin with arrival at the tailgate gathering four hours prior to a Thursday night ESPN football game, spending time with fellow Hokies, reminiscing past contests and predicting future outcomes. Enjoying the sights and sounds, especially the Marching Virginians Pep Band. Experiencing the fireworks and Skipper after each and every score. Watching both teams gather at midfield after the game as well as the players acknowledging the fans. Walking back to the car with head held high knowing the nation once again saw Virginia Tech display sportsmanship and respect for the game. Laying my head on the pillow with the realization that Lee Corso was wrong and another Coastal Division championship is eminent. Waking up the next day to a crisp fall day to discover that the winner of the ACC championship will play in January for the national championship.

**Q: Do you have any tailgating traditions? If so, tell us your best.**

**A:** Our pregame celebration consists of a group toast to the "Old Hokie" cheer and a postgame champagne toast to celebrate every win.

**Q: What motivates you to give back to help Virginia Tech athletics?**

**A:** The pride that our student-athletes bring to the university and its alumni deserves to be recognized and rewarded. Each and every athlete gives a piece of themselves to Virginia Tech, and I feel the need to help them succeed both in their academic endeavors and athletic competitions.



# VTAF Annual Meeting

The VTAF (Hokie Club) annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the annual spring football game on Saturday, April 25. This annual meeting is held at Cassell Coliseum and is open to the entire Hokie Club membership.

The meeting will begin at 11:15, a.m., and a picnic lunch will follow at approximately 12:15, p.m. Cost for the picnic is \$15 per person and reservations must be made through the Hokie Club office by April 15. Lu Merritt, Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics, will present the state of the program, and Athletics Director Jim Weaver and several head coaches are scheduled to speak.

### Schedule of Events:

Hokie Rep Refresher Course	9 a.m.
Hokie Rep Seminar	10 a.m.
VTAF Annual Meeting	11:15 a.m.
Picnic Lunch	12:15 p.m.
Spring Football Game	2 p.m.



"Thank you, Hokie Club, for all the support throughout my Virginia Tech career. You have contributed greatly to my unbelievable college experience."

**Will Oldham**  
R-Senior, Golf

### Important Dates to Remember

<b>April 25, 2009</b>	VTAF Annual Meeting & Picnic
<b>April 25, 2009</b>	Spring Football Game
<b>May 1, 2009</b>	Football Season Ticket Deadline

For more information on supporting Virginia Tech athletics, contact us at:

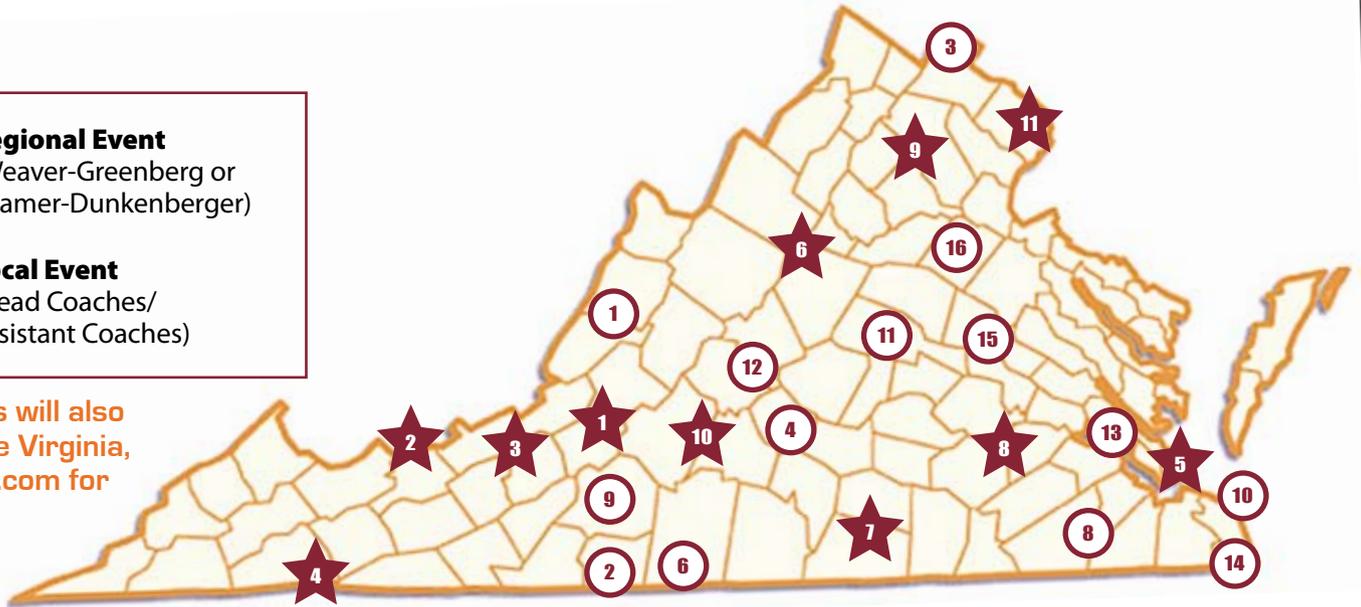
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\* Some events will also be held outside Virginia, visit [hokieclub.com](http://hokieclub.com) for more info



FOR DETAILS ON ALL OF THE 2009 ORANGE & MAROON TOUR EVENTS, VISIT [HOKIECLUB.COM](http://HOKIECLUB.COM)

## Football Season Ticket Deadline - May 1, 2009

Spring practice is in full swing and the 2009 football season will soon follow. With the Hokies poised to defend back-to-back ACC Championships, only one piece of the puzzle remains: ordering your season tickets. Paper applications and online order forms for 2009 football season tickets have been distributed and are due to the Athletics Ticket Office by May 1, 2009. Included on this year's order form is the ability to order tickets to the 2009 Chick-fil-A College Kickoff between Virginia Tech and Alabama at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Ga., on September 5. To place your order for the 2009 football season, mail in your application or visit [hokietickets.com](http://hokietickets.com).





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By Jimmy Robertson

## Three Tech student-athletes receive postgraduate scholarships from ACC

Three Virginia Tech student-athletes were among the 42 ACC student-athletes to be named recipients of postgraduate scholarships, as announced by the league in early March. The three Tech student-athletes included women's cross country and track standout Tasmin Fanning, women's soccer player Kim Hickey, and men's soccer player Taylor Walsh.

The Weaver-James-Corrigan and Jim and Pat Thacker scholarships are given to selected student-athletes who intend to pursue a graduate-level degree following graduation. Each recipient will receive \$5,000 to use towards his or her graduate education. Student-athletes receiving the award have performed with distinction in both the classroom and in their respective sports, while demonstrating exemplary conduct in the community.

The 42 student-athletes will be honored April 15 at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, N.C., at a luncheon put on by the Nat Greene Kiwanis Club.

Fanning, a senior from Charlottesville, Va., is double majoring in human nutrition, foods and exercise and communication. She finished third at the NCAA Cross Country Championships last fall – the highest finish ever for a Tech runner.

Hickey, a senior from Richboro, Pa., is a human nutrition, foods and exercise major and plans on enrolling in nursing school next fall. Walsh, a senior from Roanoke, Va., is majoring in engineering. Both Hickey and Walsh played in 15 games this past fall.

## Eleven earn Super Iron Hokie honors in S&C testing

Eleven Tech players earned Super Iron Hokie honors and 57 players overall received recognition for their work during this spring's strength and conditioning testing held the first week of March.

The list of Super Iron Hokies included Greg Boone, Josh Call, Kenny Jefferson, Josh Oglesby, Tyrod Taylor, Dorian Porch, Barquell Rivers, Demetrius Taylor, Kam Chancellor, Kenny Younger and Jake Johnson.

Demetrius Taylor, as expected, paced Tech in the weight room. He recorded the top lifts in the bench press (430) and push jerk (400), and finished second in the back squat (600) and power clean (360).

Also, 11 position records fell during the testing, with Tyrod Taylor breaking two of them. Taylor recorded a 385-pound front

squat and a 310-pound power clean, breaking the quarterback marks in both lifts.

Five position marks fell in the power clean lift. In addition to Taylor, Lorenzo Williams (331 pounds), Cody Grimm (326), Greg Nosal (361) and Jarrett Boykin (331) broke the record in this lift for their respective positions.

Three records fell in the front squat – a lift only done by the skill players. In addition to Taylor, Darren Evans (440) and Danny Coale (420) set the record for their respective spots.

Boone set the back squat mark for tight ends (620); Patrick Terry set the vertical jump record for receivers (40.5); and Chancellor set the bench press record for free safeties (380).

Here is a look at the top five in each event tested:

### Bench press

Demetrius Taylor (430)  
Vinston Painter (415)  
Kenny Younger (410)  
Josh Call (410)  
Greg Nosal (410)  
Blake DeChristopher (410)

### Front squat

Dorian Porch (450)  
Darren Evans (440)  
Danny Coale (420)  
Kenny Jefferson (420)  
Josh Call (420)  
Patrick Terry (410)

### Back squat

Greg Boone (620)  
Demetrius Taylor (600)  
Will Alvarez (600)  
Jake Johnson (560)  
James Brown (550)

### Power clean

Greg Nosal (361)  
Demetrius Taylor (360)  
Jake Johnson (351)  
Barquell Rivers (346)  
Ed Wang (341)

### Push jerk

Demetrius Taylor (400)  
Ed Wang (360)  
Greg Nosal (351)  
Blake DeChristopher (351)  
Kenny Jefferson (346)

### Vertical jump

Patrick Terry (40.5)  
Marcus Davis (40.5)  
Dorian Porch (39.5)  
Cris Hill (37)  
Ron Cooper (37)

### 10-yard sprint

Danny Coale (1.62)  
Dyrell Roberts (1.62)  
Stephan Virgil (1.62)  
Tony Gregory (1.62)  
Cody Grimm (1.64)

### NFL shuttle

Cody Grimm (4.02)  
Dorian Porch (4.03)  
Josh Oglesby (4.07)  
Lorenzo Williams (4.09)  
Rashad Carmichael (4.09)

*(Note: Beau Warren also recorded a 346-pound lift in the push jerk. Stephan Virgil and Cody Grimm also recorded 37-inch vertical jumps.)*

## 2008 football team awards handed out

The Virginia Tech football team awards for the 2008 season were handed out recently, and the following awards were voted on by the team:

Permanent team captains: Brett Warren, Ryan Shuman, Orion Martin, Victor "Macho" Harris  
**Outstanding defensive lineman** – Jason Worilds  
**Outstanding defensive linebacker** – Brett Warren  
**Outstanding defensive back** – Macho Harris  
**Outstanding offensive lineman** – Ryan Shuman  
**Outstanding offensive receiver** – Greg Boone  
**Outstanding offensive back** – Darren Evans  
**Outstanding specialist** – Dustin Keys  
**Most valuable player** – Victor "Macho" Harris

The following awards were voted on by the coaching staff:

• **John William Schneider Award** (this is given in memory of former player William Schneider, who was killed in an automobile crash. It goes to a player who excels in athletics, scholarship and leadership): **Dustin Pickle**

• **Paul Torgersen Award** (given in honor of former Tech President Paul Torgersen, who has served the university with distinction for three decades in a variety of capacities. The award goes to a player who shows a commitment to hard work and great effort every time he takes the field): **Sean Glennon**

• **Williams–Moss Award** (named in honor of John E. Williams, a former Dean of the College, and Joseph S. Moss, a former player and coach at Tech. The award goes to the player who demonstrates the highest quality of leadership and character): **Brett Warren**

• **Paul Frederick Cobb Award** (this award is given in memory of former Tech player Freddie Cobb, who was awarded the Navy Cross for heroism in Vietnam. It goes to the most spirited player): **Jonas Houseright**

• **Lawrence R. White Award** (this award is given in honor of the late Lawrence White, a former Tech linebacker who excelled in the weight room and was a positive role model for all Tech football players. It is given to the team's most outstanding strength and conditioning athlete): **Devin Perez**

• **Wes Worsham Award** (named for long-time Tech supporter Wes Worsham, this award is given to a player who exceeds expectations and surprises everyone with his performance): **Purnell Sturdivant**

• **Edward G. Ferrell Award** (this award is given in honor of the late Eddie Ferrell, whose hard work, sense of humor, devotion and unselfishness touched thousands of athletes during his 28-year career as a trainer at Tech. It is given to the player who best exemplifies hard work and unselfishness): **Cory Holt**

• **Outstanding Senior Award: Orion Martin**





FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Jimmy Robertson

Tech head coach Frank Beamer recently spent 22 minutes on a teleconference, fielding questions from media hounds the way Macho Harris fields punts.

Of course, Beamer doesn't quite return the answers as briskly as Macho returned those punts during his stellar four-year career. But Beamer steadily provided some answers to several questions, at least as best he could, just a few days before his team began its spring ritual in preparation for the upcoming 2009 season.

Among those launched his way (and his responses) included:

• Who is going to emerge as a back-up QB (Greg Boone excluded)? – "Both Ju-Ju [Clayton] and Marcus [Davis] have the ability to play. Now, how quickly they can play and how quickly you feel, 'Hey, we've got the backup we want' – that remains to be seen. I still think Ju-Ju has a lot of Bryan Randall qualities and Marcus is tall and athletic and played quarterback in high school his senior year. I was impressed with him. I'm eager to see how they play this spring."

• What's the deal at the linebacker spots? – "It's open, but you're talking about some good athletes and good players. It's going to be interesting in the spring to see how those guys come along and become consistent players. But that's a wide open position for us."

• How do you think Ryan Williams will fare? – "We fully expect him to be in the middle of things. The defensive people were impressed with him when he was on the scout team last year. He's certainly got the ability. The learning won't be an issue. We expect him to be fully involved at that position."

# HOKIES HAVE ANSWERS IN PLACE TO SOME QUESTIONS, BUT SPRING PRACTICE WILL ANSWER THE REST

• Who will emerge as the kicker and the returners?

This is the question that intrigues your resident keyboard mule because special teams tend to get excluded in conversations about teams during the spring. And for the third straight year, the Hokies will be introducing a new kicker to the college football scene.

Not that it hasn't worked out. Two years ago, Judson Dunlevy was a machine, and then last season, Dustin Keys drilled a single-season school-record 23 field goals (out of 29 attempts).

Of the contenders for the kicking job, only two – Justin Myer and Tim Pisano – have played in a game. Myer kicked off 62 times a year ago, while Pisano kicked off four times. Neither has attempted a field goal in college. Neither has Matt Waldron, another walk-on, nor obviously incoming freshman Cody Journell from Giles [Va.] High.

Breaking in another new starter at such a critical spot for the Hokies makes Beamer wince, even with such a rich tradition of special team success.

"I wish we weren't having a new kicker every year, but that's the way it is," he said. "The good part about it is that we've got good kickers to work with. I think one of these guys, and maybe a couple, will step up. But they all have the ability to do so and that's the good part."

"I want to see consistency. We've got some good candidates. That's the one thing we've found here at Virginia Tech. A lot of people send tapes in here and we usually have some good kickers in our program. We have some good kickers now. The one who is the most consistent is going to be the one who is our guy."

Analysis of the kicking situation should only be scrutinized slightly more than the return

situation, where Harris, a first-team All-ACC defensive back, excelled as both a punt returner and kick returner. Making the situation murkier, Kenny Lewis is out this spring with an injury and Davon Morgan will only participate in non-contact drills. Both returned a handful of kicks a year ago.

Though he redshirted a year ago, Williams got plenty of reps in practice – and Beamer wants to get his explosive ability on the field. Brandon Dillard, back from injury, and Patrick Terry also will get looks.

For sure, these and other questions have been posed. In some cases, Tech's staff knows the answers.

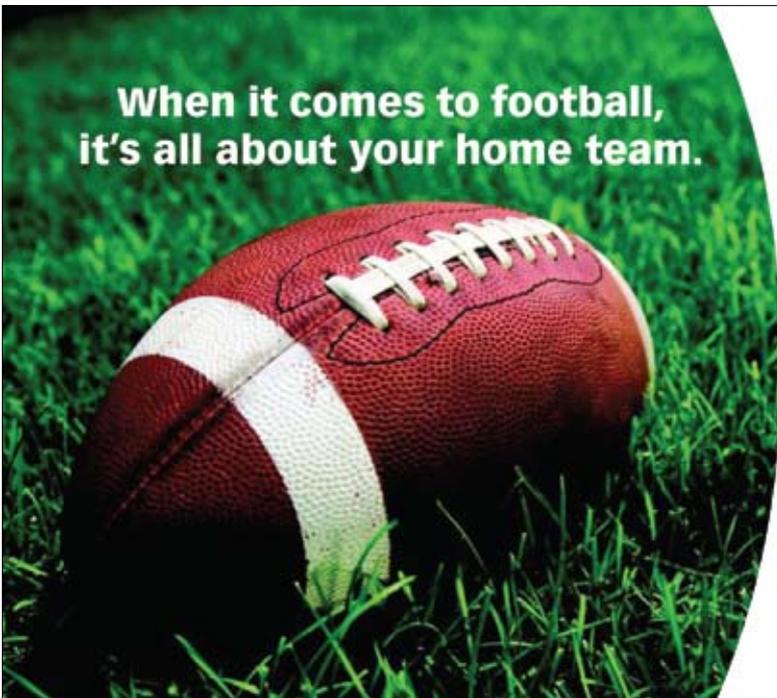
As for the rest, the answers will be forthcoming.

## Carmichael the fastest Hokie

The strength and conditioning staff also tested players in the 40-yard dash at the annual Pro Timing Day held on Tech's indoor track at Rector Field House. Rashad Carmichael, a 5-foot-10, 190-pound cornerback, recorded the fastest time among the players with a time of 4.26 seconds. The rising redshirt junior from Clinton, Md., just edged fellow defensive back Cris Hill, who ran a 4.30.

Here are the top results in the 40-yard dash:

- Rashad Carmichael (4.26)
- Cris Hill (4.30)
- Tony Gregory (4.33)
- Patrick Terry (4.38)
- Dorian Porch (4.43)
- Danny Coale (4.43)
- Lorenzo Williams (4.45)
- Jacob Sykes (4.45)
- Alonzo Tweedy (4.45)
- Tyrod Taylor (4.48) 



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Bill Roth

# TAYLOR NOW THE MAN, BUT TECH'S OFFENSIVE STAFF WANTS TO GET A CLOSE LOOK AT SEVERAL YOUNG PLAYERS THIS SPRING

When Tyrod Taylor takes the field for Virginia Tech's first 2009 spring football practice session, he'll do so with a new role and responsibility for the Hokies. Since his arrival on Tech's campus in August of 2007, the uncertainty regarding Taylor's role on the team has been seemingly in constant flux.

Will he redshirt or will he play?

Will he start or serve as the backup to Sean Glennon?

If he does play, how much?

Well, those days are over. Taylor now gets the keys to the car. And the Hokies' 2009 model looks to be loaded.

Taylor was set to redshirt in 2007, but that all changed on that steamy night at LSU. Same story in 2008, until the season opening loss to East Carolina forced Tech's coaches to make an audible again.

But even though Taylor helped the Hokies win a pair of ACC championships during his first two seasons in Blacksburg, he never could assert himself as the true leader of that offense and of this team.

Taylor handled the competition and anxiety that comes from a two-quarterback position with tremendous poise. On the field, he did the right things. At press conferences, he said the

right things. He respected Glennon's experience and accomplishments and was always cognizant, whether in sprint drills or meetings, that Glennon was the upperclassman. He was always a great teammate in that regard.

So until now, Taylor could never assert himself and take true ownership of Tech's offense.

Until now.

**"He [Tyrod Taylor] doesn't have to worry about the senior quarterback [Glennon] anymore. He doesn't have to worry about 'Is he the starter? Is he not? Is it dual quarterback?' He doesn't have to worry about the youth part of it. He fully understands that, right now, he's assuming the role that he's the leader. And it's a good time for him to assume that role on this football team." – offensive coordinator Bryan Stinespring**

"He doesn't have to worry about the senior quarterback [Glennon] anymore," offensive coordinator Bryan Stinespring said. "He doesn't have to worry about 'Is he the starter? Is he not? Is it dual QB?' He doesn't have to worry about the youth part of it. He fully understands that, right now, he's assuming the role that he's the leader. And it's a good time for him to assume that role on this football team."

Going back to January, it's been a different Taylor inside the Merryman Center. He's played two seasons of college ball, played in two ACC championship games and two

Orange Bowls, but now, coaches sense he's ready to step his game up to a much higher level.

"Tyrod is excited about this spring," Stinespring said. "His whole demeanor and approach to this spring. In the weight room, he set a couple of records. He's stepped it up there. At the 6 a.m. workouts, he's been setting the tempo. He's been a leader. It's the first

time he's stepped on the field and it's his offense. You can see the leadership come to the forefront. You can see it in everything we do."

Taylor must improve, particularly in the passing game.

He's thrown only seven career touchdowns and has 10 interceptions. Odds are those numbers will look a lot different during the second half of his Tech career.

And while Taylor's development appears to be on track, a similar focus must be made on the backup quarterback position.

"It's a huge spring at that position," Stinespring said.

The three candidates?

### JU-JU CLAYTON:

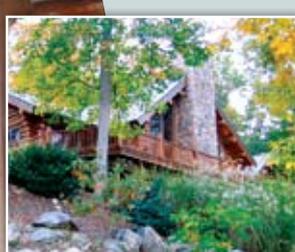
"He's a guy who's had the most work at that spot," Stinespring said. "He scrimmaged on Mondays last year during the season, and



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from day one, we saw significant improvement from him. He's a headsy guy, with a lot of poise for a young guy. And that's very important. We're anxious to see what he can carry over from last fall, how much further he can go this spring from getting a good grasp on the offense and take what he's learned in the classroom."

**MARCUS DAVIS:**

"Marcus is the guy who we probably have the least information on," Stinespring said.

"He wasn't able to practice in the fall because of an injury. We've seen enough of him in other areas dating back to high school, just his size and athleticism.

"There are more unknowns going into this process, more than we've ever had because of the amount of info we have going into spring. We'll have a lot more coming out of spring, so much more. Right now, with Marcus and Ju-Ju, we need to find out their knowledge of the

game, see them throw, see how they manage a game. It's all grass roots right now."

**GREG BOONE:**

"We're going to get him more involved," Stinespring said. "Continue to evolve in the packages he's already in. He'll take reps at QB. Take some snaps. We'll dabble in that."

But more, the Hokies need to get more information on Clayton and Davis and that fact-finding process began on April 1.

Stinespring pointed out four other players to really watch on offense this spring: Greg Nosal, Beau Warren, Chris Drager and Ryan Williams.

"It's a big spring for Greg Nosal," Stinespring said. "His opportunity in the offensive line, moving down from tight end, is big. If he can get out and provide depth where he can play to give depth and even contend, that's a big plus."

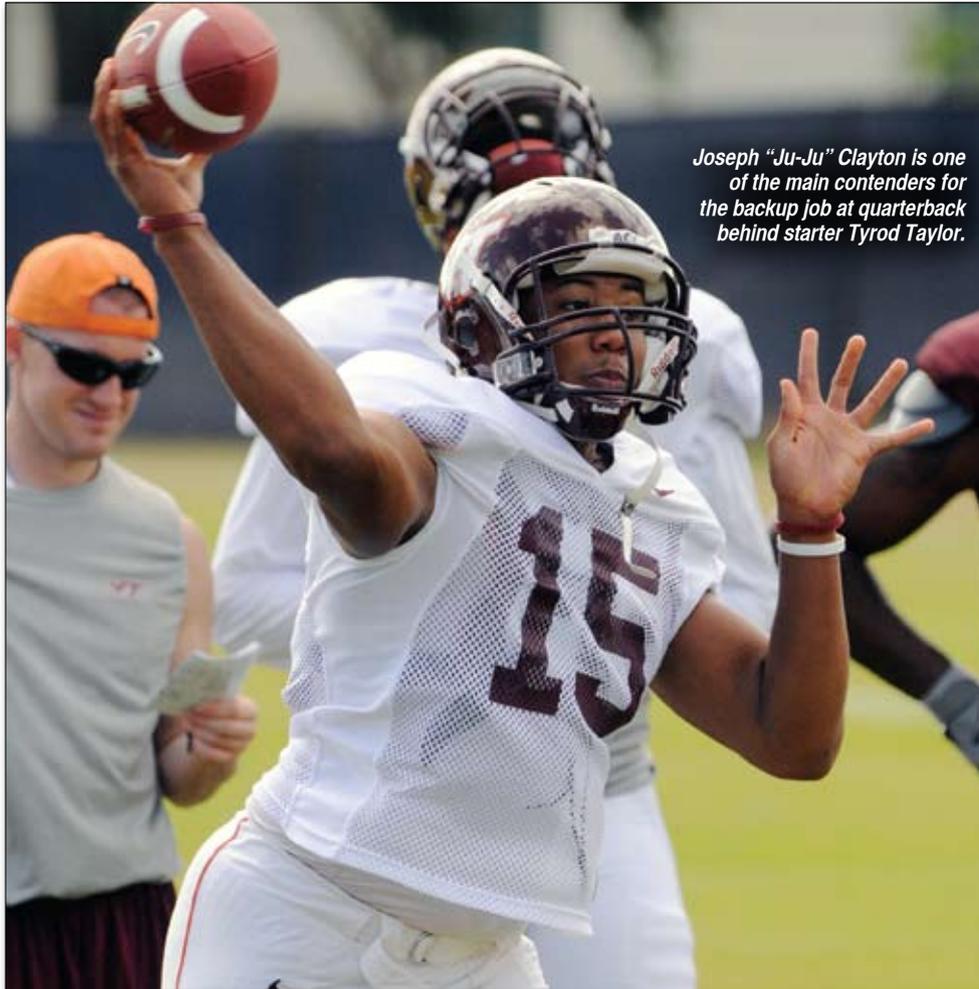
Last year, if you look closely, the Hokies had a significant drop-off in second-half offensive stats in hot or humid games (ECU, FSU, Miami). Getting additional depth on the offensive line is absolutely critical for this year. For the first time in a while, it looks like the Hokies might have some depth on their offensive line and Nosal is a key in that regard.

"For Beau Warren at center, the leadership at that position is very important," Stinespring said. "We'll be watching that."

Stinespring said to keep an eye on Drager, who has a chance to put himself in a bigger role this year because of the injury to André Smith, and on tailback Ryan Williams "who has had a tremendous offseason."

Four offensive players – lineman Sergio Render, tailback Kenny Lewis, receiver Randall Dunn and Smith – will miss spring ball, but it's still a big spring for Tech.

Spring practice isn't long, but we'll have a sense of the direction of the 2009 Hokies in the coming few weeks. 



*Joseph "Ju-Ju" Clayton is one of the main contenders for the backup job at quarterback behind starter Tyrod Taylor.*



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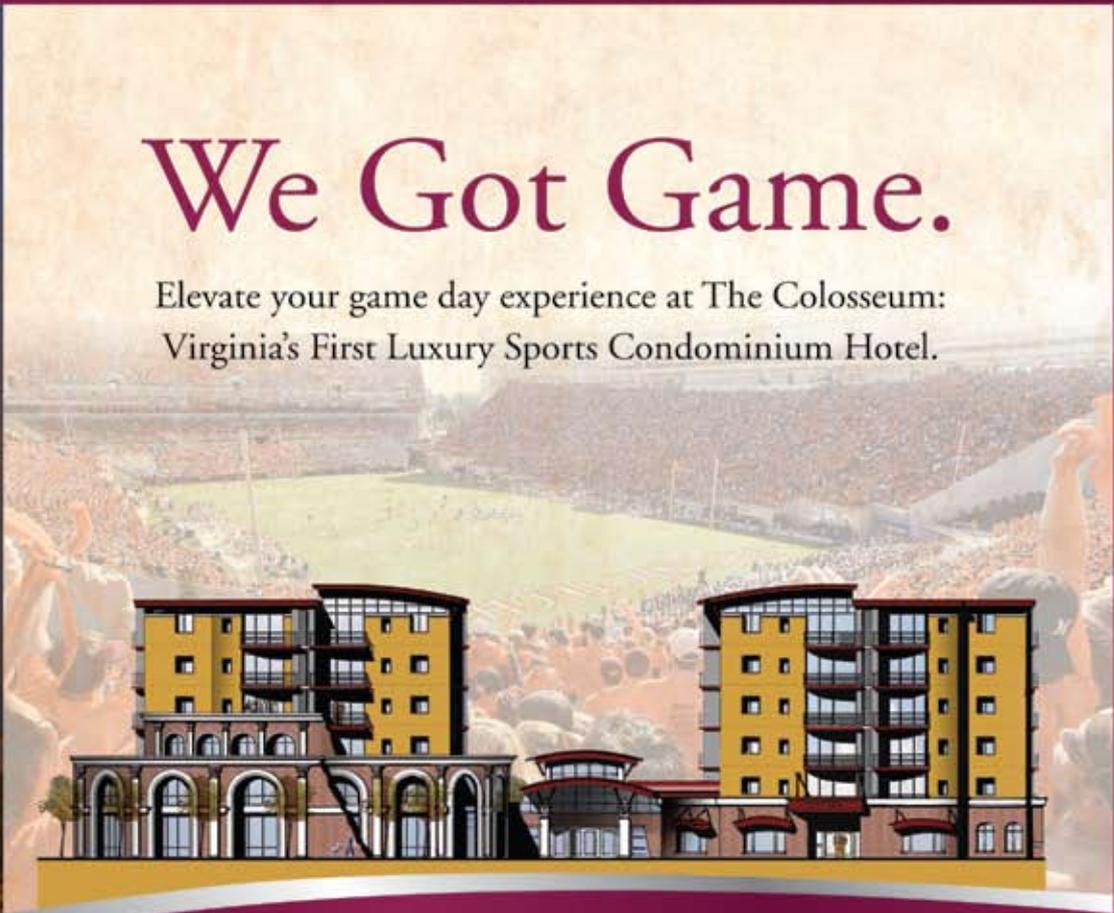
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# PRACTICE TIME HEAVILY REGULATED BY THE NCAA

By Jimmy Robertson

Allen Iverson once made it rather clear that he was not a fan of practice.

If he still played in college, he would not have to worry about extended practices.

The NCAA heavily regulates practice time, and this is the focus of this month's Compliance Corner. Over 20 years ago, the NCAA implemented policies that placed strict limits on the amount of time a team can practice. The impetus behind this was simple.

"NCAA member schools want to make sure student-athletes receive plenty of time to concentrate on academics," Tech's assistant director of compliance Bert Locklin said. "This is our way of making sure schools are placing an emphasis on academics and not forcing the student-athletes to practice too many hours."

The NCAA rules don't define "practice" *per se*, but limit the amount of "countable athletically related activities," which are defined as "any required meeting, activity or instruction involving sports-related information and having an athletics purpose, held for one or more student-athletes at the direction of, or supervised by, any member or members of an institution's coaching staff."

NCAA regulations have limited both the number of hours per day and per week that a student-athlete may engage in athletically related activities. During the season, a student-athlete may practice no longer than four hours per day and no more than 20 hours per week – which is defined as seven consecutive days. Also, these rules mandate at least one day off per week. The day off can be any day of the week and may change from week to week. Also, a day off is not required prior to the start of classes, nor during official vacation periods (e.g. Christmas or Spring Break).

Here are some examples of what counts and doesn't count toward the student-athletes' daily/weekly limits:

## Activities that count toward the daily/weekly limits

1. Practice
2. Conditioning
3. Weight training
4. Discussion or review of game film
5. Skill or technique instruction
6. Strategy sessions
7. Most team meetings
8. Competition day (counts as three hours)

## Activities that do NOT count toward the daily/weekly limits

1. Voluntary activities (no coach present)
2. Voluntary conditioning/weights
3. Training room treatment (taping, etc.)
4. Rehabilitation activities
5. Travel to and from a competition site
6. Serving as a student host
7. Academic meetings, study hall, etc.
8. Student Life or Compliance meetings

"These regulations are in place to protect the student-athletes," Locklin said. "They help provide much-needed balance to their days, weeks and seasons. Without some sort of baseline rules, there could be coaches who would monopolize the student-athletes' time and make it difficult for them to succeed academically."

It's worth noting that practices may not be conducted at any time following a competition except between contests, rounds or events during a multi-day or multi-event competition. Exceptions to this include softball and baseball doubleheaders, and rounds of golf in a multi-day tournament.

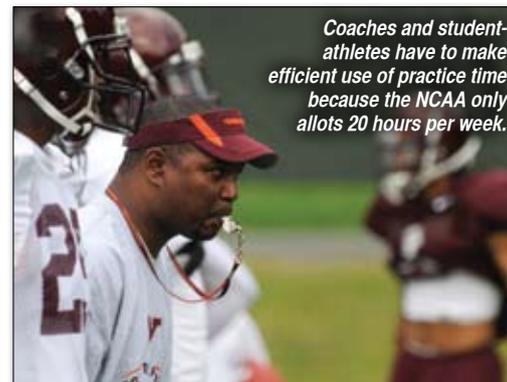
While the NCAA manual limits activity during the season, it allows for the opportunity for skill instruction during a particular sport's offseason. Each sport follows a specific timetable, with the exception of football, which does not get skill instruction time (but does get 15 spring practices).

More than four student-athletes from the team may be involved in skill-related instruction with their coaches from Sept. 15 through April 15. Prior to Sept. 15 and after April 15, no more than four student-athletes from the same team may be involved in skill-related instruction with their coach or coaches at any one time in any facility.

Each athletics department monitors practice hours for each sport. At Tech, the process includes the coaches turning in daily/weekly logs of athletically related activities, including practice and competition. These logs are then signed off by a student-athlete who has been chosen to represent that team as a part of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). Once a student-athlete has attested to the accuracy of the recording, the compliance office reviews the logs and keeps them on file.

"The monitoring system here at Virginia Tech is designed to allow the student-athletes a feeling of autonomy from the coaching staffs when signing off their schedules," Locklin said. "By using SAAC as a forum in which to confirm these hours, the student-athletes are able to address any concerns through SAAC."

In thinking about all this, Iverson could only wish such policies extended to the NBA as well. 



*Coaches and student-athletes have to make efficient use of practice time because the NCAA only allots 20 hours per week.*



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# CURTAIN FALLS ON HOKIES' 2008-09 SEASON WITH NIT LOSS TO BAYLOR

By Jimmy Robertson



*Despite the early tip-off, Tech's fans showed up in full force. But Tech couldn't extend its season, falling to the Bears 84-66 in the second round of the NIT.*

The Virginia Tech Hokies' 2009 National Invitation Tournament run came to an abrupt end courtesy of the Baylor Bears.

And so, too, did the Hokies' 2008-09 season.

A horrible shooting performance turned out to be Tech's undoing, as the Hokies fell 84-66 to the Bears in a second-round NIT game played March 21 at Cassell Coliseum. With the loss, Tech closed out its season with a 19-15 record. The Hokies lost for just the second time in an NIT game played at Cassell Coliseum (now 11-2 all time).

The Bears never trailed, jumping out to a 22-5 lead in the first 12 minutes of the game in part because the Hokies made just one of their first 17 attempts from the floor against the Bears' 2-3 zone.

In the second half, Baylor led by as many as 28. An 18-3 run, capped by two A.D. Vassallo free throws, got the Hokies to within 65-52, and after a dunk by Baylor's Kevin Rogers made the score 67-52, Tech's Malcolm Delaney canned a 3-pointer to cut the lead to 12 with 4:57 remaining.

But Curtis Jerrells hit two free throws and Henry Dugat drained a 3-pointer from the corner on back-to-back Baylor possessions to push the lead to 17, and the Bears weren't threatened again.

"Our inability to make a shot early really affected our ability to defend," Virginia Tech coach Seth Greenberg said. "We just stopped checking people. The basket got big for them

and they just physically overpowered us up front. We have to get stops to be successful, so that's disappointing."

Rogers and Jerrells paced six Baylor players in double figures with 16 points each. The two seniors combined to hit 11-of-17 from the floor. The Bears shot 61.7 percent for the game, the best against the Hokies this season. They also hit 10-of-21 from beyond the 3-point arc.

Delaney led the Hokies with 14 points and 10 assists – tying his career high – and Vassallo finished with 12. But the two of them combined to go 8-for-34 from the floor.

Tech shot just 32.4 percent – its second-worst performance of the season.

The bitter loss marked the end of the Hokies' third consecutive postseason run – a run accomplished only one other time in Tech history (the Hokies made the postseason five straight years from 1982-86). Despite that accomplishment, Tech's current crop of players felt a sense of emptiness following the game.

"We did OK, but we didn't play how I think we could play," Delaney said. "We've got to go at it hard in the offseason and try to eliminate those bumps in the road and try to keep everyone healthy going into the season. Then we need to eliminate all the crazy stuff that gets people taken out of their games.

"Hopefully, we can stay together as a team the whole season and get some confidence at the beginning of the year. Hopefully, those losses in the big tournaments we play in early in the year, we can turn into wins and that

will lead to some wins in the second half of the season."

"We had a good year, not a great year," Greenberg said. "We've got to get better. Coaches and players – everyone."

As the Hokies head into the offseason, here are a few of the things that Greenberg may or will be addressing:

- **Replacing Vassallo** – The Tech forward closed out his career as the school's fifth all-time leading scorer and was the "big" part of the "Big Three" (he, Delaney and Jeff Allen). Vassallo averaged 19.1 points and nearly 37 minutes per game.

Replacing Vassallo's production probably goes to the heart of an even bigger issue. The Hokies need a little more balanced scoring across the board. In addition to Vassallo, Delaney and Allen both averaged in double figures in scoring. But of the remainder of the roster, only J.T. Thompson averaged more than five points per game.

"Hopefully, next year some guys will step up, even the freshmen coming in," Thompson said. "Hopefully, they'll be able to put a little in to fill his [Vassallo's] spot. Those are some big shoes to fill.

"What we're hoping is that it won't be the 'Big Three.' Hopefully, it'll be everyone out there giving a little. This year, early in the year, when one of them wasn't doing too well, then the whole team wasn't. So hopefully, everyone can give us something instead of it being just the Big Three."

• **What to do with Delaney** – Greenberg may be inclined to move Delaney to the shooting guard spot on a permanent basis to take advantage of his scoring abilities. To do that, Hank Thorns needs to progress with his game as a point guard. Thorns played much better the latter half of the season as a ball handler and passer, dishing out 52 assists compared to 21 turnovers in the final 19 games. But he needs to work on his shooting – he shot less than 30 percent from the floor this season.

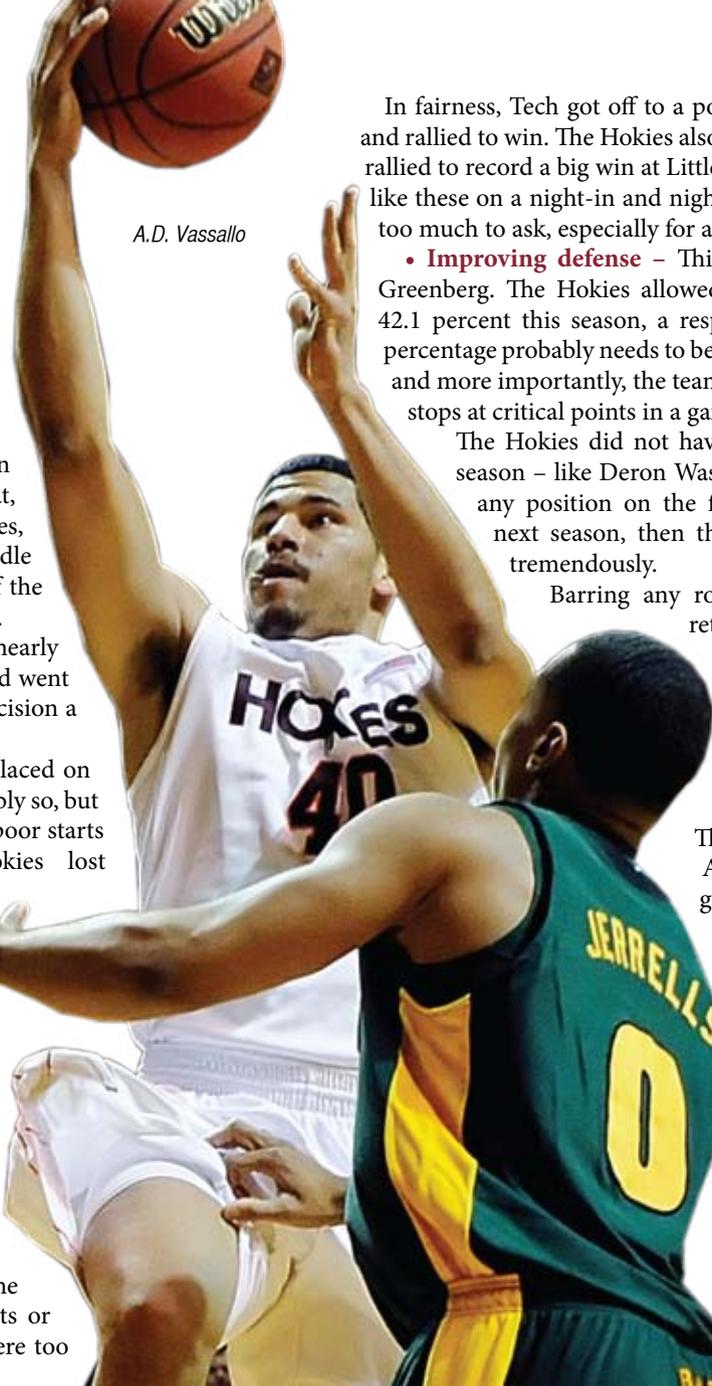
As for Delaney, he got most of the attention from the opposing team's defense, and that, combined with his point guard responsibilities, might have been too much for him to handle down the stretch. In the final eight games of the season, he shot just 28 percent from the floor.

Of course, on the flip side, he averaged nearly four assists per game the final four games and went into double figures twice. That makes the decision a hard one for Greenberg.

• **Better starts** – A lot of emphasis gets placed on what happens at the end of games and justifiably so, but Tech found itself victimized by some rather poor starts the final six weeks of the season. The Hokies lost nine games starting from Jan. 31 to the end of the season, and in five of those, they got off to poor starts, trailing by at least seven points 15 minutes into the game. Here's a sampling:

Date	Opponent	Trailing by
Jan. 31	at BC	18-11
Feb. 21	FSU	25-11
Feb. 28	Duke	20-5
March 8	at FSU	24-10
March 21	Baylor	22-5

With the exception of the Baylor game, the Hokies did cut these deficits to a few points or took the lead. But in the end, the deficits were too much to overcome.



A.D. Vassallo

In fairness, Tech got off to a poor start against N.C. State and rallied to win. The Hokies also trailed Clemson early and rallied to record a big win at Littlejohn Coliseum. But rallies like these on a night-in and night-out basis in the ACC are too much to ask, especially for a young team.

• **Improving defense** – This may be the big one for Greenberg. The Hokies allowed opponents to shoot just 42.1 percent this season, a respectable number. But that percentage probably needs to be below 40 for more success, and more importantly, the team needs to find a way to get stops at critical points in a game.

The Hokies did not have a defensive stopper this season – like Deron Washington, who could guard any position on the floor. If someone emerges next season, then that would help this group tremendously.

Barring any roster attrition, the Hokies return three starters and nine other regulars who saw minutes this past season. They do have a nice nucleus returning.

But as most know, that doesn't equate to wins. There is improving to do. As Greenberg said, "We've got to get better."

### Vassallo's swan song

Vassallo, the senior from Toa Baja, Puerto Rico, did not go out the way in which he wanted – with an NIT championship. He suffered a rough game in the Hokies' loss to Baylor, scoring just 12 points and hitting only 4-of-17 from the floor, including 2-of-10 from beyond



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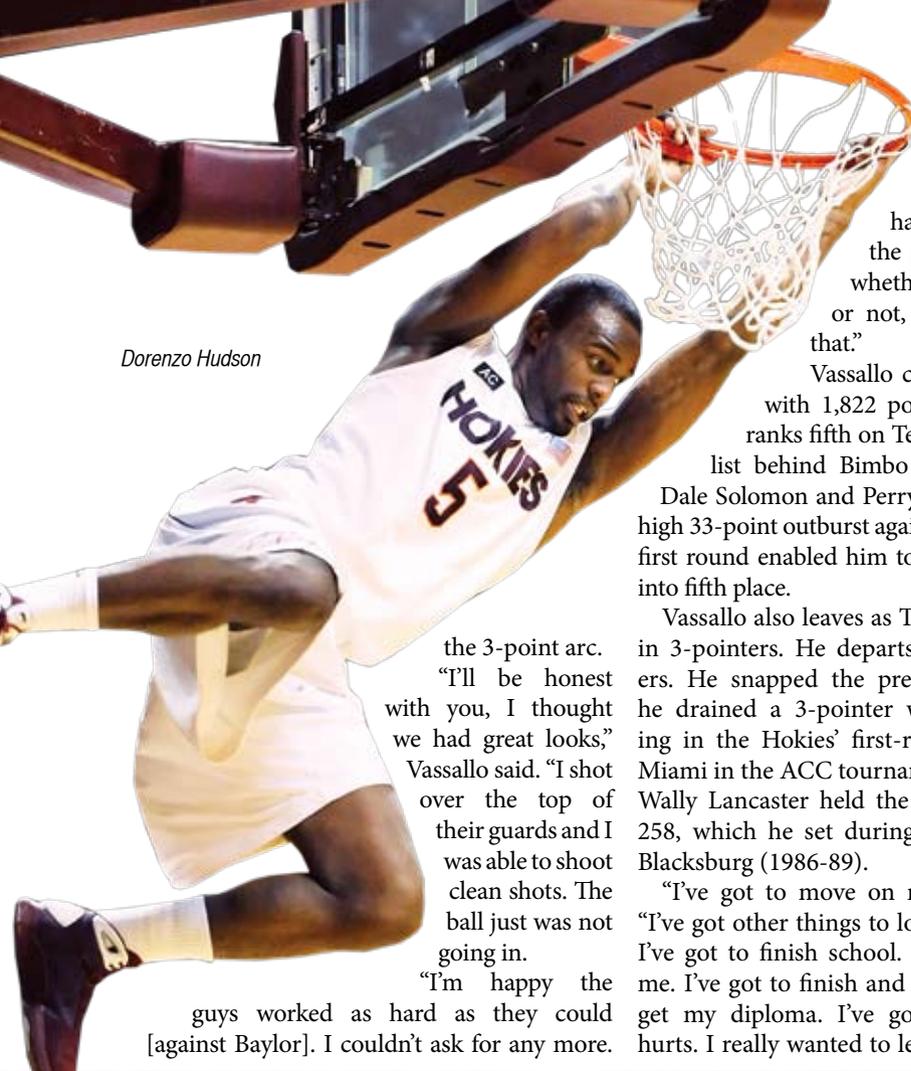
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Dorenzo Hudson

They pressed and were running around all over the place trying to make something happen, trying to win the game. Regardless of whether they did it for me or not, I'm appreciative of that."

Vassallo closed out his career with 1,822 points – a figure that ranks fifth on Tech's all-time scoring list behind Bimbo Coles, Dell Curry, Dale Solomon and Perry Young. His career-high 33-point outburst against Duquesne in the first round enabled him to pass Allan Bristow into fifth place.

Vassallo also leaves as Tech's all-time leader in 3-pointers. He departs with 267 3-pointers. He snapped the previous record when he drained a 3-pointer with 19:40 remaining in the Hokies' first-round game against Miami in the ACC tournament. Former guard Wally Lancaster held the previous record of 258, which he set during his three years in Blacksburg (1986-89).

"I've got to move on now," Vassallo said. "I've got other things to look forward to now. I've got to finish school. That's important to me. I've got to finish and try to graduate and get my diploma. I've got workouts. But it hurts. I really wanted to leave Tech winning a

championship and making my mark. But that couldn't happen."

Vassallo also departs with six career double-doubles, including three this season. Two of those came in the Hokies' final three games when he scored 26 points and grabbed 10 rebounds – despite being in foul trouble for a chunk of the game – in the Hokies' near upset of North Carolina in the quarterfinals of the ACC tournament and his 33-point, 12-rebound performance against Duquesne in the NIT.

"I know in the clutch, if he's got an open shot, he's going to knock it down," Delaney said of Vassallo. "He's one of the toughest players to defend in the ACC. He's a leader on the court. The young guys coming in next year, they could have learned some stuff from him."

### Tech-Duquesne – a game for the ages

In the first round of the NIT, Tech played Duquesne at Cassell Coliseum in a battle of old Atlantic 10 Conference foes, and the game turned out to be an epic.

The Hokies outlasted the Dukes 116-108 in double overtime, getting a career-high 33 points from Vassallo and staving off a great performance from Duke's guard Aaron Jackson.

"All I can say is, 'Wow!'" Greenberg said. "I've been doing this 32 years and I've

the 3-point arc. "I'll be honest with you, I thought we had great looks," Vassallo said. "I shot over the top of their guards and I was able to shoot clean shots. The ball just was not going in.

"I'm happy the guys worked as hard as they could [against Baylor]. I couldn't ask for any more.

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never played in a game like that.”

The Hokies led by as many as 13 with seven minutes to go in regulation, but the Dukes used a 17-4 run to tie the game and actually took a 78-76 lead after Melquan Bolding hit the first of two free throws with 28.6 seconds remaining in regulation. But Vassallo hit a floater in the lane with 13.1 seconds to go to tie the game at 78.

On the final possession of regulation, Duquesne's Eric Evans drove into the lane. But his contested lay-up came up well short, sending the game into overtime.

The Hokies appeared to have the game under control in the first overtime, leading by six with under a minute to go. But the Dukes rallied again and tied the game at 94 on Jackson's lay-up with less than two seconds to go.

In the second overtime, Vassallo scored 10 points and the Hokies made all 10 of their free-throw attempts in the final 1:18 to put the game away.

Jackson scored a career-high 46 points – the most ever by a Tech opponent at Cassell and the second-most ever against a Tech team. He hit 15-of-25 from the floor, including 8-of-13 from beyond the 3-point arc. He also hit 8-of-9 from the free-throw line and dished out four assists.

His performance was the fourth-best single-game performance in Duquesne history.

“I told him it was incredible the way he played,” said Greenberg, who stopped Jackson after he fouled out with 23 seconds left in the second overtime and shook his hand. “He’s a fierce competitor. His toughness and competitive spirit impressed me, but it didn’t surprise me. I watched their last four games and that guy doesn’t quit. He is that good.”

The 116 points were tied for the ninth most in Tech history and the most since the Hokies put up 141 points against Southern Miss in a 141-133 double-overtime win on Feb. 6, 1988.

## Delaney knocks off some records

By hitting 14-of-15 from the free-throw line in the Hokies’ first-round win over Miami in the ACC tournament, Malcolm Delaney set the Tech single-season record for free throws made. The 14 made free throws gave him 205 on the season at that point, snapping the previous mark of 200 set by Bimbo Coles during the 1987-88 campaign. Delaney finished the season with 225 made free throws.

He now has made 310 free throws and could break Coles’ career record of 593 free throws by the time he departs from Tech. His current 84.5 career free-throw percentage would also be an all-time mark at Tech if he maintains it.

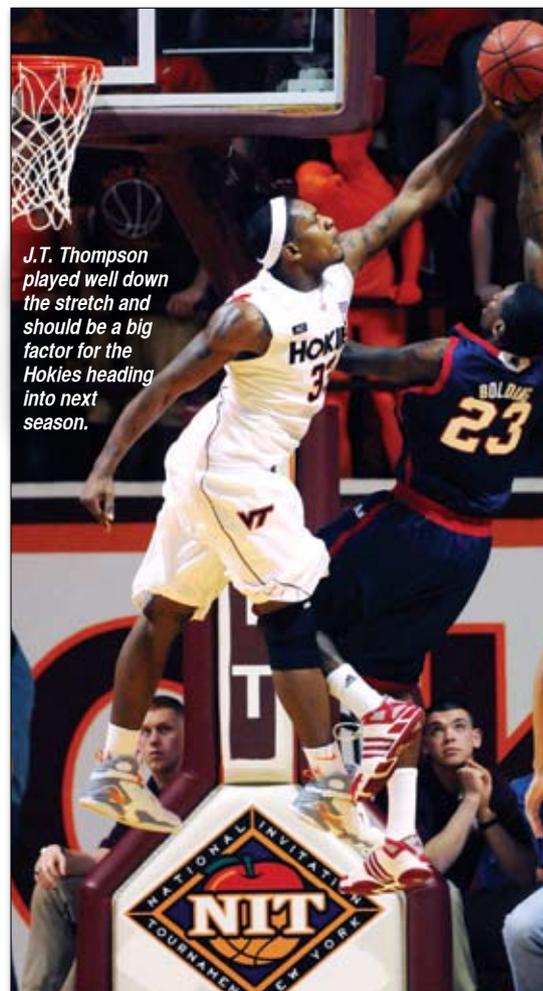
The sophomore from Baltimore also set the Tech tournament record for assists in a game. He dished out eight assists against Miami, tying his career high and breaking the Tech tournament record of six held by former guard Zabian Dowdell, who dished out six in a win over Wake Forest in the 2007 quarterfinals.

He broke that record in Tech’s next game. Against North Carolina in the quarterfinals, Delaney dished out a career-high 10 assists. He dished out another 10 assists in the Hokies’ loss to Baylor.

In the final four games of the season, Delaney dished out 37 assists as compared to just 11 turnovers.

## Thompson strong down the stretch

J.T. Thompson played down the stretch the way that many anticipated him playing the entire season. He scored a career-high 21 points in Tech’s win over Duquesne, hitting 9-of-12 from the floor, and he averaged 10.9 points per game the final seven games of the season. He shot 66 percent from the floor in that span.



*J.T. Thompson played well down the stretch and should be a big factor for the Hokies heading into next season.*

His was the surprise performance for the Hokies in the ACC tournament when he played two tremendous games off the bench. Against Miami, the sophomore from Monroe, N.C., scored 12 points and grabbed eight rebounds in 23 minutes. He connected on all five of his shot attempts.

“I think we’re better when I give a little more,” Thompson said. “Today [after the Miami game], I was able to score and grab some rebounds. It doesn’t matter if I start or



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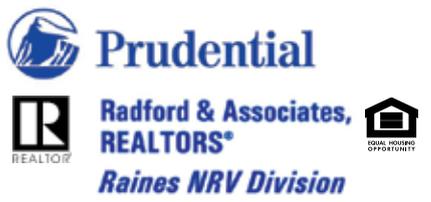
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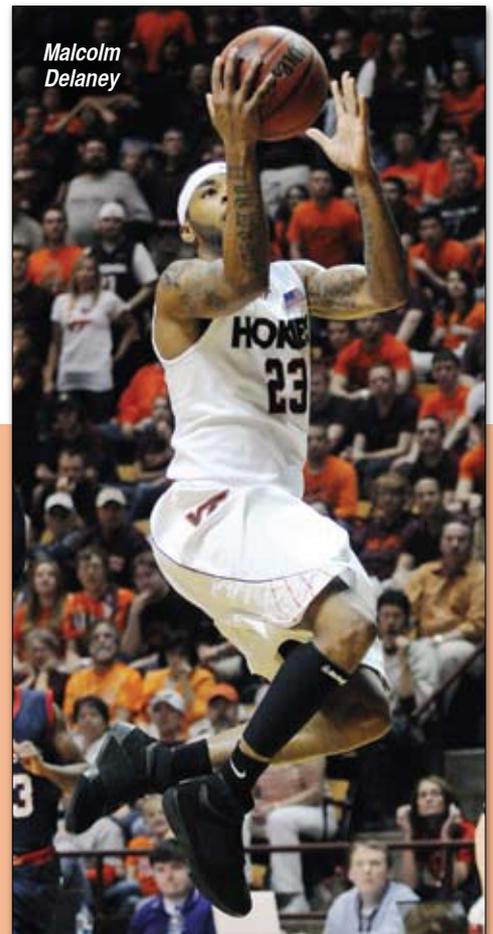
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come off the bench, as long as I'm giving the team something."

"He was the energizer bunny," Greenberg said. "He gave us great toughness today. He was flying around."

"The three keys to the game were we did a very good job on [Jack] McClinton, we knew they were going to open in a zone and we were poised against the zone early on, and J.T. gave us an energy off the bench."

Against North Carolina, he scored nine points and grabbed four rebounds in 24 minutes. He connected on 4-of-6 from the floor. 



Malcolm Delaney

## DELANEY, VASSALLO EARN ALL-ACC HONORS

Vassallo and Delaney received recognition for their tremendous seasons by earning a spot on the All-ACC team as selected by the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association. Both made the third team. Vassallo earned second-team honors in 2007, while Delaney made the squad for the first time. Here's a look at all the teams:

### ALL-ACC TEAMS

(first-team vote = 3 points;  
 second-team vote = 2 points;  
 third-team vote = 1 point)

#### FIRST TEAM (POINTS)

Tyler Hansbrough, Sr., North Carolina\* (228)  
 Toney Douglas, Sr., Florida State (226)  
 Ty Lawson, Jr., North Carolina (224)  
 Gerald Henderson, Jr., Duke (210)  
 Jack McClinton, Sr., Miami (188)  
 \*unanimous 1st team

#### SECOND TEAM (POINTS)

Jeff Teague, Soph., Wake Forest (185)  
 Trevor Booker, Jr., Clemson (156)  
 Tyrese Rice, Sr., Boston College (151)  
 Kyle Singler, Soph., Duke (128)  
 Greivis Vasquez, Jr., Maryland (116)

#### THIRD TEAM (POINTS)

James Johnson, Soph., Wake Forest (100)  
 Malcolm Delaney, Soph., Virginia Tech (83)  
 A.D. Vassallo, Sr., Virginia Tech (81)  
 Danny Green, Sr., North Carolina (48)  
 Gani Lawal, Soph., Georgia Tech (46)

#### HONORABLE MENTION (15+ POINTS)

Wayne Ellington, Jr., North Carolina (41)  
 K.C. Rivers, Sr., Clemson (33)  
 Sylven Landesberg, Fr., Virginia (15)

#### ALL-FRESHMAN TEAM

\*Sylven Landesberg, Virginia (76)  
 \*Al-Farouq Aminu, Wake Forest (76)  
 Iman Shumpert, Georgia Tech (70)  
 Solomon Alabi, Florida State (59)  
 Ed Davis, North Carolina (55)  
 \*unanimous

#### HONORABLE MENTION

Chris Singleton, Florida State (21)

#### ALL-DEFENSIVE TEAM

Trevor Booker, Clemson (67)  
 Toney Douglas, Florida State (67)  
 Solomon Alabi, Florida State (53)  
 Danny Green, North Carolina (28)  
 L.D. Williams, Wake Forest (26)

#### HONORABLE MENTION

Ty Lawson, North Carolina (20)  
 Gani Lawal, Georgia Tech (17)  
 Courtney Fells, North Carolina State (16)  
 Gerald Henderson, Duke (15)

#### PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Ty Lawson, North Carolina (31)  
 (Receiving 5 or more votes) – Toney Douglas, Florida State (27); Tyler Hansbrough, North Carolina (13)

#### COACH OF THE YEAR

Leonard Hamilton, Florida State (55)  
 (Receiving votes) – Al Skinner, Boston College (10); Dino Gaudio, Wake Forest (6); Oliver Purnell, Clemson (2); Roy Williams, North Carolina (2); Gary Williams, Maryland (1)

#### DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Toney Douglas, Florida State (53)  
 (Receiving 5 or more votes) – Trevor Booker, Clemson (15)

#### ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Sylven Landesberg, Virginia (55)  
 (Receiving 5 or more votes) – Al-Farouq Aminu, Wake Forest (20)

# TECH'S RECRUITING CLASS CLOSES PREP CAREERS AND GEARS UP FOR ACC PLAY

By Jimmy Robertson

*Cadarian Raines, a 6-8 power forward from Petersburg, Va., averaged nearly 16 points and 10 rebounds as a senior this past season.*

*Photo courtesy of The Richmond Times-Dispatch*

A year ago, Tech fans wondered how the basketball program would fare with the departure of versatile superstar Deron Washington.

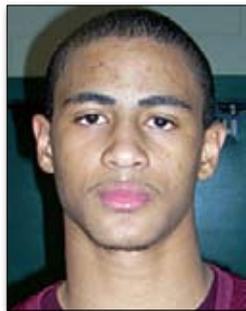
Another postseason berth simply answered that question.

Now, they wonder how Tech's program will get along without 20-point-per-game scorer and All-ACC selection A.D. Vassallo.

The answer to that question may lie in how well Tech coach Seth Greenberg's talented recruiting class adjusts to ACC competition. Given how most of them fared during their senior season, their transition may be a smooth one.

Of Tech's four fall signees, three of them guided their teams into their respective state's final four. The fourth missed most of the season with a broken leg, but his team, too, made the final four of the state playoffs.

Here is a look at how the Hokies' recruits fared this past season:



## MANNY ATKINS

Atkins, a 6-foot-7, 200-pound wing player from Stone Mountain, Ga., could be the heir apparent to Vassallo. Atkins averaged nearly 27 points and 11 rebounds per game in leading Tucker High to a 24-9 record.

"I played him at the 3 [small forward] and the 4 [power forward], and even some 5 [center]," Tucker High coach James Hartry said. "He did everything for us. But I think he's probably a 2 or 3 in college. He can handle the ball well and he can shoot. He's a lights-out shooter. That's what he's known for. That's his thing."

Atkins led Tucker High to the Class

AAAA championship game played in early March at Gwinnett Arena. His team lost to a powerful Miller Grove squad 59-31, a game in which he scored 16 points.

He got his team there, though. In the semifinals against Bainbridge, he poured in 28, hitting 10-of-12 from the free-throw line. In the quarterfinals against Hillgrove, he also scored 28 points and grabbed nine boards.

Atkins recently participated in the Georgia Athletic Coaches Association North-South All-Star Game in Savannah, Ga. He scored 22 points in that game to pace the North team, which lost 86-81.

Hartry has coached some great players during his 10-year tenure at Tucker High. Jeremy Simmons is playing for Bobby Cremins at the College of Charleston, while Marshon Brooks is currently at Providence and Cameron Tatum is at Tennessee.

But Atkins, who guided Tucker to the Class AAAA championship as a sophomore, ranks as his best.

"Across the board, he's the best I've ever coached," Hartry said. "He's got a 3.7 grade-point average, he's coachable, he's on time, he's a leader and he's a good kid. You can't ask for anything more."



## ERICK GREEN

Green, a 6-2, 180-pound point guard from Winchester, Va., was the only Tech recruit to win a state championship

this past fall, guiding Paul VI to the Virginia Independent School Division I championship. Paul VI beat Blue Ridge, 61-47, in the title game and Green led the way with 23 points.

Green transferred to Paul VI following his junior season at Millbrook High in Winchester, Va. – a season in which he guided Millbrook to the Group AA title and averaged 18.5 points, three rebounds and 2.9 assists per game, earning Northwestern District and Region II player of the year honors in the process.

"This was a really productive year for Erick," said Paul VI head coach Glenn Farello, who has sent 40 players to Division I schools. "He came in wanting to play against a higher level of competition and it was a positive experience for him. He furthered his talents as a player. He learned that you have to grind and

you have to do it on a daily basis. I think he met every expectation we had for him.”

Green got better and better as the season went along. He scored 20 or more points in Paul VI's final five games. He also scored 23 points in a win over Christchurch in the semifinals, and for all his work, he earned state tournament most valuable player honors.

Green guided his team to a 19-15 record this season. He averaged 16.8 points and six assists per game on his way to earning first-team All-WCAC honors this past season.

“He's a pure point guard,” Farello said, noting that Green finished with a 5-to-1 assists-to-turnover ratio. “He can score, but he's more of a facilitator. He gets everyone involved. He's got a college-level mid-range game and he can shoot the 3. But he'd rather pass than shoot.”

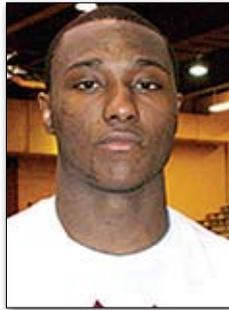
Green faced some of the nation's best competition this past season. For example, he played head-to-head against Maalik Wayns out of Philadelphia's Roman Catholic High. Wayns was rated one of the best point guard prospects in the nation and signed with Villanova.

“One of the areas where I was really pleased with Erick was his defense,” Farello said. “He played against Maalik and I thought he'd have trouble with him because Maalik is a very strong point guard. But Erick did an admirable job. He showed me he was capable of defending people.”

“I often compare him to Delonte West, who's in the NBA [with the Cleveland Cavaliers]. Erick is long and can keep people in front of him. He understands angles. I knew he could handle the ball and pass it and that he would play under control, but the one piece of his game that exceeded my expectations was his ability to defend.”

“I think he's really going to fit into the

puzzle there [at Tech]. He's the consummate team player and he plays within himself. He'll get the ball where it needs to go. He's unselfish and that's going to make things easier for him.”



## CADARIAN RAINES

Raines, a 6-8, 210-pound forward from Petersburg, Va., is the true post presence in this class, and he dominated inside for Petersburg High this season, leading the team to the Group AAA semifinals.

Petersburg rolled to a 29-0 record before falling to King's Fork 73-67 in the semis. Raines, saddled with foul trouble, scored just seven points in the game.

Yet for the season, he averaged 15.8 points, 9.8 rebounds, 3.8 blocks and 1.8 assists per game. His best scoring game came against Henrico during the Central Region semifinals when he poured in 27 points and hit 12 of 14 shots.

“He had a very good year and his numbers don't really show what type of year he had,” Petersburg coach Bill Lawson said. “Out of 31 games, there were probably 15 or 16 in which he didn't play in the fourth quarter.”

“We played him at center, but I think he'll be a power forward at that level. His sophomore and junior years, he was primarily a shot blocker. But he became more of an offensive player this year. He's athletic and runs the court well. He knows how to finish inside. He's improved his face-up game. He can go out to the foul line extended.”

Raines shot 64 percent from the floor this season, but only 42 percent from the

free-throw line. He earned Central District player of the year honors for the second straight year. As a junior, he averaged 14.3 points, 10.4 rebounds and 5.8 blocks per game on his way to earning co-player of the year honors.

“I think the big thing for him is getting bigger,” Lawson said. “The ACC is a physical league and he's going to need to get bigger and stronger for that level. But he's got the body to do it and I'm confident that he can.”



## BEN BOGGS

Boggs, a 6-3 combo guard from Roanoke, Va., suffered the worst of luck this season when he broke two bones in his leg in Hidden

Valley High's second game of the season. Boggs drove the baseline in a game against Northside High and went up for a lay-up while a Northside player tried to draw a charge. It appeared Boggs came down on a teammate's foot.

Boggs spent the season cheering on his teammates. Without Boggs, head coach Troy Wells still managed to guide Hidden Valley to the final four of the Group AA tournament, where they lost to Salem in the semifinals. Boggs underwent surgery a couple of days after his spill and should be ready to go once practice starts next fall.

As a junior, he averaged 17.8 points, 8.3 rebounds and 3.7 assists per game in leading Hidden Valley to the Group AA semifinals. A first-team All-Group AA selection his junior season, he also was the Timesland player of the year according to *The Roanoke Times*. 

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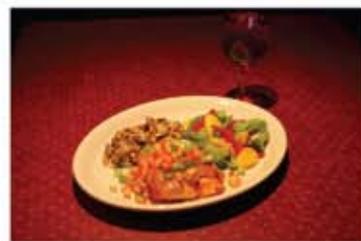
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# READY TO RELOAD

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR BUD FOSTER AND HIS STAFF ARE ANXIOUS TO SEE HOW NEW PIECES FIT THIS SPRING

By Jimmy Robertson



The Tech football team began practice on April 1. Defensive coordinator Bud Foster sat down and answered some questions about his unit days before spring ball began.

**Q:** So in looking at the depth chart, how are things going to shake out at the mike linebacker and backer positions?

**BF:** “That would be nice to know. I wish I knew myself [laughing]. Right now, that’s the big question for us. Over the last two years, we’ve lost back-to-back starters, so it’s wide open.

“Barquell Rivers stepped in during the bowl game and did a great job. He played his position and was productive. He was a complete player and did a lot of nice things in the

passing game. That was a concern going in and he did a great job. He’s probably ahead of the curve because of the years he’s been here and he has a game under his belt. He’s taken a lot of reps in practice and he’s had a great offseason.

“The two who have separated themselves a little in the offseason are Barquell and Jake Johnson. By their 40 times, their strength numbers and what they’ve done with their bodies, they’ve had great offseasons.

“Right now, we’ve brought Bruce Taylor back. We had him there early, but then thought we might need some help at defensive end. Then he got dinged up and we ended up redshirting him. We’re going to move him to mike linebacker. He’s got

a good football IQ and he’s going to create competition. Backing him up would be Mark Muncey, who’s kind of like Jonas Houseright, a guy that I trust.

“The backer spot is wide open. We’re moving Jake from mike to backer to just try and get our best players on the football field. He’s dropped some weight. He’s really leaned up his body. He ran a great time and he’s physical. His pitfall is that he goes too hard sometimes, but I’d rather have to slow a guy down. That’s a good thing. Quillie Odom and him ... that should be one of the key spots to look at this spring.

“These guys are good young prospects. But we’ve got a lot of growing up to do and they know that.”

*Jake Johnson played mostly on special teams a year ago, but he's going to be battling for the starting spot at backer this spring.*



**Q:** How tough will it be for these younger players to grasp either the mike or backer position?

**BF:** "Very tough. That's why you don't see many freshmen or sophomores playing linebacker at most universities. The linebackers have to be so involved in the running game and the gap fits, but where they have the most issues are the terminology and the coverage concepts. The high school passing

game, though it's gotten better, consistently you're not facing a quarterback who can beat you. On this level, pretty much every week someone can beat you throwing the football. You've got to be disciplined in your coverage concepts and techniques and fundamentals. Your mind doesn't need to tie up your feet, and if it does, you're going to be a step behind and that's not usually a good end result.

"I thought Jake really improved the last two

weeks of last season. He got all the second-team reps because Brett [Warren] was out and I really saw him take a step forward. I see a guy in Jake – and not that Quillie isn't – but Jake is really self-motivated. He's a lot like Xavier [Adibi] from that standpoint. I didn't have to prod Xavier to watch film or do well in the weight room and Jake is very similar. He's a conscientious young man."

**Q:** Would you consider moving Cody Grimm to backer?

**BF:** "We've talked about it, but right now, Cam Martin is out [with a knee injury]. Cody is going to miss some time with some class conflicts, too. Now, I'd take Cody in a heartbeat. Don't get me wrong. He's a helluva football player. He did it [play backer] for a few weeks for us two years ago and he'd be a playmaker for us. If push came to shove, I think we could work something out, but I hope we don't have to go there. We've talked about it, but we don't have that luxury this spring."

**Q:** What are some other concerns for you this spring?

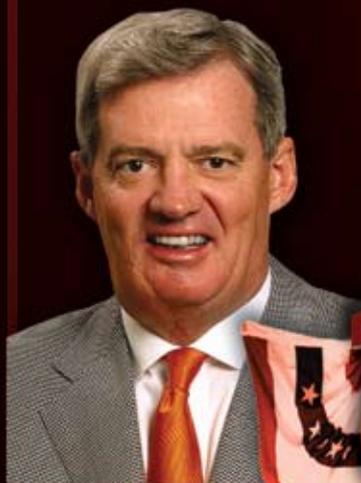
**BF:** "We've got to develop a playmaking corner. We've got one in Stephan Virgil and we're going to take him and move him to our boundary corner. But we're going to see how

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Stephan Virgil made several big plays as a field cornerback last year and he'll be taking over at Macho Harris' old spot - boundary corner - this spring.



[Rashad] Carmichael, [Cris] Hill and [Eddie] Whitley do at the other corner. We're going to find out who is going to take that spot.

"After that, we need to develop some depth in our front. When we've been really good is when we've been able to rotate some people. I think it's time for a guy like Steven Friday to take a step forward and we're going to look closely at those redshirt kids, like Isaiah Hamlette at defensive end.

"We're going to take John Graves and move him to defensive end this spring. Nekos [Brown] is going to be out some because of class conflicts and Jason Worilds is out [with a shoulder injury]. If a bunch of people got injured there, John would have some reps. We know he can play at tackle.

"That gives us an opportunity to rep guys like Antoine Hopkins, Courtney Prince, Dwight Tucker and Kwamaine Battle. Those four guys are going to create competition. We need them. That's a position where you get beat up and we were very fortunate that we stayed away from the injury bug last year, other than Jason. Moving John can actually help us to create depth."

**Q: Who are you looking at closely among those young defensive linemen?**

**BF:** "All of them. Kwamaine Battle has shown some signs. We redshirted Courtney and he's changed his body, and so has Dwight Tucker. Antoine is a guy we looked at playing last fall. He's got great twitch and great pop. But all those guys have to learn to play the game at high level. They've got to learn to

play with a high motor. That's the one thing they didn't do consistently in the fall, but they're freshmen and that's normal. They've all done things to lose weight and change their bodies and I think they've had good offseasons. It'll be a big spring and a big summer for those guys, and hopefully they'll take that step forward."

**Q: Do you expect Stephan Virgil to perform the same way as Macho Harris did?**

**BF:** "I think Stephan will do very well. He's shown he has playmaking skills and he's got good ball skills. He's a good tackler. You look at our tradition and that guy right there [at boundary corner] has been the guy to go to the next level. I think that excites Stephan.

"All those guys play both [cornerback spots], but we're probably going to keep Stephan at the boundary corner because that position demands so much. We bring that guy on corner blitzes and offenses often try to attack that side of the field. There are some things we do differently with that guy than we do with the field corner, and the boundary corner has to be one of our better players on defense. He's a lockdown guy and a big run-support guy. He needs to be a good tackler and a physical player."

**Q: How much better do you think Kam Chancellor will be at free safety this season?**

**BF:** "I think he will much better. The media was saying he wasn't performing well,

but our free safety is a lot more involved in coverage whereas the rover spot is more of a free hitter. He's [the rover] not being tied up in coverage as much as the free safety. He's a roamer, and Kam was a playmaker at rover.

"Actually, Kam was playing well most of last year. It's just a different position. We tie him up in coverage more. You always notice the rovers and the whips because they're free guys. They need to be good football players and Kam was that, but we needed a leader at free safety and Kam is that. He wanted that role. I was really pleased with how he played down the stretch. He played with a lot more confidence at free safety down the stretch. He was making all our calls and all our checks. There's a lot of responsibility with that guy. He played a great bowl game and a great ACC championship game.

"I think he's going to have a big year. We're going to try and do some things this spring with a couple of pressures to get him more involved just because he is a playmaking guy. We need to do some things to free him up at times.

"As far as the backup, we're going to look at Lorenzo Williams. He was really coming on last year until he hurt his knee. Torrian [Gray] likes him and I like him. He improved down the stretch, too."

**Q: Will you juggle Davon Morgan and Dorian Porch at rover or maybe get one some work at the safety spot?**

**BF:** "Well, Davon is not going to participate in contact drills [because of his

knee]. We'll get him out there in some pass skeleton drills. He did the mat drills during our 6 a.m. workouts and I'm anxious to get him back.

"I feel good about that rover spot. I thought Dorian came in and really did a good job for us. We're going to take Ron Cooper and move him [from safety] to rover and we're going to take [Jeron] Gouveia-Winslow and look at him as a whip. He was impressive in our scrimmages and he has a knack. I know he can play rover. I just want to see if maybe he can play whip.

"We're probably not going to move Davon back to safety. We like Lorenzo [Williams] and want to give him a look and we've got some freshmen coming in, like Antone Exum and Theron Norman, that I really like. Those are guys who could come in and help us if we need it."

**Q: Will you change anything scheme-wise or implement any new stuff? How leery are you of doing that considering your success?**

**BF:** "We always tweak stuff and we've got a list of items of things we want to look at. We went to visit the University of Georgia's staff and there's a lot of carryover there. They wanted to talk about Georgia Tech and they play Alabama, so we wanted to talk to them about that. And we do a lot of things similar scheme-wise. We got some

things from them that I like that may be able to help us in certain situations.

"There are some schematic things that we're looking at, but nothing big. What we do is good. We have a lot of confidence in it and we know how to adjust, but we're always looking to tweak and improve if we can. You're not going to see us go to a 3-4 or anything like that. I don't see any need to. We're good at what we do and I want our kids playing fast.

"The one thing I know is how, when people change against us, I can adjust. When you create a new defense or a new scheme, you don't have that. I know how teams handle our blitzes and pressures, and if they make a change, I know what I can come back with to counter that. That's why I like what we're doing.

"We're efficient. We disguise well and we can pressure people with blitzes and with coverage. We're more multiple now and can do things in a multitude of ways. We'll continue to do that and we'll continue to tweak things to improve ourselves.

"What we do, everyone else is doing. I think we have a tendency as coaches to screw the game up. It still comes down to fundamentals and we're always going to be fundamentally sound and be multiple enough in our packages. We'll find ways to bring pressure and outnumber people and hopefully we'll continue to keep offenses off balance." 



*Dorian Porch (24) excelled at rover last season in place of an injured Davon Morgan and will be counted on to be a leader on Tech's defense this fall.*

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# FACING OFF AGAINST ALL CHALLENGES

TECH'S RACHEL CULP HAS USED SPORTS TO TRIUMPH OVER SOME TOUGH TIMES

By Jimmy Robertson

Even those without a fundamental knowledge of the game of women's lacrosse couldn't help but be impressed on this unquestionably miserable day.

On a 38-degree afternoon in which the methodical rain that cascaded down on Blacksburg made Thompson Field a veritable purgatory for watching any sporting event, the Tech women's lacrosse team battled the fourth-ranked team in the country, North Carolina. Roughly 10 minutes into this affair, the smattering of water-repellant fans of the orange and maroon started witnessing grace in motion.

It first came when, with multiple Tar Heels velcroed to her, she caught a sliver of Jessica Nonn's jersey out of the corner of her eye and lofted a blind pass right to the perfect spot. Nonn immediately and easily deposited it into

the net, a goal that marked Tech's second of the game and cut UNC's lead to 3-2.

Then, a few moments later, she struck with such exactness. Again, with a couple of Tar Heels practically sewed to her right flank, she made a deft fake, freed up her stick, and whizzed a carefully placed laser into the back right corner of the net with surgical precision to tie the match at 3.

Maybe her best came in the second half after teammate Allie Emala made a fine defensive play that led to a Tech breakaway. She effortlessly sped past a Tar Heel defender and received the pass from Emala, and at that point, UNC goalie Logan Ripley could only strike a submissive pose. A sweet juke later, she scored her second goal.

By the end of the match, a lacrosse novice could make even this astute deduction:

Rachel Culp was the best player on Tech's squad – and maybe the best on the field.

Tech lost 12-8, a respectable and predictable showing for a rebuilding program. Culp scored two goals and notched the one assist, also respectable and predictable.

After all, she truly is grace in motion, so athletic and yet so smooth and efficient. She moves with undefined fluidity and wastes no movement on the lacrosse field and, like most great athletes, she'll never be able to explain exactly why.

For her, it's just – well – easy. Lacrosse is easy for Rachel Culp.

Which is exactly contrary to what everything else has been for her.

Life, in general, has been anything but easy.

Joel Culp remembers the day and with not

much fondness. He and his wife, Meredith, gathered Rachel and their son, Jamie, into the living room at their home in Kent, Ohio, for the proverbial heart-to-heart. This time, it actually was that.

They informed their 8-year-old daughter and 11-year-old son that the doctors suspected Meredith had a rare neurological disease called Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD, for short). The name itself meant nothing to the children, but an explanation of the symptoms and the prognosis provoked the expected response.

“They were angry at us for not telling them sooner,” Joel said. “But we didn’t really know what to tell them. There was some confusion. The doctors thought for a while that it might be Huntington’s disease.”

A protein virus or bacteria called a prion causes CJD and the symptoms include dementia and memory loss, along with a variety of

difficult to comprehend, just the magnitude of the situation.

“By the time I was in fifth grade, she passed away. It was very difficult for the family, and it’s been a struggle ever since.”

Mindful of the overwhelming grief brimming within his children, Joel Culp set about speeding up the healing process of his family’s fractured lives. The following summer after Meredith’s funeral, the family went with their church on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic and helped build an orphanage.

“The kids weren’t too pleased,” Joel said. “They thought I was ruining their summer. But I wanted them to see that people have it much worse than we do. As it turned out, that was a very important event in our lives – in a positive way.”

While that trip certainly touched their core, it wasn’t the overriding cure-all for their grief,

which they faced anew once they returned home. Rachel, so young and so soon to enter the all-important teenage years, needed a place to retreat from all of life’s hassles.

She found the perfect spot – in sports.

With her dad having played lacrosse and her mom having played tennis, both at Wooster College in Ohio, Rachel seemingly was destined to play sports.

It just took a little time to sort out which ones.

Her dad, who once worked on a ski patrol, strapped skis on her at the age of 3. The boots were a little too big, but he resorted to that ever-versatile product known as duct tape to keep them on her tiny feet.

She also joined the local T-ball team and a passion soon emerged. Once she got too old for T-ball, she stubbornly refused to play softball and remained staunchly adamant that she be allowed to play baseball.

So the Culp family did the only thing they could do. To pacify their daughter, they petitioned the local parks and rec department to let her play – and they won.

**“I see so much of Meredith in her. Like Meredith, she has her life together. She knows what she wants, and if she doesn’t, she’ll put in the work to find out. She’s used the disappointment and pain and channeled it positively.”**

**- Joel Culp**

physical ailments. It eerily resembles a more familiar disease to most – Alzheimer’s. The symptoms only present themselves during the middle-age years. There is no treatment and there is no cure.

It is, indeed, rare. Studies show this disease attacks one person out of a million every year.

Yet the gene that carries the virus is hereditary, so the Culp family had been through this rarity once before. Meredith Culp’s mother passed from the exact same thing.

After Meredith’s diagnosis, the family wasted nary a second, spending as much time together as possible. Joel Culp remodeled a room for his wife, flatly refusing to consider the thoughts of putting her into an adult care facility.

“We cared for her for the duration,” he said. “I wanted the kids to see her. I could have put her into some nursing home, but I wasn’t going to have any of that. I wanted the kids to have access to her and for her to be able to see them.”

After a two-year battle, Meredith Culp went to a better place on November 7, 1997, at the age of 48. Like with birthdays and anniversaries, the Culp family will always remember that particular date. It is their family day of infamy.

“When we sat down when I was in third grade and they told me my mom was sick, it was kind of difficult to comprehend when you’re 8,” Rachel said. “It took a long time to understand what was going on and what was happening. We had a pretty good support system in Kent and a lot of people helped out. But it was dif-



"She did well with baseball," Joel said. "She could play every position on the field."

She obviously liked the challenges that boys presented because, around the age of 8, she laced up the skates and played on an ice hockey team. She became so good at that sport that she ended up with a roster spot on the Lady Barons, a traveling ice hockey team.

That flirtation lasted a couple of years until her mom passed.

"I just couldn't afford to keep her on the travel hockey team," Joel said. "They'd go to Canada and all over, but I couldn't afford it. It broke my heart."

Perhaps it turned out to be a blessing. Perhaps her mother's death actually marked the birth of something, maybe a newfound passion for Rachel. Perhaps it spawned something that would change her life forever – and for the better.

Not long after giving up hockey, Rachel decided to try the sport her father loved and the one at which her brother also excelled – lacrosse. She watched her brother and his friends toss the ball around or play out in the yard, and being the ever fearless one, she never shied from asserting herself in these impromptu sessions regardless of her age and physical limitations.

It was a common occurrence in those days. The annoying sister not just trying to keep up with big brother, but actually thinking she could out-do him.

"I hated it at first. I couldn't get the hang of it," Rachel said of lacrosse. "The throwing and catching, I couldn't do it all. My dad kept making me try it, and I hated not being able to do something that my brother could do. So that was the beginning of it. If he could do it, I had to be able to do it."

"We definitely had a little rivalry thing going," Jamie said. "I used to pick on her a bit. It didn't matter if we were out there playing street hockey or football, she'd be out there trying to compete. She hung in there. She was way better than any other girl."

Rachel ended up selecting basketball and lacrosse as her sports of choice. The fast pace of both kept her mind off her mom for brief periods of time.

But tragedy – and CJD – came crashing into their lives once again. Almost three years after watching her mother depart this world, she and the rest of the family bid farewell to her uncle, Glenn Menk III, who lost his battle with this insidious disease.

His death stripped open those old scars, ever reminders of the family's vulnerability. Searching again for that escape, she and Jamie hurled themselves headfirst into their sports' passions. She ultimately became a two-sport standout in lacrosse and basketball.

"When I look back on it," Joel said. "I really do think both of them pursued sports to block out everything."

"Those things are out of my control," Rachel said. "Every time something difficult happens – and I've been this way my whole life – I get back to work and



Rachel Culp

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try to simplify it. I try to focus on what I can control.

"I've been able to turn to sports as an outlet. It's been that way my whole life. It's a lot easier than everything else."

Jamie ultimately graduated not long following his uncle's death, and after a semester at Ohio State – and knowing how short precious life can be – he decided to pursue his utmost dream, bolting for Colorado and pursuing a career as a professional snowboarder, something he continues to do. His departure left another void in Rachel's life, but he needed something different and he sensed a future change in his sister's life.

"I knew what I had to do," he said. "And I could tell she was going to be okay. I knew she was going to go away to school."

She did. And lacrosse made it happen.

"I knew they had a good football team," she said.

That was the extent of Rachel's knowledge of Virginia Tech during her senior year at Theodore Roosevelt High.

It's easily forgiven. After all, she grew up in a state where dotting the "P" is a bigger fall tradition than Grandma's turkey on Thanksgiving and where the locals firmly believe Archie Griffin's mug should be carved in the limestone at Mt. Rushmore. Some things resonate a little more deeply in the minds of teenagers concluding their pre-college years.

But the Tech women's lacrosse coach at the time, Tami Riley, invited Culp to come down for a visit. And like most who visit Blacksburg for the first time, she immediately fell headlong into happiness with the surroundings. Clicking with the girls on the team was simply added gravy.

She rarely played as a freshman, though, scoring six goals in a rather gloomy 14 games. Her inaugural college campaign served as a wicked lacrosse stick upside the head.

Unable to accept status quo and unwilling to succumb to the dejection, she summoned her inner fire displayed so regularly when she roughhoused with her older brother and his pals back in Kent. She stayed in Blacksburg during the offseason, running routinely and peppering the backs of the nets with shots on a daily basis.

She has started every game since, a streak of 47 consecutive games heading into the American game on April 4. She has scored no fewer than 25 goals in any season since then and recently scored her 100th, becoming just the sixth Tech player ever to do so.

"My freshman year, I didn't start or play that often and I didn't want to have that feeling again," she said. "So I just worked until I wasn't at that point any more. I never take a summer break away from it. I never wanted that feeling again. I wasn't okay with it. I wanted to do everything I could to make sure it didn't happen."

Still, it hasn't always been easy. Riley departed in late June of 2006, and Tech AD Jim Weaver hired Katrina Silva to head the program. While Culp has scored a lot of goals, she hasn't been a part of a lot of victories, a frustration for any great athlete, and Silva booted a lot of Culp's classmates for a violation of team rules this past fall, robbing her of some longtime on-field relationships.

Times, though, appear to be changing. Tech rattled off four straight wins during one stretch this season, with Culp scoring a career-high seven goals in a win over Davidson and then adding six goals in a 16-14 overtime win over BC – the Hokies' first ACC victory since joining the league.

In that one, Culp scored the game-tying goal – and then for good measure, added the game-winner.

"Beating Boston College," she said when asked of her most memorable moment. "Getting that first ACC win, that's huge. Very cool."

Joel Culp, who now lives in Denver near Jamie and sells emergency medical supplies, flew across the country to see the Hokies play a home match against Old Dominion on March 28, a game that marked Senior Day. During the pregame ceremonies honoring the seniors, father and daughter walked onto the field arm-in-arm, and mother did, too, only in spirit.

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*Rachel Culp's life hasn't always been easy, but she was all smiles before the match with ODU - and afterward when her game-winning assist helped Tech to a 11-10 victory in double overtime.*



"Every day, every game, every milestone ... there's not a day that goes by that I don't think about her," Rachel said. "She never saw me play lacrosse, and that's something I'll always regret. So I think about her a lot on game days."

This particular game went into double overtime, and Rachel treated her father to the greatness Tech fans have witnessed throughout her career. In the second overtime, Rachel - a magnet for Monarch defenders on this afternoon - fielded a pass from Katie Rotanz, but instead of firing off a wild shot amidst the timber in front of the net, she nimbly slipped a pass to Nonn, who won the game with a rather routine goal.

Her dad unquestionably saw her sacrifice. But then, he knows all about her sacrifices.

"I see so much of Meredith in her," Joel said. "Like Meredith, she has her life together. She knows what she wants, and if she doesn't, she'll put in the work to find out. She's used the disappointment and pain and channeled it positively."

Rachel's storied career will soon be over, but decisions are soon to follow.

Tough decisions.

Life decisions.

A superb student - a two-time selection to the ACC's all-academic team - she graduates next December with a degree in biology and contemplates going to medical school. She also ponders getting into the coaching profession and teaching young girls the game in which she flourishes.

But the elephantine question weighing on her mind is the test - and not one taken in a classroom.

Doctors have told both Rachel and Jamie that they can be tested to see if they carry the gene that predisposes them to the virus that leads to CJD. Possessing the gene doesn't necessarily mean they are guaranteed to contract the disease, so it comes down simply to wanting to know.

Ever the free spirit, Jamie refuses to take the test, preferring to live life as it comes.

"It doesn't make a difference to me," he said. "I'm going to live life to the fullest. But Rachel's got more of a plan for her life. She's got certain things to take into consideration."

And thus, Rachel wages the war within herself.

"I don't know. I didn't want to deal with it [the test] while I was in college," she said. "I just figured I may as well focus on normal things. My mom never got tested and she decided to get married and have a family. But my personality is one that ... I don't know. It's a huge debate. I think about it a lot. I don't know what I'm going to do."

"That may be one reason I'm putting off med school. If I have it, I don't want to spend another 'X' amount of time in school when I could be doing other things like traveling or coaching or other stuff. You know, things that wouldn't stress me out. Not that it wouldn't be worth it to be a doctor. I just haven't decided if that's the path I'm going to take."

"It's entirely their decisions," Joel said. "Either way, it's not like they don't think about it. It's in the back of your mind all the time."

For sure, she would make a wonderful doctor, a beautiful combination of intelligence and compassion derived from years of learning from her own case study.

Or does she stick with sports and stay in the arena that has assisted her so much? She'd make a splendid coach. Her passion for the game is only exceeded by her own willingness to demand the best from herself.

Whichever path she chooses, it should be the one that makes her the happiest. She certainly deserves that.

After all, they say to experience the pleasures of life, you have to experience some pain.

There's no denying that Rachel Culp has had more than her fair share of that. 

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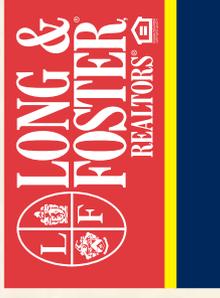
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# HEY YO!

## YOANN RE'S UNIQUE PATH TO TECH HAS TRANSLATED INTO AN ATTENTION-GRABBING SEASON

By Matt Kovatch

In a way, you can credit Canada's love of hockey for the Virginia Tech men's tennis team's success this year.

One thing always leads to another, and when you look at it, life is essentially a bunch of seemingly random events that chain together to form a discernible path. It's always interesting to go back in time step-by-step, figuring out how you got to where you are. It's no different for Yoann Re.

Now, of course, the Hokies' junior (whose name is pronounced YO-on RAY) is one of the best tennis players in the Atlantic Coast Conference, having started the dual match season 11-0 before ending the month of March with a 12-2 record and a national ranking of No. 59. But his route to that point has been an interesting one.

It all began a little over 20 years ago when his Italian father and French mother met, in of all places, Canada, near the city of Montreal. Not long thereafter, 3-year-old Yoann picked up a tennis racket for the first time.

"My father was a fan of tennis, but he discovered it pretty late so he couldn't play it himself," Re said. "So he wanted me to try it and to become as good as I could."

Young Yoann picked up on the game rather quickly, and as he approached his teenage years, he felt that it was time for a change. You see, in hockey-crazed Montreal, where the Canadiens have won more Stanley Cups than any other NHL team, tennis wasn't quite so popular among the area's youth. And according to Re, unless you were one of the top few players in your age category, the Canadian tennis federation didn't present a bevy of opportunities for you.

So partly because of that, and partly because his mother, grandmother, brother and uncle lived in France at the time, 11-year-old Yoann packed up and moved across the Atlantic to live with them.

It was during his six years in France that Re really blossomed as a tennis player. The

game was simply more prevalent, with more players at a higher level, more tournaments to take part in and more opportunities to develop.

"Tennis-wise, it was good over there because the federation helps a lot," Re said. "And financially, it's cheaper to play tennis over there. It's just more popular."

Although France's role was paramount in Re's tennis career, it wasn't the permanent place for him. Socially, Quebec was where he wanted to be – he finds the people there a lot more open-minded and friendlier, so much so that he thinks that's where he'll return when his time at Tech is through. He had his fill of France, and at age 17, Re returned to his homeland in Canada.

But Re's time overseas wound up helping his game in an indirect way – through academics. According to Re, the education system in France was a bit more advanced than in Canada, and by the time he returned as junior in high school, he already possessed the knowledge equivalent to that of a high school degree. Thus, he was able to take a year off from schooling, which allowed him to focus solely on tennis.

He spent six months training in the tennis hotbed of Naples, Fla., playing in some ITF (International Tennis Federation) tournaments and even qualifying for the U.S. Open in 2006. If France was where he planted the seeds of his game, Florida was where it finally came to fruition.

"Yoann was always good when he was young and he did well when he was in France, but it was the time in Naples when he really took off," Virginia Tech head coach Jim Thompson said. "There is no doubt that it helped him a lot. He worked with some good coaches down there and had the opportunity to play a lot of ten-



nis. It was at the end of that year when he really peaked.”

But the year-round tennis couldn't last forever. Re has always been a good student and he had the desire to go to college. After all, he admits it was France's accelerated high school system that allowed him to finish early and become a better tennis player. Up until his successful, tennis-filled summer of 2006, only smaller universities were interested in him, with the exception of Virginia Tech.

“He didn't have great results until the summer before he was coming to college,” Thompson said. “But by the time most schools realized how good he was, we had already signed him.”

Excuse the hockey term, but you can once again credit Canada with the assist. You see, the Hokies once had another Quebecer, Francis Huot, who played for Tech from 2000-03. Huot loved his time in Blacksburg, and he just so happened to be great friends with a young player from Quebec named Sebastien Jacques. For those who follow Tech tennis, you might recognize Jacques as the Hokies' current No. 4/5 singles player and Re's doubles partner. Thompson was tipped off on Jacques by Huot, and low and behold, Jacques happened to be good buddies with Re.

“Francis really helped to steer Sebastien here,” Thompson said. “They were best friends back home and they trained with the same coaches. Francis also knew Yoann a little bit, but he knew that Sebastien knew Yoann really well. That helped us a lot.”

It ended up being a 2-for-1 deal for Thompson and the Hokies, as Re and Jacques both committed to Blacksburg and currently team up as the Hokies' top doubles duo. But it's in singles where Re has really made his mark in 2009.

“I think Yoann has always known that he could play at the top of our lineup,” Thompson said of his two-time ACC player of the week honoree. “It just took a little bit of confidence and believing in himself. He's played all around the world and he's very experienced. It was just a matter of getting the opportunity, and he certainly took it and ran with it.”

The opportunity came on Feb. 1 at top-ranked Ohio State, when Re, who played as Tech's No. 3 in 2008 and began the 2009 season at No. 2 behind Nicolas Delgado de Robles, pulled off a huge upset. He toppled the nation's sixth-ranked player by a score of 6-2, 6-4, prompting Thompson to move

him into Delgado de Robles's No. 1 spot in the lineup. He responded by ripping off 11 consecutive wins, including another upset of a top-10 player.

Though Re admitted that his fast start surprised him – and he knows that his No. 1 spot could be handed back to Delgado de Robles at any time if he falters – Thompson wasn't quite as surprised.

**“[Yoann] works hard, he's quiet and he comes from great parents who have taught him good values. He looks at things the right way and he's mature beyond his years. He wasn't the typical 18- or 19-year-old freshman who was more interested in going to parties. He looks at things with mature eyes and he treats everything very professionally.”**

**- head coach Jim Thompson**

“[Yoann] works hard, he's quiet and he comes from great parents who have taught him good values,” Thompson said. “He looks at things the right way and he's mature beyond his years. He wasn't the typical 18- or 19-year-old freshman who was more interested in going to parties. He looks at things with mature eyes and he treats everything very professionally.”

Re indeed plays like a professional, and as a rare left-handed player, he said he's constantly trying to use that to his advantage. He takes

pride in his serve, which curves the opposite way of the normal right-hander's, and he said he always tries to send his strong forehand to the weaker backhand of his opponent. With a path to stardom as unique as his, it's fitting that his game should be unique as well.

“It's just a little trickier to play a lefty,” Thompson said. “They seem to put a different spin on the ball. It's just like in basketball

when a guy goes up to shoot with his left hand, but the defender is so used to reaching to the right side to block the shot. It's the same way. It's a big advantage.”

As you can see, there are many things to which Re's success can be attributed. Is

it because he's left-handed? Is it due to his Canadian connections allowing him to fall into the right place at Virginia Tech? Or is it because his time in France allowed him to play more tennis than the average North American? Heck, you could argue it was because too many children in Quebec opted to play hockey, prompting Re to head to France in the first place.

Whatever the answer, one thing's for sure. In Re's case, it couldn't have flowed together any better. 



## GETTING TO KNOW ...

### YOANN RE

**BORN:** 10/2/88 in Pointe-Claire, Quebec, Canada

**PARENTS:** Humbert Re and Martine Blumstein

**SIBLINGS:** Only child

**NICKNAME:** Yo

**OTHER SPORTS PLAYED GROWING UP:** Soccer

**NO HOCKEY?:** “I liked the Montreal Canadiens, but I never played hockey.”

**FAVORITE TENNIS PRO:** Rafael Nadal. “I like his game and how he acts. He is really humble and he never gets mad on the court. When he was my age, he had already won a Grand Slam!”

**MAJOR:** Finance

**FAVORITE COURSE:** Introduction to Finance

**TOUGHEST COURSE:** Concepts and Skills in Finance

**ROOMMATES:** Teammates Sebastien Jacques, Pedro Graber and Corrado Degli' Incerti Tocci

**CAR YOU DRIVE:** Saturn

**FAVORITE FOOD:** Pasta carbonara

**FAVORITE MUSIC:** Pop music

**LAST MOVIE SEEN:** *He's Just Not That Into You*. “It's a good one for a date.”

**Who's the lucky lady?:** “Haha! I'm working on one.”

**ONE THING PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU:** “I've written two books – fantastical, Harry Potter-style novels. I just do it for fun in my free time in the summer.”

# TAKING IT IN STRIDE - A FAMILY-FRIENDLY AFFAIR

## WHEN RUNNING, TECH'S NATALIE SHERBAK SETS THE PACE - BUT HER LARGE FAMILY ISN'T FAR BEHIND

By Jimmy Robertson

Rebecca Motley remembers the evenings vividly. Usually spent from a day of work and facing a lengthy list of chores at home that simply demand a mother's full attention, she remembers hopping in her cold car nonetheless, twisting the ignition switch and jostling a stiff gearshift into 'D'.

She remembers doing this simply to fulfill the wishes of a headstrong teenage daughter - is there really any other kind? - who simply needed a fix for what ultimately had become her addiction.

"From the time she was a kid, she was interested in sports," Motley said. "But once she made the decision to get into running, she was independent with that. She ran every day. She ran on weekends.

"Sometimes, she didn't get her run in during the day, so she'd come home at night and it would be dark outside and cold, and she'd want to go for a run. So either my husband or me would get in the car at night and follow her as she ran, just for her safety.

"My husband and I would fight because sometimes she'd want to get up at 5:30 in the morning and go for a run. My husband was for it, and so was she, so she'd usually go. It would be minus-degree temperature outside and she'd go running. She'd do that all winter long."

Natalie Sherbak hasn't stopped running ever since. She has run herself into a rather decorated career, first at the prep level and now at the collegiate level, where the 23-year-old holds multiple ACC crowns and All-America status and is literally on her final lap at Tech. But the end simply will mark the beginning of the next race, whatever it's named and whenever it takes place.

"Oh yeah, I love it," Sherbak said. "I love it so much. I'm going to do it even after I'm done here."

Motley certainly understands her daughter's obsession. She used to be a runner herself, and as a toddler, Sherbak used to watch her mom compete. Also, Sherbak's older sister, Rachel, ran in middle school.

Looking back, it seems fitting that family got her involved. After all, she has seven sisters, and in a family that large, you're always running - somewhere.

Which, of course, is fine with Sherbak. For someone with such an overwhelming desire to put one leg and one foot in front of the other as fast as possible, the finish line just doesn't exist.

Motley insists she wasn't trying for a boy.

"People always ask that," she said, chuckling. "I'm used to it. I usually have a clever answer.

"It's probably for the best. I think about it now. What would I have done with a boy?"

Even though she and her first husband, Michael Sherbak, were in the Navy - she as a nurse and he as a regu-

lar - they knew they wanted a big family. So they had five daughters, with Natalie being the third.

The Sherbaks ended up divorcing and Rebecca later married Todd Motley, another member of the Navy. They decided they wanted children, too, and together, they added three more - all girls.

Eight girls in all, ages from 26 years old to 6. Rachel is the oldest, followed by Susan, Natalie, Emma, Hannah, Abigail, Julia and Caroline.

Typical of the Navy life, or any military branch for that matter, the family bounced around.

Natalie was born in Jacksonville, but later, the family got transferred to Brunswick, Maine, and then to Virginia Beach, where they currently live. Once they got there, they moved into a four-bedroom house, a veritable palace of hormones. Four bedrooms are typically big enough for most families, but not for this atypical bunch.

"We were fortunate that me and my husband had good jobs and could buy a big house," said Motley, who ultimately got out of the Navy and became an elementary school teacher. "We had three girls to one bedroom and one of the first things we did was buy office partitions, so that each one of them could have their own private space.

"They all did fine. They all liked being a part of a big family."

"I've lived like three to a room my entire life," Sherbak said. "It's a little crazy having a family that big. But it's fun, too. I have a huge fan club."

It was Rachel Sherbak who inadvertently fired the starter's pistol on Natalie's illustrious career. Rachel ran track in middle school, and Natalie was on hand as her sister broke six minutes in the mile.

"That now sounds really funny, but I thought, 'Wow, I want to be as good as Rachel,'" Natalie said. "I played soccer before then, and then in high school, I played field hockey during the cross country season and then ran track. But I decided my senior year that I wanted to focus on running and that's how it became just running."

In doing so, she switched to maybe the one true sport in this world. After all, there aren't any timeouts in running. There are no halftimes or substitutions either. If you don't cross the finish line first, you can't blame officials or teammates. It's all on you.

Which may be why she loves it the most. She certainly blistered the competition her senior year at Kellam High School, becoming the Michael Phelps of prep running. She won an unprecedented six state championships; and of course, the sisters were there practically every step of the way.

They were her biggest fans - and critics.

"They're definitely my biggest fans and they definitely keep me humble," she said. "I remember once in high school we'd run the 4x400 at the end of the meet and my sisters would come at the end. We'd end up losing because we were not a good 4x400 team, and my sisters were like, 'We didn't come to see you lose.' I'd be like, 'Yeah, but you didn't see me win the others.'



"They're really supportive, though. All of them are my biggest fans."

"I've lived like three to a room my entire life. It's a little crazy having a family that big. But it's fun, too. I have a huge fan club." - Natalie Sherbak

Sherbak has an unquenchable passion and it becomes evident when you hear the story of how she celebrated her 21st birthday.

Rather than run from bar to bar and set a breakneck consumption pace, Sherbak made the rather adult decision to celebrate such a milestone by doing what she loves to do – forsaking a long-established tradition among her college peers in the process.

"I ran for 21 miles rather than the whole go out-and-get hammered thing," she said. "I think my coaches were probably more upset that I did that. But I really like long runs."

For those who knew of her maturity then, her decision came as no surprise. Deeply religious, this is a young woman who has done missionary work in Mexico and helped build homes in Tennessee as part of community service projects.

Certainly, long runs aren't the social activity of choice on most people's 21st birthday's. But she hardly classifies as most people; and that she'd rather run a near marathon on her 21st birthday speaks volumes.

Of course, her definition of 'long' differs from the average Joe. She routinely goes on 12- to 14-mile runs, often using the time to think and to pray. The common person defines long as five miles and prays, too – prays that he or she makes it without slipping into cardiac arrest.

"I do get bored sometimes, but for the most part, it's very therapeutic," Sherbak said. "I have time to think, and I pray a lot

Photo courtesy of the Sherbak's



The eight sisters (clockwise from the bottom) - Caroline (6 years old), Julia (11), Hannah (19), Natalie (23), Rachel (26), Susan (25), Emma (22) and Abigail (14).

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Natalie Sherbak (behind the Iowa runner) isn't as tall or long as some of her competitors, but her leg strength and determination more than offset the difference.

while I'm running. I just think a lot and process more. I pray. I don't know. I just enjoy running."

She certainly must because her training

regimen borders on insanity. She runs between 50 and 70 miles a week, with the norm being 60 to 70, and she's "on the higher end."

Three days a week, she and her teammates

do two-a-days, with shorter, intense running combined with longer runs. They'll also mix in pool workouts.

But the overwhelming majority of her workouts consist of feet pounding the ground, a pain-inducing process that starts at the soles of her feet and slowly works its way into her ankles, calves and upward.

Sherbak, though, never lets her body tell her mind what to do. After all, the body would give up.

"You get sore," she admitted. "But I'm a resilient runner. I can do higher mileage. My bones are strong and I handle the stress on my body pretty well."

"You wouldn't think she's a runner," Motley said. "Most runners are taller and thin, with long legs. But she's all muscle. We're always like, 'Wow,' when we watch her run."

The honors are 'wow' worthy too. She won the distance medley relay at her first ACC indoor championships (2005). Last year, during the outdoor season, she won the 10,000-meter run at the ACC championships.

Then, a few weeks ago, she blew away the competition in the 5,000-meter run at Rector Field House, winning another ACC crown, and she finished second in the 3,000. She has qualified for the NCAA Championships on four occasions (twice in the outdoor 10,000, once in the indoor mile run, and once in cross country). She earned her first All-America honor a month ago when she finished 10th in the mile run at

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the NCAA's indoor meet.

But perhaps more stunning than her honors and times is the sheer amount of tread this young woman burns in a year. She goes through two or three pairs of shoes each semester and two pairs during the summer – six or eight during a calendar year.

She runs just about every single day, and said she and her teammates only get a week and a half off during the summer.

And if you're wondering if those kids ever get tired of the monotony of running, then you're not alone.

"Any time you take off is a setback to an extent," she said. "But I do take strategic breaks.

"Some days, I'll tell coach [Ben Thomas] I need a break or that I need a run where I can go out and run where I want to run, when I want to run and how long I want to run. Because I love it and it's something I enjoy, those days are a break for me. Then there are other times, too, when I just don't want to think about running and I'll take a day off.

"I think if you take strategic breaks, you can avoid burnout. We're given the option of a day off once a week and I take it maybe once every three weeks."

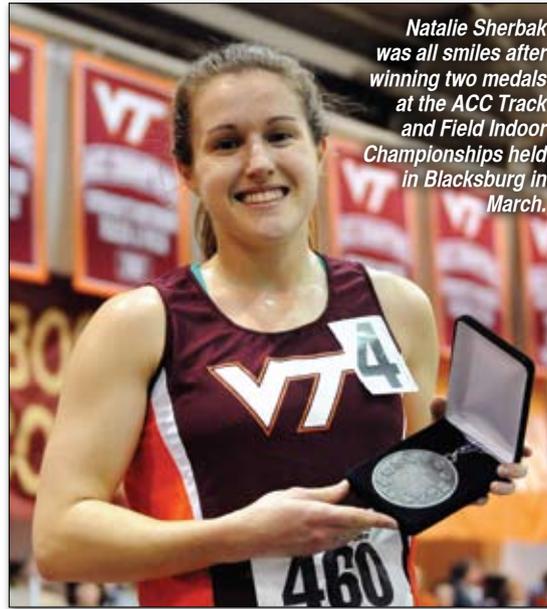
Basically, the moral of her story is – when you love something, you never get tired of it.

Natalie Sherbak is striding toward the finish line of her collegiate career, with only a handful of races remaining and only a solitary

chance at yet another ACC crown in mid-April when she and her teammates head to Coral Gables, Fla., for the conference's outdoor track championships.

But the starter's pistol is cocked and ready for her next race – whenever and wherever that may be.

"I actually don't know what I'm going to do," she said. "I'm really praying about it and seeing where the Lord leads me. I'm involved with Athletes in Action on campus and part of me is thinking that I'd like to go into the ministry



Natalie Sherbak was all smiles after winning two medals at the ACC Track and Field Indoor Championships held in Blacksburg in March.

and work on staff with Athletes in Action, or I'd love to coach.

"I also want to continue to do my own running. I'm trying to see if all the things I'm passionate about really come together into something I can support myself with."

She already has two willing pupils to mold, her sisters – 11-year-old Julia and 6-year-old Caroline. Thanks to her, both have gotten into running, and after the final event of the ACC's indoor meet at Rector Field House, Caroline provided a glimpse of the next generation when she got to run a mile on Tech's indoor track.

"She's my biggest fan," Sherbak said. "She's my best friend."

Rest assured, though, wherever she goes and whatever she does, Sherbak will have the winds of support from a strong family at her back.

"My kids always say that she is my favorite," Motley said. "But the funny thing is she is their favorite, too. If you asked any of them who they'd like to hang out with, they'd all say her."

Regardless of where life takes her, she'll leave Blacksburg as a champion. But she didn't become a champion when she crossed the finish line first at all those races.

She became a champion when she started preparing so many years ago.

Just ask her family. They certainly can attest to that. 

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# What it's like to be ... A STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACH

By Matt Kovatch



Before student-athletes ever step foot on the field or court at Virginia Tech, they have already been through countless hours of strength training and conditioning, preparing both their minds and bodies for the grueling season they are about to endure. But they don't go through it aimlessly – a member of Tech's athletic performance staff is there to guide them every step of the way.

As the strength and conditioning coordinator for women's basketball, volleyball, soccer and tennis, **Jamie Meyer** (a former Hokie volleyball player herself) is one of those mentors for Tech student-athletes. Here's a look at some of the ins and outs of her job:

## IT'S MORE THAN SIMPLY DEMANDING MORE REPS.

"We spend a lot of time mapping out each semester for the athletes. It truly is a science with all the different phases that your body goes through. You could make it your fulltime job just to research the trends and philosophies that are entailed in all of the programming that we do. We spend a lot of time reading new books and going online for articles and videos of new ideas. I spend a lot of time trying to find new exercises that are not only challenging, but also that are working the right muscles and that are geared toward the sport that I'm working with."

## I DO IT BECAUSE I LOVED IT WHEN I WAS AN ATHLETE.

"When I was an athlete here, I had a couple of injuries, so I spent a lot of time in rehab and in the weight room. The weight room was something that I always had. If I had an upper-body injury, I could still come in and do the lower-body stuff. I really came to love the weight room and I loved the time that I spent in there. As I neared graduation in my senior year, my strength coach approached me and asked if I ever considered doing this as a career. My response was, 'I'm not sure – I don't know if I could do this.' It very quickly became a 'yes' as soon as I learned more about the field."

## AN ATHLETE'S EFFORT WITH ME USUALLY MIRRORS THEIR EFFORT ON THE FIELD.

"Usually, the approach for an athlete is the same in the weight room as it is on the court. You need to know whom you are dealing with before you deal with them, so we talk to the coaches about that and set goals for kids. As far as seeing a direct correlation in performance, it's interesting. Sometimes, the hardest workers in the weight room are hard workers because they're not as naturally gifted on the field or on the court. I sometimes wish I could take those players who are more naturally gifted and give them the same heart and intensity as the players who are working and fighting for those spots and playing time. It's been challenging as a professional to be able to relate to an athlete who might be less driven than I was when I played. I see the potential in all of these kids and I really want to pull them along and make them better."

## IT'S ALWAYS REWARDING WHEN AN ATHLETE WANTS TO CONTINUE TRAINING AFTER GRADUATION.

"I love seeing athletes ready to leave here in a great position physically,

emotionally and mentally, and ready to attack the world. To have them say, 'Hey Jamie, do you have a workout plan for me that I can do when I leave here?' – I love that. I've put together a 500-page manual for them because I think continuing to work out is the most important thing. I want these girls to know that fitness is a big part of their lives. It's really important to me that I don't burn them out on fitness and that I don't make them see running and lifting as a punishment. I try to repeat over and over to them that there are some things that they don't have control over, but their fitness is something that they have 100 percent control over."

## I DON'T JUST TALK THE TALK – I WALK THE WALK.

"I feel that if I'm going to be a strength and conditioning coach, I can't ask anyone to do something that I cannot do. I take my fitness very seriously and I think it's very important for a fitness professional to show a healthy and athletic physique that is desirable in a healthy way. I probably work out six days a week and that is one of the great things about working in a weight room – I can get it done here. But in all honesty, I do a lot of my exercise outside of here." 

# WITH H2OKIES AT NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS, ONE ERA BEGINS AS ANOTHER ENDS

By Matt Kovatch

The last two weekends of March marked the end of the swimming and diving season for Virginia Tech, with the women competing March 19-21 and the men hitting the pool March 26-28, both on the campus of Texas A&M in College Station, Texas. The Hokies sent five women to the meet and finished in 34th place with 13.5 points, while two men accumulated four and a half points to finish 36th. Just days after wrapping up competition, head coach Ned Skinner sat down to discuss his team's performance and the outlook of the 2009-10 campaign.

**IHS:** *What was your overall impression of the women's performance at the national meet?*

**NS:** "I was really excited about the NCAA Championships for our women. We put so much into our season, and to be able to go to NCAAs and still have something left in the tank was great. All five women [seniors Sara Smith, Megan Newell and Jordan McHorney, sophomore Steffi Drechsel and freshman Erika Hajnal] who attended the national meet came home as honorable mention All-Americans – which, I guess, is the equivalent of being a second-team All-American in another sport. We were really proud of that. Each girl had goals of performing a little bit better, but all in all, we were so proud of what we accomplished – a 34th-place team finish is still very good."

**IHS:** *What were your thoughts on the final meet for Sara Smith, who placed 11th in the 50 freestyle and 20th in the 100 freestyle?*

**NS:** "Sara Smith is arguably one of the top student-athletes in the history of our program – she was only equaled by Jessica Botzum. She was a hundredth of a second away from eighth in the 50 free prelims, which would've guaranteed her All-American status. That's the closest margin of defeat you can have in swimming. It was just a little bad luck to be honest with you – she had a fine swim. She may have wanted a little bit more out of the

final weekend, but when you're a senior and it's the last meet of your career, you're just so proud of everything that you've done."

**IHS:** *In addition to Smith, two other seniors made up a big part of your successful relay team, which scored points by placing 15th in the 400 freestyle relay. Did you like how Megan Newell and Jordan McHorney ended their careers?*

**NS:** "Megan was just 0.27 seconds away from scoring in the 100 butterfly. She would've loved to have scored in that event, but she was such a key member of the 400 free relay at the end of the meet that I think she felt very good about her performance. Jordan had a great experience as well. She recorded a split of 49 seconds flat in her leg of the relay, which was the second-fastest split in our history of that event, just behind Smith. I think she felt very good about the way that her career ended."

**IHS:** *The other two contributors, Erika Hajnal and Steffi Drechsel, swam well and that's got to be promising for next season. Will they be the ones to take the torch from this year's seniors?*

**NS:** "Erika went up a little with her time in the 1,650 free, but she still finished 13th to score points, and doing that as a freshman is an excellent accomplishment. It's kind of an end to an era at Virginia Tech when you look at the graduation of that senior class, along with the absence of what Jessica Botzum did the year before. With that whole crew having gone through our program and having had so much success, we are going to look for Erika and Steffi to lead

the way with a very strong recruiting class. We'll have a young group of women, but we do have some seasoned veterans returning. It will kind of be the start of a new phase here and we're excited about going to that next phase of the program."

**IHS:** *Speaking of a strong recruiting class and the start of a new era, isn't that what the men had in play this year?*

**NS:** "As a freshman, Charlie Higgins was a top ACC performer, and at NCAAs, he finished 20th in the 100 backstroke. He didn't score points for us, but he was just 0.27 seconds off of doing so. He returns as a key player for us because he's so talented and so gifted. We had seven guys who scored points at ACCs who were all freshmen, and that really bodes well for where we want to head next year. We have some really strong divers coming to our team next year, and we really feel like our men's program could be more balanced than ever. It could definitely be the type of year that we say is their best year ever."

**IHS:** *Finally, let's not forget about junior diver Mikey McDonald, who scored in two events for the men this season at the national meet.*

**NS:** "When you look at the men's program, you can safely say that Mikey is the foundation of the team. He has been the only one to score points in either of the past two years at the NCAAs. We'd obviously like to see more guys score at that meet, but you take what you can get. He scored in the 1-meter and platform last year, and he scored in the 1-meter and 3-meter this year, making him an honorable mention All-American as well. He is the ultimate Hokie and someone who will continue to make us proud." 

Junior Mikey McDonald scored points in two diving events at the NCAA Championships for the second straight year.

# TECH WRESTLING PUTS ITSELF ON THE NCAA MAP

WITH EIGHT PARTICIPANTS AT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Matt Kovatch

When the Virginia Tech wrestling team bowed out of the NCAA Championships a day early on March 20, it did more than just put a close to a very successful season – it put a big orange and maroon pin in the national wrestling map.

Just one year removed from a 7-9 overall record and a tie for last place in the Atlantic Coast Conference, the Hokies suddenly mattered in the world of singlets and headgear. No longer a team to be overlooked, the Hokies steamrolled through the regular season with a 20-2 overall mark and an unblemished 5-0 in the ACC.

Wrestling pundits started taking notice. The Hokies were ranked 14th in the polls as the regular season concluded, with several individuals being ranked among the top 20 in their respective weight classes. Freshman 125-pounder Jarrod Garnett was voted the ACC's rookie of the year, and the NCAA selection committee awarded Tech with two wildcard entries into the national meet after the Hokies had six automatically qualified already.

So just think how head coach Kevin Dresser felt when he pulled up to the Scottrade Center in St. Louis with a van full of Hokies as opposed to the one wrestler he accompanied to the national meet a year ago.

"It was definitely exciting," Dresser said of having a full team at the national meet. "From a coaching standpoint, we were really busy all through Thursday and Friday [March 19 and 20], having eight guys out there. Of course, we lost our last two guys in the All-America round on Friday night, and the only thing that could be finer would be to be busy on Saturday, too. It was definitely a big change from a coaching perspective. We wrestled two matches out there last year, and this year we had over 20. It's progress and it's baby steps, but it's a good feeling."

A good feeling that even Dresser wouldn't admit to expecting back when this long season began in early November. Eight Hokies at the national championships?

"I'm greedy, but I think we would have been tickled to death in November to know that we would qualify eight guys," he conceded. "We would have been ecstatic. I was very disappointed on Friday night [March 20] that we didn't get an All-American, but that's probably



Heavyweight David Marone and 141-pounder Chris Diaz (not pictured) each won three matches at the NCAA Championships, just missing out on All-America status.

just the greedy side of me. We made great progress individually and we made great progress as a program. We put ourselves on the map nationally. Virginia Tech is definitely a Division-I wrestling program."

When you've sent eight guys to the national championships and you can reasonably expect every one of them back there next year, it is indeed safe to say that you're on the map. Of the eight Hokies who wrestled in St. Louis this year, not one is an upperclassman, with four being freshmen and four being sophomores. Dresser expects Tech to improve upon its 39th-place team finish in 2010.

"I don't care who you are – the first time you go there and there are 17,000 people screaming at you and you're not used to that – it takes your breath away a little bit," Dresser said. "We shouldn't be intimidated next year. We had a few guys who were a little stage-struck this year, but we should be over that. As a Division-I wrestler, when you mentally know that you can wrestle at that level – and you've been there and done that – great things happen."

Great things certainly will happen if the Hokies can build on this year's experience in the offseason. Here's a look at how each Hokie who made the trip to St. Louis fared, along with Dresser's thoughts on each wrestler:

## 125 POUNDS: Jarrod Garnett (2-2)

**First round:** def. Nick Bedelyon (Kent St.), 4-3

**Second round:** lost to No. 3 seed Angel Escobedo (Indiana), 2-1

**Consolations:** def. Prescott Garner (Navy), 18-5 (MD)

**Consolations:** lost to Obe Blanc (Oklahoma State), 17-4

**Dresser's take:** "Jarrod has been a pleasant surprise all year long. He was 2-2 at the nationals and I think he knows what he's got to do. We'll see how hard he approaches the offseason. I think he knows that he could be an All-American next year – there's no question – but it depends on if he is ready to go to work this offseason."

## 141: Chris Diaz (3-2)

**First round:** lost to No. 2 seed Zach Tanelli (Wisconsin), 8-4

**Consolations:** def. Elijah Nacita (CS Bakersfield), 11-6

**Consolations:** def. No. 5 seed Marcus Hoehn (Missouri), 16-5

**Consolations:** def. Jamal Parks (Oklahoma State), 4-3

**Consolations:** lost to No. 6 seed Nick Gallick (Iowa State), 6-1

**Dresser's take:** "Chris is right there. The difference between the top eight and the next guys is a fine line sometimes, and unfortunately, he's not yet quite over that fine line. But when you see yourself get that close and you don't make it, it's got to be a motivator. And Chris, like Jarrod – I'm going to sound like a broken record here – but we've got a lot of guys who are right on the line of being an All-American. They just have to get over the line."

**149:**  
**Pete Yates**

(Scratched due to injury)

**Dresser's take:** "[Pete's knee injury] was very frustrating. Pete was frustrated and we were frustrated because I felt like he would've made it to the All-America round. I think he's that good as a true freshman. You can't control injuries no matter what sport you're in. It's unfortunate that he got hurt, but he had a great year and he finished in the top 20 in the nation prior to the nationals. He can wrestle and he's the kind of kid who is going to work his you-know-what off in the offseason."

**157:**  
**Jesse Dong (0-2)**

**First round:** lost to No. 11 seed Chase Pami (Cal Poly), 5-1 (TB)

**Consolations:** lost to Kurt Kinser (Indiana), 10-2 (MD)

**Dresser's take:** "Jesse had a great season, but he had a tough draw out there [in St. Louis]. He drew two good guys. The 157-pound weight class was probably the deepest weight class at the NCAA Tournament. There weren't many easy consolation or championship matches there. He lost in double overtime in the first round to the kid who got seventh in the nation. You can't get much closer than that."

**174:**  
**Anthony Trongone (1-2)**

**Pigtail:** lost to Nate Rock (Buffalo), 2-1

**Consolations:** def. Hunter Meys (Boston), 8-5

**Consolations:** lost to Shane Onufer (Wyoming), 7-2

**Dresser's take:** "It was a good experience for Anthony to get out there. The determining factor for him, if he's ever going to be an All-American at Virginia Tech, is going to be the offseason, so we'll see."

**184:**  
**Tommy Spellman (1-2)**

**First round:** def. Christopher McNeil (Oklahoma State), 3-1 (SV)

**Second round:** lost to No. 3 Mike Pucillo (Ohio St.), 6-0

**Consolations:** lost to Rocco Caponi (Virginia), 1-0

**Dresser's take:** "Tommy won a match out there, but I can't say he was close to being an All-American this year because I think he's got a ways to go. He's got a choice to train to be one and he has the choice not to train so hard and just be an NCAA qualifier - there's a huge difference. He's got the ability. He's just got to get to work this summer."

**197:**  
**D.J. Bruce (0-2)**

**First round:** lost to No. 2 seed Jake Varner (Iowa State), 17-2 (TF)

**Consolations:** lost to Charles Silber (American), 10-4

**Dresser's take:** "D.J. didn't have a good NCAA Tournament. He's got to do a little soul searching to decide how badly he wants it in this sport. He's a great kid and a great team player, but individually, he's got to pay the price in the offseason. He's got to find a way to get tougher in the second half of a match as compared to the first half of a match. He struggles in the second half of the match and he's got to figure out how to get over that hump."

**285:**  
**David Marone (3-2)**

**First round:** lost to DJ Russo (Rutgers), Fall 4:48

**Consolations:** def. Clayton Jack (Oregon St.), 10-2

**Consolations:** def. Benjamin Berhow (Minnesota), 6-4

**Consolations:** def. Rashard Goff (Cleveland State), 7-4

**Consolations:** lost to No. 9 seed John Wise (Illinois), 5-2

**Dresser's take:** "David is probably the biggest overachiever we've got. Every time he steps out there, he's always undersized and he probably doesn't know as much wrestling as some guys on our team, but he just figures out a way to get it done. He had a terrible first-round match against a guy whom he had previously beaten, but he came back and won his next three and was right there knocking on the door of being an All-American. If we had gotten a better call against the kid from Illinois, he's in overtime, and in overtime, he's pretty good. I was very pleased with his effort." 

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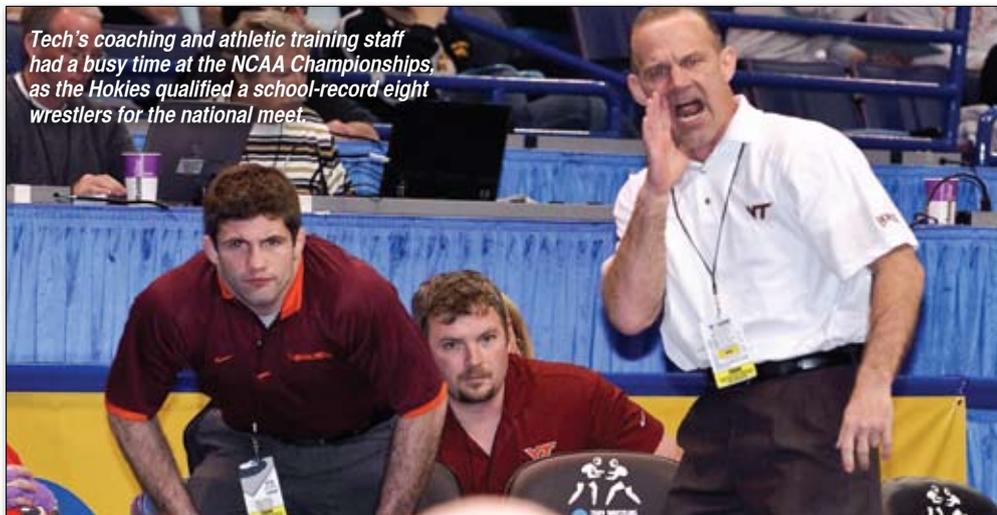
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Tech's coaching and athletic training staff had a busy time at the NCAA Championships, as the Hokies qualified a school-record eight wrestlers for the national meet.

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**BASEBALL**

The Tech baseball team concluded the month of March by playing a pair of games at completely different ends of the spectrum. A March 29 loss at N.C. State – which was just six minutes shy of four hours in length – by a score of 19-18 may have been Tech's ugliest game in recent memory, as the Hokies walked 13 batters, committed seven errors and allowed the most runs to an opponent since early 2007. Things weren't much better for the Wolfpack either, as they committed four errors of their own, while allowing 19 hits and letting the Hokies come back from a 12-4 deficit.

Two days later, however, Tech played its cleanest and most efficient contest of the season by breezing past James Madison 4-0 in two hours and 20 minutes. Five pitchers (Clark Labitan, Rhett Ballard, Kyle Cichy, Brandon Fisher and Ben Rowen) combined to shut out the Dukes on just seven hits and one walk. The Tech defense chipped in by playing errorless ball and the Hokies recorded their first shutout since May 9, 2007, against VMI.

So where do the Hokies fall within that spectrum? At 16-10 overall and 3-8 in the ACC at the end of March, the safest answer is to say it's somewhere in the middle. The 18 runs scored in that game were not a fluke, as it was the 13th time this season that Tech had scored in double digits. The Hokies have been hammering the ball all year, scoring over nine runs per game and batting .327 as a team.

But the one-walk, zero-error shutout was far from the norm for the Hokies. Through month's end, Tech ranked near the bottom of the league in fielding percentage and earned run average.

The injury bug has bitten the Hokies as well, but if guys like left fielder/catcher Steve Domecus (.416 avg., 19-game hitting streak), catcher Anthony Sosnoskie (.344 avg., six homers) and infielder Ronnie Shaban (.370 avg, 10 doubles) continue to hit, Tech should continue to win its share of games.



*Steve Domecus ended the month of March on a 19-game hitting streak.*

**SOFTBALL**

The Tech softball team's season got off to a rough start, but the Hokies won five games over the final week and a half of March to push their record to 13-17 overall and 3-3 in the ACC at month's end.

The highlight came with a series win over rival Virginia on March 28-29, with Tech claiming the final two games of a three-game set thanks to big efforts by seniors Charisse Mariconda and Beth Walker.

Mariconda hit an important two-run home run in the first inning of the clinching 5-2 win in game three, and when you include a doubleheader split with Radford on March

24, she put together a week that boasted a .462 batting average, a .611 on-base percentage and a .769 slugging percentage. The third baseman drew five walks, drove in six runs and scored five times to earn Virginia Tech's athlete of the week honors.

Walker, meanwhile, had her big performance in the game two win over the Cavaliers. The first baseman led the way at the plate with two hits (a double and a grand slam) and a career-high six runs driven in. The six RBIs mark a tie for the third-most for a single game in program history.

For the season to date, Mariconda is second on the team with a .413 batting average

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and three home runs. Two others – outfielder Jessica Everhart (.301, four homers) and designated player Jenna Rhodes (.446, 20 stolen bases) – have also posted solid offensive efforts to fuel the midseason surge.

## TRACK & FIELD

The outdoor track and field season began on March 21, and with a strong performance during the campaign's second weekend, senior thrower Brittany Pryor earned co-ACC women's track and field Performer of the Week honors on March 31.

Pryor became the first Hokie to regionally qualify for the outdoor postseason, tossing a distance of 184 feet, three inches to win the hammer throw at the Weems Baskins Relays in Columbia, S.C., on March 29. The Niagara Falls, N.Y., native outdistanced the runner-up finisher in the event by more than 20 feet, and surpassed the regional standard by more than six feet.

## GOLF

The Hokie golf team had three tournaments under its belt by the time March came to a close, and finished an impressive second in two of them.

Tech finished 15th at the Puerto Rico Classic on March 1 in a tournament that featured four of the top five teams in the



*Charisse Mariconda's hot bat helped the Hokies to a series win over Virginia in late March.*

country, and senior Drew Weaver tied for 10th individually after a 6-under-par 66 in the final round.

Weaver nearly won his first collegiate event on March 17 when he placed second at the Pinehurst Intercollegiate, three strokes behind the winner. As a team, the Hokies were

just five strokes shy of champion Penn State.

The High Point, N.C., native once again paced the Tech squad to a runner-up finish at the Furman Intercollegiate on March 29, this time finishing in a tie for fifth to mark his third top-10 finish of the spring.

## WOMEN'S TENNIS

Conference play has not been kind to the women's tennis team after it split its first two ACC matches. Since defeating Maryland on March 1 to begin the league slate 1-1, the Hokies have dropped five consecutive ACC contests to slip to 1-6 in the league and 10-8 overall by the end of March.

To be fair, all five of those losses came against top-25 opponents, including No. 5 Miami, No. 6 Georgia Tech, No. 13 Clemson, No. 18 Virginia and No. 25 Florida State. And to their credit, the Hokies have taken care of their three non-conference opponents during that time, defeating Winthrop and Tulane by identical scores of 6-1, and Richmond by a 5-2 margin.

Though the going has been tough against so many elite opponents, the Hokies' No. 1 doubles team of Jessica Brouwer and Holly Johnson provided a huge highlight against Clemson on March 21 when they knocked off the nation's eighth-ranked doubles team of Ani Mijacika and Keri Wong by a score of 8-5.

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