New coaches Jeff Grimes, Scot Loeffler and Aaron Moorehead join Tech's football staff as part of a shakeup by head coach Frank Beamer.

Jasmin Harrell hopes to lead the Tech softball squad back to the NCAA regionals, while slugger Tyler Horan returns to a Hokie baseball team with high expectations this season.

New coaches Jeff Grimes, Scot Loeffler and Aaron Moorehead join Tech's football staff as part of a shakeup by head coach Frank Beamer.
David Marone dominated Virginia’s Derek Papagianopoulos 7-1 and the Hokies dominated the Cavaliers 25-6 on Nov. 25. The Tech wrestling squad went undefeated in ACC competition this season and goes into the ACC Championships looking for its first league title.

"I am very thankful to the Hokie Club for its generous gifts that have made my time here at Tech possible. The Hokie Club made it possible to get where we are today."

DAVID MARONE
Senior | Wrestling

"Your donations made it possible for me to attend school and wrestle at Virginia Tech. Thank you for all of your support."

PETE YATES
Senior | Wrestling
Q: Being a member of the Hokie Club and supporting Virginia Tech athletics is important to me and my family because: A: It gives us the ability to give young men and women the opportunity to experience college sports at Virginia Tech and all it has to offer. It gives them a chance to become a member of the Hokie Nation, which is something that is hard to describe but an experience they will never forget. We have been able to establish an endowed scholarship for an athlete majoring in art and would like to thank them for their commitment to helping improve Virginia Tech athletics! Because of this tremendous support, we have been able to establish an endowed scholarship for an athlete majoring in art.

Q: Do you have any game day or tailgating traditions or superstitions? A: When we were stuck in traffic on one of our many trips driving to Tech from Delaware, and we said, "Why don’t we make it a Thursday night!" That decision has proven to be interesting. We have wanted to play Notre Dame forever, and it will be interesting. We have wanted to play the Irish show up in Lane Stadium. Maybe we can get lucky and make it a Thursday night!

Q: What lengths have you taken to travel to see the Hokies play? A: After Laura and I got married, we used to travel week in and week out from Delaware to see Hokie football games. The years we had three home games in a row made it difficult, but we did it! Today, we follow the Hokies to all home and away bowl games. We enjoy seeing the different cities and stadiums. Addie and Audie (we loved that trip this year) and Syncoole will be interesting. We have wanted to play Notre Dame forever, and it will be interesting. We have wanted to play the Irish show up in Lane Stadium. Maybe we can get lucky and make it a Thursday night!

Q: What year did you graduate? A: After Laura and I got married, we used to travel week in and week out from Delaware to see Hokie football games. The years we had three home games in a row made it difficult, but we did it! Today, we follow the Hokies to all home and away bowl games. We enjoy seeing the different cities and stadiums. Addie and Audie (we loved that trip this year) and Syncoole will be interesting. We have wanted to play Notre Dame forever, and it will be interesting. We have wanted to play the Irish show up in Lane Stadium. Maybe we can get lucky and make it a Thursday night!

Q: What are your current residences? A: Our grassy area. We would spend the days tailgating traditions or superstitions? If so, what are they? A: I’m not sure if you’re a Hokie or a Hokie fan, but I think I can see you at a game some time.
Custis, Houseright named ACC Legends

Former Tech men’s basketball player Ace Custis and women’s basketball standout Michelle Houseright were named part of the 2013 ACC Legends class, as announced by ACC Commissioner John Swofford. Each school is represented with a former male and female player or coach.

Custis guided the Hokies to the 1995 NIT championship and led the program to the 1996 NCAA Tournament. A three-time all-conference player, he led Tech in rebounding for four consecutive seasons and his total of 1,177 career boards ranks third in Tech history. The 6-foot-7 performer still ranks 10th on the Tech career list for points scored (1,706), fifth in career rebound average (9.3) and seventh in career blocked shots (196). He is one of only three players in Tech history to surpass the 1,000 mark in both points and rebounds.

The men’s Legends will be honored at this year’s ACC Men’s Basketball Tournament in Greensboro, N.C., during the annual ACC Basketball Legends Brunch, which will be held on Saturday, March 16, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Sheraton Four Seasons Hotel.

Houseright, whose maiden name is Hollister, was part of three teams that played in the NCAA Tournament (1995, 1998 and 1999), including one that made the Sweet 16 (1999). She finished her career at Tech with 1,112 points, 1,124 rebounds, 199 assists and 201 steals for points scored (1,706), sixth in career field-goal percentage at 46.7. She also holds the mark for the third-most points scored in a single game when she knocked down 23 against Providence.

The women’s Legends will be honored at the ACC Women’s Basketball Legends’ Brunch on Saturday, March 9, at 10 a.m., and then will be introduced to the Greensboro Coliseum crowd at halftime of the first semifinal game of the ACC Women’s Basketball Tournament on that same day.

Exum out indefinitely with a torn ACL

The news out of the Virginia Tech Tech athletics department had been positive for nearly all of January, with quarterback Logan Thomas, defensive end James Gayle and cornerback Antone Exum coming back to school and then the hiring of three qualified assistant coaches on the offensive side of the football.

But the football program suffered a blow when Exum, a rising redshirt senior from Glen Allen, Va., tore the ACL and meniscus in his right knee during a pickup basketball game. Exum underwent surgery, and he figures to be out 6-9 months. He will definitely miss spring practice and possibly some of next season's games.

Exum, a second-team All-ACC selection and the MVP of the Russell Athletic Bowl, recorded 48 tackles (35 solo) and a team-leading five interceptions. He led the ACC with 16 pass breakups. His interception in the bowl game turned the momentum for Tech.

Longtime Tech athletics department employee passes away

Buford Meredith, the longest-tenured employee in the Tech athletics department, passed away on Jan. 23 at the age of 78.

Meredith, a grounds foreman, started working at Tech in 1962 and in the athletics department in April of 1966. He helped with the construction of Cassell Coliseum, and he helped build the Jamerson Athletics Center, which serves as the primary nerve center of the athletics department’s facilities over the years, including the mowing of the fields and the cross country course.

Meredith is best known, though, for painting the lines and end zones on Worsham Field before home football games. He performed this task until 2005 when he started concentrating on other duties for home football games.

“He was so helpful and down to earth,” said Casey Underwood, the director of outside facilities in the athletics department and Meredith’s supervisor for the past 14 years. “He taught us a lot about athletics work and field painting. I picked up a lot of good habits from him. You just couldn’t ask for a better person to work with.

“I know a lot of people would ask me when Buford is going to retire, and I told them I didn’t know. I know he liked working, and as long as he wanted to, I was more than willing to have him around. He’s going to be missed.”

Meredith left behind his wife of 54 years, Shirley Stafford Meredith. The funeral was held Jan. 27 in Pembroke, Va.
Tech coach Frank Beamer sat on the stage at the Schott Media Center in the south end zone of Lane Stadium. His three new coaching hires flanked him, all sitting there with a thong of media anxiousily awaiting to toss them questions and the bright lights shining squarely upon them — literally, for sure, and probably figuratively as well.

Following the 7–6 grind of the 2012 season, Beamer overhaulcd his staff on offense, a foundation-setting move that he hopes catapults the program back to the upper tiers of college football’s hierarchy. He cited the general consistency of the Hokies’ 2012 offense as the motivation behind the move, but digging deeper reveals a more important factor.

Beamer wants his program to get back to running the football. With power. With speed. With aggression. With intensity.

“I haven’t changed my belief in that the first thing you need to be able to do is run the football,” he admitted. “There’s no question we need to address how our offense’s consistency, particularly in the running game.

Beamer wants his program to get back to running the football. With power. With speed. With aggression. With intensity.

“I haven’t changed my belief in that the first thing you need to be able to do is play better. All three of those possess potential, but need to play better.

Grimes wants to build “the toughest line in the ACC.” The task has already started in strength work in several areas. It all probably starts up front, where new line coach Jeff Grimes goes into spring practice looking to build a capable front. Tech lost starters Nick Becton and Vinston Mango be of help?

Of course, the process also involves schemes. That’s where new coordinator Scot Loeffler, with his background of having coached at Michigan, Florida, Temple, Auburn and the NFL’s Detroit Lions, comes into play.

“It’s the fundamental base thing you have to do well to be a successful offense,” Loeffler said of the running game. “Even the spread teams, like Urban’s (Meyer) offense (at Florida), we ran the ball. Spread, wishbone, two-back, one-back … it’s teams that protect the football and can run are the teams that are winning.”

Beamer knows this. He watched Alabama win the national championship because of its power rushing attack. He watched the Baltimore Ravens get to the Super Bowl and win it because of their ability to run the football. And he’s seen his teams do it this way in the past, having won four ACC titles in nine seasons.

Will his new hires help the program get back to that level? He’s betting so. He and Hokie Nation will find out starting this spring.
Intelligence and toughness are two of many things new offensive coordinator wants to see out of Tech’s offense.

“Intelligence” and “toughness.” Those are two words you hear frequently coming from Scott Loeffler, Virginia Tech’s new offensive coordinator. He wants his players to play smart and be tough. He wants a quarterback who’s smart and rugged, and he wants an offense that plays that way each and every snap.

If Loeffler learned anything during his playing days and early in his coaching career at the University of Michigan in the 1990’s, he learned the recipe to win at the highest level. You win by playing physical, cerebral football … like former coach Lloyd Carr’s teams did in Ann Arbor.

A quarterback for the Wolverines from 1993-96, Loeffler earned his bachelor’s degree in 1996. Then, as a student and graduate assistant coach under Carr, he worked on staff during the Wolverines’ 1997 undefeated national championship season. He spent six seasons as the Wolverines’ quarterbacks coach before moving to the NFL for a season. Stops at Florida, Temple and Auburn preceded his move to Blacksburg, Loeffler eagerly jumped on it.

“Coach Carr, who is my mentor still, told me to ‘run, not walk’ for the chance to work for Frank Beamer at Virginia Tech,” Loeffler said.

Even with other college and pro options on the table, Loeffler did eagerly pursue and quickly accept Beamer’s offer.

“Coach Beamer has been here for 27 years, and I’m 38,” Loeffler said. “In my era, Virginia Tech, in my mind, has always been a storybook program. They win. They win by doing things the right way. They’re going to graduate their football players. They’re going to follow the rules and win with integrity.

“Any time you’re at a place that does it the right way, wins on a consistent basis, graduates their kids, and makes sure their kids have a very successful career after football, you run to that place. That’s what Virginia Tech is, and why I’m so thankful to be here.”

Beamer, as many know, is close with Carr. They have similar personalities and goals. Their respect for the game itself, for their staffs, and for their respective fan bases is legendary.

Beamer discussed the Hokies’ offensive situation with Carr, and Loeffler’s name quickly came up. Plus, he’ll bring that intelligence and toughness Beamer wanted.

While he visited face to face with other candidates, Beamer knew rather quickly that Loeffler was his man. There was a connection.

“Coach Beamer is very similar to Coach Carr, who I consider a friend and a mentor,” Loeffler said. “He (Carr) was my coach. Every time I hear Coach Beamer talk, it reminds me very much of Lloyd. These places (Michigan and Virginia Tech) have stood for the same values. Win. Do it the right way. Graduate their players. Care about their kids.”

So what will Tech’s 2013 offense look like? What are Loeffler’s ideals?

“No. 1 is I want an offense that will protect the football,” Loeffler said. “It’s amazing the little things – the teams that turn over the football are generally the teams that lose the game. We want to protect the football, and we want to run the football. If you protect it and run it effectively in any league, you got a chance to win the football game.”

But don’t expect Loeffler and the Hokies to be a totally grind-it-out offense. He wants to be able to do both.

“We will be balanced,” he said. “As much as I like running it, I understand you have to throw the football, especially against today’s defenses. We are going to do both. I’d like us to be a big ‘formation movement’ team and be multiple, and have multiple personnel groupings.”

In easy-to-understand words, what should Tech fans expect?

“We will be a pro-style offense that is multiple, with the ability to run the ball from the quarterback position,” he said. “You have to be able to do that in college football today.”

It’s with the quarterbacks where Loeffler has excelled over the years, tutoring some of the best, such as Tebow, Navarre, Henson, Brady and others.

“My biggest strength is probably the quarterback position,” Loeffler said. “I’ve been very blessed to have great teachers. Lloyd (Carr) was an ex-quarterback. Cam Cameron coached me in college. All the contacts I’ve made throughout my career. That’s what I love to do. Take a guy out of high school, develop him and watch him grow into a great college player and then obviously an NFL player.”

Loeffler is inheriting a guy who will rewrite most – if not all – Tech quarterback records during his career. Logan Thomas is back for one more year in Blacksburg, and that means it’s one year with Loeffler.

“I’m excited about Logan,” Loeffler said. “He wants to be great. He loves Virginia Tech, and these are going to be right great months with Logan.”

He likes Thomas’ brain, and he likes Logan’s competitiveness.

“Exactly, intelligence and toughness, that’s Logan,” Loeffler said. “You never lose with intelligence and toughness. Moving forward, if we can find another guy who is super smart and who’s tough and has some talent, we’ve got a chance. Leadership is right up there too. That’s what we’re looking for.”

He’s 38 years old, working with college football’s winningest active coach, at a program that reminds him much of his alma mater in Michigan. Loeffler isn’t just excited because he’s here – he’s excited because of the potential of Tech’s program.

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Two members of the Tech softball team share an unbreakable bond. Sisters Courtney and Bailey Liddle have shared the highs of playing college softball together and the lows of finding out their mother, Nancy, who was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer, was not responding to the most recent treatments. Early in the fall semester, Courtney had the idea of making a video for her mother after hearing what other teams were doing for Hokies who were battling different health issues.

Courtney told Bailey about the idea of creating a video for their mother, and Bailey suggested presenting the video to their mother for Christmas. An avid Hokie, Nancy Liddle is well known for her attendance at every home softball game since her oldest daughter began at Tech. The Liddle sisters knew hearing from fellow Hokies would be just what their mother needed to remain encouraged during such trying times. In November, the sisters borrowed a video camera from a teammate and started on their journey of collecting well wishes from fellow Hokies. When Bailey and Courtney told a few student-athletes about their idea, the outpouring of support was incredible.

"Everyone was so helpful, and the video is just really a small sample of the loving words that were shared," Courtney said. "I can't even count the number of people who wanted to be in the video but couldn't because of schedule conflicts or time constraints."

Student-athletes from football, softball, baseball, men’s basketball, swimming and diving and women’s cross country took the time to share a few words of encouragement. Coaches from several sports including softball, baseball, wrestling and swimming and football team chaplain Johnny Shelton also stepped up to show their support for Courtney and Bailey and the fight their mother was going through. Christmas day was full of emotion in the Liddle household, and Courtney and Bailey were thankful not only to share their present with their mother, but also of the unexpected volume of support they received from their Hokie family.

“Seeing my parents spoil over with tears on Christmas morning was one of the most emotional moments of my life because, even though this cancer has brought our family so much heartbreak, my mom could finally see how inspirational she has been (and still is) to so many Hokies,” Courtney said. "I don’t think there’s any better place to be loved and supported. God knew the Hokie family would take care of the Liddles."

With the amount of time Virginia Tech student-athletes spend together practicing, travelling and competing, it’s no wonder they consider their teammates and coaches to be an extended family. These, and so many others, are examples of the ways they support each other when it matters most. Although Hokie Pride isn’t something that can be seen, it can definitely be felt in the hearts of Tech student-athletes.
Virginia Tech football coach Frank Beamer took a conservative approach with the Tech offense over the years, preferring a stable approach that has produced steady winning results.

But a 7-6 season and inconsistent performances on offense prompted a bold move just a few weeks ago by the Tech coach, who will be starting his 27th season in Blacksburg.

Beamer stepped outside of his comfort zone with a staff shakeup rarely seen in those parts, hiring three new coaches and changing his offensive coordinator. The 66-year-old coach hired Scott Loeffler to be his new coordinator, while naming Jeff Grimes and Aaron Moorehead as the new offensive line and receivers coach, respectively. Beamer moved Bryan Stinespring, the previous two seasons, as the coordinator, and the past 17 years, as the tight ends coach, and added recruiting coordinator to his title.

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Beamer’s hiring of Grimes as the offensive coordinator makes perfect sense, given that he worked with Loeffler at Auburn and thus knows his schemes. Grimes, a 44-year-old who graduated from UTEP (Class of 1991), comes with strong roots as the quarterbacks coach for the Detroit Lions, as the coordinator, and the previous two seasons, as the receivers coach. The 2003 Illinois graduate (Class of 1996) who played quarterback for the Orange Bowl champs as a freshman.

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“Not only younger, but taller,” Beamer joked. “Nah, I can’t say that. But I can say that we’re going to have a good blend of older guys and younger guys connecting with kids in recruiting can help. I feel very comfortable with where we are.”

“Anytime you can be a part of a place that has that type of head coach, has that type of tradition, that wins and does things the right way and graduates players, you run and you stay as long as you possibly can. So I’m ecstatic to be here.”

Loeffler, who has worked with Tebow, Tom Brady, Brian Grises, Chad Henne, Drew Henson and Manning, and winning a Super Bowl ring in the NFL – takes over an offense that struggled much of last season. The Hokies’ offensive line has been a source of contention among the fan base over the past several years, and Grimes will be tasked with bringing some on-field consistency to the unit.

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“Not only younger, but taller,” Beamer joked. “Nah, I can’t say that. But I can say that we’re going to have a good blend of older guys and younger guys connecting with kids in recruiting can help. I feel very comfortable with where we are.”

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Inside Hokie Sports' Top 5

KENDALL FULLER | The lone 5-star recruit in the class, Fuller is the type of shutdown corner that every program covets. He dominated at the high school level – so much so that two teams challenged him. His brothers say he’s the best in a family of loaded athletes, and his numbers back that up. He possesses the type of ability to play early and often at Tech.

WYATT TELLER | Teller joined Fuller as early and often at Tech. He possesses the type of ability to play up. He’s very athletic, very smart, very competitive – just like his brothers say he is. And he’s only a junior.

BUCY HODGES | Hodges reminds many of Logan Thomas because of his size (6-6, 230) and speed, which made him a top recruit among quarterbacks. He throws the ball pretty well, having tossed it around for more than 2,000 yards each of the past two seasons, and he knows how to escape the pocket, with nearly 1,000 yards rushing the past two years.

BRAXTON PFARR | Pfarr is a big, powerful young man with good feet and someone who, judging from his highlight tape, loves to put defensive linemen on their backs. He’s also a winner, having been a part of two state championship teams. Though he played at a private school and wasn’t well known by many of the big name schools, he got the ability to make a quick impact at Tech.

HOLLAND FISHER | Fisher battled injuries for much of this past season and his statistics suffered as a result, but that didn’t stop Alabama and Ohio State from trying to get him to renege on his Tech commitment. He’s a big, fluid athlete who can run, and he’ll get a shot for early playing time in Tech’s defensive backfield as a safety.

It’s been a busy six weeks for the man in charge of Tech’s football program. First, he spent a countless number of hours hiring three new coaches to his staff. Then, he spent even more time than that helping his staff secure one of the nation’s top recruiting classes. But Frank Beamer doesn’t mind working so hard when he see the results he wants.

The 2013 National Signing Day came and went quietly for Beamer and the Hokies, who have seen their share of drama over the years. But their 28-member 2013 class is deep, and the staff members inked a class rated in the top 25 nationally by both Rivals and 247Sports, two organizations that focus on recruiting.

ESPN ranked the class 19th nationally and third in the ACC. Rivals ranked it 20th nationally and fourth in the ACC.

“We’ll answer that question for sure in three or four years,” Beamer said when asked about this being one of his highest-ranked classes ever. “But I do feel good about these kids. They have good athletic ability. They are good-quality kids, and they’re a good fit for Virginia Tech.”

Several recruits possess family ties to the Tech program, but the most important family connection centered on the Fuller family, as Kendall Fuller, the younger brother of former Tech players Vinnie and Corey Fuller and current player Kyle Fuller, followed his brothers to Blacksburg. The cornerback from Baltimore, Md., was the Hokies’ lone 5-star recruit and ranked as the No. 9 overall prospect in the nation by Rivals and the No. 9 cornerback.

Tech staff brings in top-25 recruiting class for the second straight year

by Jimmy Robertson

Fuller won every award imaginable after a senior season in which he caught 44 passes for 695 yards and seven touchdowns as a receiver, and finished with 28 tackles and three interceptions on defense. “The tough thing about Kendall Fuller is he’s the last one,” Beamer laughed. “We’d like to have a couple more come through here.”

“Kendall is extremely athletic, and I think he’ll have a chance to figure in somewhere in our secondary. I think he needs to get his hands on the ball some. We’ll work with him as a return guy, and maybe after he gets settled defensively, we’ll get him an offensive package. But he’s quite a player. He’s very athletic, very smart, very competitive – just like that whole family.”

Fuller, though, wasn’t the lone headliner of the class. Holland Fisher, a free safety from Richmond, Virginia Beach, Va., was one of the top in-state prospects to sign with Tech and a part of the Hokies’ top-25 recruiting class.

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back top-25 classes should be the foundation for nationally for the second straight year. Back-to-
put together a class that ranks among the top 25 season.
Doing so gives them the advantage of going through Carlis Parker and defensive back Brandon Facyson. McLaughlin and Parker Osterloh, quarterback listed as "athletes" end up.
respectively, at those spots. Those numbers, though, on the offensive line, cornerbacks, safeties and知
9.5-sack junior season. Fisher recorded 72 tackles 2016 according to 247Sports, Fuller, Fisher, Teller and Anthony Shegog FS 6-2 200 Stafford, Va. North Stafford Bud Foster Kyshoen Jarrett UVa Listed as the No. 16 prospect in Virginia by The Roanoke Times
Braxton Pfaff OL 6-4 285 Lynchburg, Va. Liberty Christian Academy Cornell Brown Nigel Williams UVa, WVU, Liberty Listed as the No. 27 prospect in Virginia by The Roanoke Times
Parker Osterloh OL 6-8 301 Williamsburg, Va. Warhill Bryan Stinespring Augie Conte UVa, JMU Listed as the No. 28 prospect in Virginia by The Roanoke Times
Bucky Hodges QB 6-5 230 Virginia Beach, Va. Salem Bryan Stinespring J.C. Coleman Ohio State, WVU, Maryland, UConn Listed as the No. 4 prospect in Virginia by The Roanoke Times
Holland Fisher FS 6-2 200 Richmond, Va. Manchester Shane Beamer Joel Caleb Alabama, Ohio State Rated the No. 10 safety prospect nationally by Rivals
Brandon Facyson DB 6-2 173 Newnan, Ga. Northgate Torrian Gray Connor Jessop Georgia Tech, Missouri, Ole Miss, UNC Listed as the No. 39 CB prospect in the nation by 247Sports

The class overall features a nice balance of ACC championships.
Fisher, tailback D.J. Reid and cornerback Cequan Beamer – who inked six prospects out of Richmond including Hodges. Running backs coach Shane Newsome signed a combined five prospects from the Tidewater/Peninsula areas, including Hodges. He gives Tech a best players out of the state who can help us win the ACC. We're going to work hard and get the best players out of the state of Virginia," Beamer said. "Virginia is a highly recruited state. There are a lot of chances out there who realize Virginia is a good state for football. But that needs to be our foundation – that we get the best players out of the state who can help us win the ACC."

As usual, the staff cut a wide not out within the state. Bryan Simmsong and former offensive line coach Curt Doughty signed two quarterbacks in high school, but Tech loses both Tariq Edwards and Jack Tyler after this season, and Chase Williams will return as a senior next year after sorority, which was important for the staff.

A total of 11 prospects listed as "athletes" end up.

Whether you like to look at that spot, so Tech's staff signed two quarterbacks in this class all over the state. One – Brandon Motley – a year ago.

For the second year in a row, the staff signed at least the No.3 CB in the nation, this time bringing in four. McLaughlin, from Mauldin, S.C., by way of Fork Union, may be the closest of the group to play left for the first year. He has experience at both corner and safety.

The rest of the class follows Tech's blueprint for recruits. The staff concentrates first and then when we got on Carlis, that was a good fit, too. We added the quarterbacks that we thought were the best for us. There were a lot of good quarterbacks around, but we're pleased with the two we got.

"We're hoping to get a commitment for one next year, too," he said. One place (quarterback) where you better be good. I think it's a proven fact that you have to be a good quarterback to play in the ACC.

"We're going to work hard and get the best players out of the state of Virginia," Beamer said. "Virginia is a highly recruited state. There are a lot of chances out there who realize Virginia is a good state for football. But that needs to be our foundation – that we get the best players out of the state who can help us win the ACC."

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Before the game or after, Preston’s Restaurant is a delicious place for a new game-day tradition.

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The Inn at Virginia Tech
On his position:
"I think the technique and my strength are my two strong points, because I can just be explosive off the line. This was a chance for me to be myself, be my own man, be my own guy. At the beginning, I was shaky, but I knew I could do it, and I did it. I got it done."

On the memorable moment as a player:
"I would say when we beat Miami on our high school. Bartman Trail, this season by scoring a game-winning field goal. This is the biggest moment so far in my career, since I was in the ninth grade, and I had built relationships with the coaches. I thought I was the right place for me.

On his position:
"I probably be a safety or a corner. It doesn't matter to me. If I had to choose, it would be safety. It's a key role, it's like the quarterback of the defense."

On his favorite players:
"I think I'm going to be like Michael Vick, I grew up watching Michael Vick, and I try to play like them. I think I'm similar to them, I grew up watching Michael Vick, and I try to do things on the field.

On his favorite team:
"I played both quarterbacks, so I would say Carolina Panthers quarterback. I think I'm similar to them. I grew up watching Michael Vick, and I try to play like them.

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On his impact on his brothers:
"Well, he's the field general. You lead the team. You work on the coaching staff. You see the whole field. You're the field general. You lead the team."

On his strengths and weaknesses:
"I think I diagnose plays before they happen. I like to see the field and get the right answers on the ballgame."

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**JAMIE ON NEWSOME**

State: Played quarterback as a senior and attacker as a junior and sophomore. Both for 287 yards and two touchdowns. His three-year total: 1,724 yards and 17 touchdowns. He really did a lot this year, and he really helped us get into the academics. They have what I’m looking for, and the academics. They have what I’m looking for, and the academics. They have what I’m looking for, and the academics. They have what I’m looking for, and the academics.

**PALMER OSSERMAN**

State: Caught seven passes for 190 yards and a score — his father’s first of the year. He also rushed for 30 yards on two carries (15 total) and had a reception for 21 yards. He’s a big receiver with great hands and a quick release. He also has a strong arm and can beat defenders one-on-one. He’s a big target in the middle of the field, and he’s a quick mover overall. He’s a good blocker, and he has a good understanding of the game. He’s a great leader for his team, and he’s a great passer. He’s a great leader for his team, and he’s a great passer. He’s a great leader for his team, and he’s a great passer. He’s a great leader for his team, and he’s a great passer.

**PARKER OSERMAN**

State: Placed 15 tackles, including 12 for a loss, as a senior. He had eight sacks, including four for 25 yards and three for 10. He also had one interception and three pass breakups in his senior year. He’s a very athletic and quick defensive end. He’s a great rusher and a great pass defender. He’s a great rusher and a great pass defender. He’s a great rusher and a great pass defender. He’s a great rusher and a great pass defender.

Top honors: A 3-star recruit by Rivals and the No. 29 prospect in the nation by 247Sports. He was also selected to and played in the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas and the Orange-Bowl Classic.

Why he chose Tech: “I’m really into the idea of being a Virginia Tech fan. I love Virginia Tech, and my family always loved Virginia Tech. When I got that scholarship, I felt like I was surrounded by great people surrounding me.”

On his position: “They’re (Tech’s coaches) told me they view me as a backer. I’ll be doing a lot of the same things I did in high school. I’m used to being right off the edge and covering receivers, but I’m also used to playing at the line of scrimmage and being in defensive packages.”

On his strengths and weaknesses: “I’m strong and fast, and I think I’m really good at the position I play. I have a good understanding of the game, and I’m a great leader. I’m a great leader. I’m a great leader. I’m a great leader. I’m a great leader.

On enrolling early: “I want to do it. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. I want to play right away. 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ANTHONY SHEGOG

Stats: Played halfback and receiver as a senior and scored 16 touchdowns, including five on defense and two on punt returns. Had 111 total yards on offense his senior season. Rushed for 447 yards and five touchdowns on only 31 carries in North Stafford’s three playoff games. Finished with 62 tackles, five forced fumbles, five fumble recoveries and two interceptions his senior season.

Top honors: A 4-star recruit by both Rivals and 247Sports. Ranked the No. 64 safety overall in the nation and the No. 5 overall player in Virginia by 247Sports. Rated the No. 32 strongside defensive end prospect in the nation by Rivals and the No. 31 overall prospect in the nation by 247Sports. Listed as the No. 10 strongside defensive end and No. 50 overall prospect in Virginia by 247Sports. Named the Group AA defensive player of the year by the Virginia High School Coaches Association.

Why he chose Tech: “It was down here. I grew up in Fredericksburg. I know all the coaches. They’re not that far from where I grew up. I’m fine with it.”

On his strengths and weaknesses: “I’ll say my strengths are coming down hill and making tackles, and I’m usually in the right place at the right time. I probably need to work on my coverage skills. They’re not too bad, but they can always get better.”

Most memorable moment as a player: “I’d say winning back-to-back regional championships. I had a part in helping to do that, probably more this year than last year. I scored four touchdowns against Mountain View this year to help us win.”

Personal: Born July 24, 1995, in Manassas, Va. … Son of Richard and Cheryl Teller … Has an older brother and three older sisters … Contemplated majors are political science or criminal justice.

STATS: Finished with 120 tackles, 11 sacks and four forced fumbles as a senior. Recorded 85 tackles, including 27 for a loss, 9.5 sacks and five forced fumbles his junior year. Also had three interceptions and five blocked kicks his junior year.

Top honors: A 4-star recruit by both Rivals and 247Sports. Ranked the No. 10 overall prospect in Virginia by Rivals and the No. 8 overall prospect in Virginia. Listed as the No. 10 strongside defensive end prospect in the nation and the No. 10 overall prospect in Virginia by 247Sports. Ranked the No. 11 prospect in Virginia by the Roanoke Times ... Named the Group AA defensive player of the year by the Virginia High School Coaches Association.

Why he chose Tech: “You can’t get better coaches. Coach (Bud) Foster and Coach (Frank) Beamer are great, and Coach (Charley) Wills can make me better as a player. It just felt like family there. I’ve got a lot of family and friends who go there, and it’s going to feel like I haven’t left Fauquier County.”

On his position: “They’re (the coaches) reminded me as a defensive end. But with my size, if I put on weight, I’ll move down (to defensive tackle). If I get faster I’ll stay at end. But if I get moved down, I won’t get mad about it.”

On his strengths and weaknesses: “I think my motor, and I love the weight room. My strength is something I pride myself on. Also I try to work harder than everyone else. Those are my strong points. I need to work on my speed and getting used to the speed of the game. I also need to work on all the little things so that I can become the best player I can.”

Most memorable moment as a player: “Last year, we lost to Kettle Run, but this year, I ran a fake field goal and got in for a touchdown, and we won 15-14. That was awesome.”

Personal: Born Nov. 25, 1994 in Manassas, Va. … Son of Richard and Cheryl Teller … Has an older brother and three older sisters … Contemplated majors are political science or criminal justice.

An older brother … Major is undecided.
Lack of depth taking its toll on Hokies as season moves toward final weeks

by Jimmy Robertson

Fresh off an extremely disappointing overtime loss to the North Carolina Tar Heels in Chapel Hill, Tech coach James Johnson sat in the postgame news conference after fielded question after question about the loss and the team going forward.

When asked if there was anything he could have done to change things and keep his team from “wearing down,” he gave a good-natured response:

“What I could do is tell him (UNC coach Roy Williams) not to play all those guys he’s playing,” Johnson said with a smile. “Tell him, ‘Let’s play 6 for 6. You can’t do any more.’ But that’s not how the game works.”

The Hokies, who fell to 11-10 overall following the 72-66 setback to the Tar Heels, led for the entire first half after jumping out to a 12-0 lead. Tech held that lead for the first 10 minutes of the second half as well.

But in the final minutes, the Hokies made just two field goals. That said, they somehow had the ball with a chance to win the game in the waning moments. Erick Green, who struggled for most of the game, missed a shot with less than four seconds remaining, and the game ultimately went into overtime. The Tar Heels outscored the Hokies 17-5 in the extra frame to pull out the victory.

Tech’s lack of depth is starting to show. The roster features nine scholarship players, but only eight of them play, and one of those, freshman Marshall Wood, just returned from a fractured foot. Johnson likes the attitude of his team despite the struggles. He continues to applaud their work ethic, and he says they possess too much pride to give in to any team.

When asked if he would have a very nice career, but he’s still averaging 25 points per game. "I think it’s just a matter of being confident and being focused," Raines said. "I was finishing. The plays were going down for me, and I was making shots.

GREEN TORCHES ACC BEST

The Hokies played Virginia, Clemson and Miami in back-to-back-to-back games in six days.

But Green, who was the nation’s leading scorer going into those games, got the best of all three, even though the Hokies came out on the losing end of each game. He scored a career-high 35 points against Virginia on 11 of 18 shooting (6 of 8 from beyond the arc). Then he scored 25 points in the road loss at Clemson, and he closed the three-game outburst with a 30-point performance against the Hurricanes. He hit 11 of 20 from the floor against Miami, including a career-high five 3-pointers.

“I thought going to Virginia Tech, you know, he would have a very nice career, but he’s developed into the leading scorer in the country. That’s a whole ‘nother level,” said Miami coach Jim Larranaga, who recruited Green when he was the head coach at George Mason. “When everybody’s attention is on you, you’re going to get every defender’s best effort. You’re getting every team’s best defender on the perimeter. It’s very, very hard to get by the way he has. It’s a remarkable accomplishment by him.”

For much of the season, Green has led the nation in scoring. After being held to 16 points against North Carolina on 7 of 21 shooting, he was still averaging 25 points per game.

“This is the most fun I’ve had in my four years,” Green said. “And I know we’re losing and it’s probably crazy for me to say that, but I’m having a great time with those guys in my last year. Those guys are getting me open, and I’m just making shots and I’m having a great time. I wouldn’t trade this for the world.”

BROWN UNLIKELY HERO AGAINST WAKE FOREST

Mired in a terrible shooting slump, Brown found himself with the basketball and the shot clock running down in the waning moments of the Hokies’ game against Wake Forest on Jan. 29.

Brown, a sophomore from Clermont, Fla., had missed nine of his previous 10 shot attempts before the game. He finished 2 of 11 from the floor, with four points.

But Brown picked up his play following the Wake Forest win. “I’ve got two in a row (ACC wins), and we’re still averaging 25 points against Virginia, but scored nine points against Clemson, eight against Miami and 10 against the Tar Heels.

Cedarian Raines scored in double figures in back-to-back games for the Hokies when he had 10 points against Miami and 12 against UNC.

Raines making progress

For the most part this season, Raines, Tech’s centre, has been splitting time with redshirt freshman Joey van Zegeren, and thus, his numbers haven’t been what many expected. But Raines showed signs of reverting back to the way he played at the end of last season when he averaged 10.3 points and 6.6 rebounds in the final eight games. He scored 10 points on 5 of 6 shooting from the floor and grabbed eight rebounds against Miami’s huge front line – the Hurricanes are the best team in the league.

Then, Raines followed that performance with a 12-point, six-rebound performance against North Carolina. He made 6 of 11 from the floor in that one.

Undaunted, he drove into the lane and hit a short jumper with 12.9 seconds remaining. That shot was the difference in a 66-65 Tech win over the Demon Deacons, who missed two shots in the final few seconds before Eddie got the rebound as time expired.

“Coach (James Johnson) always tells me to be aggressive regardless of whether I’m hitting or not,” Brown said. “It was an open shot that he let me take, and I took the first good shot we had. That’s what Coach (Erick Green), so the lane was open. I just made a play.”

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“Tell him, ‘Let’s play 6 for 6. You can’t do any more.’ But that’s not how the game works.”

The two games marked the first time this season that Raines has scored in double figures in back-to-back games. For the season, leading into a home game against Maryland, he had scored in double figures in six games.

“I think it’s just a matter of being confident and being focused,” Raines said. “I was finishing. The plays were going down for me, and I was making shots.”

Inside Hokie Sports
It was the winter of 1988, and both Louisville and Memphis State dominated Metro Conference basketball attention. It was the era of great players like Louisville’s Ulis Frazier and Memphis State’s Elrod Perry, with their high-profile, well-known coaches Donny Crum and Larry Fitch. So many expected just another ordinary conference game when Tech and Southern Miss got together on a February afternoon at Cassell Coliseum. But the two programs were out to make points:

Literally and figuratively.

On a chilly Saturday afternoon, the game between the Hokies and the Golden Eagles turned into a near four-hour sprint that bordered on insanity. Points were scored at a dizzying pace, and the wild action left players, coaches and fans exhausted at its conclusion. It also left those in attendance near speechless.

Words used to describe the game were “terrific,” “awesome,” “unbelivable,” and “great.” Yet those adjectives fail miserably to capture a performance that saw at least 13 records fall and one that has never been duplicated. In fact, no Tech team has ever allowed so many points. What are we going to do?“

With 25 points in the first 20 minutes. But Tech got into it.”

Allen refused to use the turmoil within the department as an excuse. He promised an up-tempo attack. His squad was young, but they were also athletic, and they possessed the pieces to be an effective, pressing team.

Twenty-five years ago, Virginia Tech and Southern Miss combined for 274 points in a breathless, frenetic, up-and-down-the-court classic that set a Cassell Coliseum scoring mark and today remains the ...
jumper with 20 seconds left to tie it at 122.

Fisher then nearly won it for Southern Miss in the final seconds. He picked Coles clean at the free-throw line and drove toward the basket. But Nottingham prevented Fisher from getting to the goal, and Coles ran back and dove at Fisher, knocking the ball away from him along the sideline.

“I prevented Casey Fisher from going to the basket, and Bimbo was behind him,” Nottingham said. “He (Coles) dove on the sideline. That was big, but for us, diving on the floor was what we were doing that year. In the beginning of the season, we had more knee scrapes, and we started wearing kneepads. We just wanted to press and run, and wanted to get the ball out and go.

“That was a great effort on Bimbo’s part, but from the players’ perspective, we were all diving all over the place all the time.”

Southern Miss inched the ball, but didn’t get off a shot. So off things went to a second overtime.

In the second overtime, Coles took over, as the Hokies opened the overtime with a 12-4 run.

“In the second overtime, Coles dove on the sideline. That was big, but for us, diving on the floor was what we were doing that year. In the beginning of the season, we had more knee scrapes, and we started wearing kneepads. We just wanted to press and run, and wanted to get the ball out and go.

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Southern Ms
Women's Basketball: Tech Struggles Into ACC Play

Marc Mullen

New year hasn't been kind to Tech women's team, as young Hokies struggle with confidence.

When the calendar turned to 2013, the Virginia Tech women's basketball team was coming off a three-game winning streak, which included a victory over Wake Forest in the team's ACC season opener.

And after three narrow losses – a pair on the road at Virginia (a four-point loss) and at No. 15 North Carolina (a three-point loss), and one at home to Boston College (by seven points) – the Hokies appeared to have made strides in improving as a program.

However, since then, they've dropped six more games – three to ranked teams – but all by double figures, and they head into the final four weeks of their season on a nine-game losing skid.

In the span, the defense had been streaky – limiting No. 4 Duke to just 49 points, but allowing more than 65 on three occasions. Meanwhile, the Tech offense has fallen flat, scoring more than 50 just once and failing to hit the 40-point plateau three times.

"We're still a work in progress," Tech coach Dennis Wolff said after the Boston College game. "So every game is going to be an interesting entity. In this league, there isn't a ton of high-scoring games in league play, so everybody's playing hard defense.

"We didn't get 50 the other day. Neither did Carolina. Again, everybody is fighting on the defensive end. We have to – from our standpoint – play better on offense. We need to be more-efficient offensively, and we need to execute better.

Wolff pointed to a pair of things that needed to be improved upon to help his team right the ship. One was getting a better start in games.

Only twice in the nine-game streak had the team scored its 10th point of the contest before the 20-minute mark of the first half. Six times during ACC play, the Hokies trailed by 10 by halftime.

"You can’t come into a game and be running up the whole game. We aren’t good enough to do that," Wolff said. "That’s what it feels like on us on the bench.

"And whether it’s stage fright, whether we’re playing not to lose, whatever it is, it has to change. We're in the ACC, and when we come out and start so slowly and we make similar mistakes as we do in other games, then you can just almost look at the look of our team, and we become defeated and we have to somehow collectively try and end that."

Ending that feeling, Wolff believed, would come with gaining confidence.

"We have to collectively try and find a way to restore some confidence in some of the kids," Wolff said after the Clemson loss. "There were some good shots in the first half that we missed, and then when those things happen, individually we lose confidence.

"So every game is going to be an interesting entity. In this league, there isn’t a ton of high-scoring games in league play, so everybody's playing hard defense"

"But she’s struggling big time (from the floor)." Wolff said after the Clemson loss. "There were some good shots in the first half that we missed, and then when those things happen, individually we lose confidence.

The future of healthcare in Southwest Virginia is looking brighter.

Sure, it’s the same sun. But it’s rising on a new day.

We’re proud to call Southwest Virginia home. And for us, there’s no place we’d rather be, caring for our family and for yours. We’ve been a part of this community for more than a century – quietly and without fanfare building a regional health services network that touches the lives at thousands of your neighbors each day. We’re LewisGale Regional Health System and we provide the one thing that matters most – great care.

It’s a new day in Southwest Virginia. And the sun dawns on a network you’ve long trusted.
The Tech baseball team features a lot of young pitchers and thus will rely on an offense that returns nearly everyone from a season ago.

by MARC MULLEN

It’s the same story once again for head coach Pete Hughes as he enters the 2013 season with his Virginia Tech baseball program. The team returns a wealth of bodies on offense, almost 75 percent of the at-bats from a season ago, but pitching will be the key, particularly starting pitching.

Less than half of the starts return on the mound for the Hokies, but one bright spot is that, rather than opting to sign a professional contract with the Philadelphia Phillies, senior Joe Mantiply returns with his 34 career starts. Hughes is looking for quality starts and will try to find them wherever he can.

“The strength this year is the offense. It’s about as productive a team as we have ever had coming back,” Hughes said. “It’s productive in its experience. There are a lot of quality at-bats coming back, and I guess that’s a good thing when you have so many questions marks with your pitching staff. We have guys who haven’t had expanded roles, so to have a little extra on the offensive side to go through some growing pains is helpful.

“But we look for those growing pains to be short and few and far between. We need to have guys fall into expanded, impactful roles, and we need them to pitch to their abilities. So there are a lot of question marks, and we don’t have a lot of time to answer them. Those questions marks have been addressed to our staff, and these guys have been competing and working on that since the fall.”

Mantiply will no doubt be a weekend guy. Hughes pointed to six to eight guys who are in the mix and a couple of interesting names pop up.

“Joe Mantiply is going to pitch on the weekends, and then we are going to throw guys who are competitive, guys who love to compete and can throw strikes,” Hughes said. “Sean Kellison, Sean Kennedy, Tanner McIntyre, Jake Joyce, Devin Burke, Eddie Campbell, Brad Markey, Colin O’Keeffe ... there are eight guys who are good enough, but they need to take advantage of a great opportunity for them. We need guys to emerge and take that opportunity, and those guys are good enough to do it.”

Last season, the Hokies came back to win 19 games in which they trailed entering the fifth frame or later. That goes back to the Tech bullpen and its juniors Clark Labitan, Joyce and McIntyre, who combined to go 16-3, with five saves and a 3.08 ERA in 111 innings pitched (all in relief).

It should be noted that McIntyre was a junior-college transfer and Labitan was coming off an injury. All three needed to step up into roles that were lost during the season because of injuries suffered to then-seniors Ronnie Shaban, the scheduled closer, and Jake Atwell, a top set-up man in 2011.

Both Joyce and McIntyre are among the names that Hughes thinks might make that jump into an expanded role.

“Yes, we are stretching those guys out to see if they can be one of our top three pitchers right now, just in case we want to go with that option. We are going to give them an opportunity and see what’s best for our program,” Hughes said. “Jake and Tanner are guys we trust and were lights out.

“There are two ways to look at it – the age-old question. Do you put them out there to start instead of close because you may never get to your closer? We really just need quality starts. We have enough depth to match up with the sixth inning on. We are just looking for a guy to give us five quality innings.”

Quality starts are usually defined as a starting pitcher tossing six or more innings and allowing less than three earned runs. As a whole, last season, the Hokies were 7-5 when a starter recorded a quality start, but the five losses included two at Virginia, and one game each at Florida State and North Carolina and versus NC State – all teams that made the NCAA Tournament.

Using Hughes’ definition of quality start, just five frames, the numbers jump substantially. The Hokies were 9-1 – with the only loss coming at FSU. So combining the two definitions of a quality start, the team went 16-6, a winning percentage that equates to .727.

“There is a great opportunity for a lot of guys to work themselves into expanded roles for our season as we head into ACC play,” Hughes said.
“And, as we do, we have a lot of guys who are battling for two rotation spots on the weekend, and it should make for a really competitive preseason and first three weekends of the season, I know that.”

Interestingly enough, those injuries to Shaban and Atwell also created an opportunity for a couple of freshmen to see play their first year on the varsity level. “I love that. I love the fact that we have some seniors who are about to be that dance, and I think that this year we really can get this one year. That gives them less distraction and less noise, and they become more of a team.”

The Hokies need to be focused and become a team right out of the gate, as their schedule is competitive throughout. They face 18 teams — a total of 33 games — that made their respective conference tournament and 15 teams that are among those ranked or receiving votes in preseason polls.

That includes Tech’s opening weekend opponents Kent State and UNC Wilmington. Both teams won conference championships last season and made the NCAA Tournament, with the Golden Flashes advancing to the College World Series.

“The phrase that Hughes is continuing to emphasis since the fall, though, is “Avoid the noise.” Several underclassmen are jockeying to break out of the season to bolster their draft status, and Hughes wants to make sure his guys are focused on the Hokies first and foremost.

“Those guys took advantage of injuries to Shaban and Atwell and played great. And their growth was expedited, and it’s made us a better team this year. And I think it has. I think it’s made us deeper and more productive one, and experience group for 2013. I think that’s a key to having a successful season.”

Hughes said. “Those guys took advantage of injuries to Shaban and Atwell and played great. And their growth was expedited, and it’s made us a better team this year. And I think it has. I think it’s made us deeper and more productive one, and experience group for 2013. I think that’s a key to having a successful season.”

“I love our schedule, and I’m excited for our players to play Kent State,” Hughes said. “Those guys went to Omaha (last year). That’s where we want to go. They (his players) are going to see first hand that you can be a mid-major and go to Omaha, as long as you have a really successful season.”

But we play against Omaha teams every year on the weekends. Those years ago, we beat three Omaha teams in ACC series. But I like our nonconference schedule. We want to play better on the weekends, we need to be able to do that to get ourselves ready for a tough ACC schedule.

“And that should ramp up our level of play and our intensity level nonconference, so we get to ACC pace and tempo and approach. It’s all about playing well in the ACC and past of doing that is having that switch on and playing at a high level all the time, so you walk into the ACC and play it naturally because that’s how you played it in the nonconference.”

Tech will follow its first weekend of baseball at the UNCW Wilmington tournament — Feb. 15-17 — with its first home weekend against Temple and Holy Cross on Feb. 22-24. In all, the Hokies serve as the hosts to 28 games at English Field this year, a schedule that includes visits from top ACC teams Georgia Tech, Florida State, North Carolina and Virginia.

Q: • My summer vacation was spent ... TH: • Back at home with my family in Middleboro, Mass., where I play baseball in the Cape Cod League. I played for the Wareham Gatemen and had a 25-minute commute. We won the Cape Cod League championship, which was great.

Q: • My pregame routine consists of ... TH: • Usually just some light swings in batting practice, but not too much because I don’t want to overwork it and tire myself out. Over the summer, my mom and I got into this routine where she would make me a peanut butter and fluff sandwich before every game, so that’s a new thing.

Q: • My favorite Tech moment, so far, was ... TH: • Being around the team with some of the big victories we’ve had – extra-inning wins, walk-off wins. Probably the best moments so far were the comeback wins in the Miami series because they were in the top 10 at the time.”
With a powerful lineup and a top-notch pitcher, the Virginia Tech softball team has high expectations for the 2013 season.

There are high expectations for the 2013 Virginia Tech softball team.

With the loss of just two seniors to graduation — who combined to account for just 55 starts in a 63-game schedule — from a team that advanced to the ACC championship game and the NCAA Tournament, the Hokies have a goal of matching or possibly exceeding what the 2008 team accomplished and do not shy away from that.

“Our No. 1 goal, no matter what year it is, is to compete for an ACC title,” Tech softball coach Scot Thomas said. “But sometimes you’re in a situation, where we are this year, that the expectations kind of change a little bit, and our focus is to win an ACC title, and we feel like that we’ll be disappointed if we don’t.

“That’s not to take away from teams that are right there with us because there is Florida State, North Carolina and Georgia Tech, in particular, who are going to be right there — top-25 caliber teams, as well as I think we are. But the expectations are very high for us to win an ACC title and then go on to NCAAs and go as deep as we can.”

For those who don’t remember, the 2008 Tech softball team was the defending ACC tournament champions, but had bowed out in the regionals of
The 2013 season preview for the Virginia Tech softball team features the return of a talented and experienced roster. The Hokies opened the 2013 season with a loss in the Dot Richardson National Collegiate Softball Invitational in Clermont, Fla., and play their first 16 games away from Blacksburg. Tech's only home game in its first 27 contests is scheduled for March 5 at 6 p.m. against UNC-Greensboro. The experience of their talent and experience, this team of Hokies wouldn't have it any other way.

The top of the lineup certainly highlights the offense, starting with Gaskill, who was named an NFCA all-region first-team selection and a second-team All-ACC member. She led the offense with a .312 average, 47 runs scored, 59 hits, 14 doubles and 24 stolen bases and will return as the team’s leadoff hitter.

Liddle, who was an NFCA second teamer and a repeat first-team All-ACC selection, led the team with a .295 batting percentage and a .419 on-base percentage. She enters her senior year second at the school in career home runs (25) and walks (101) and sixth in RBI (99).

Mercier, the cleanup hitter for Tech in 2012, knocked in a team-high 45 runs and slugged nine home runs as a team. Tech hit 46 home runs, with Liddle connecting for eight and Gaskill six.

“From a pure hitting standpoint, we have an incredible speed/power combination with Gaskill in leading,” Thomas said. “Then we’ll go with Kylee, Courtney, and Kelsey, our top home run hitter back from last year. To be honest with you, any of the three in front of her can hit home runs as well, if they get on track. After Kelsey, the picture becomes a little more cloudy, but in a positive way, because we’ve got Betty Rose, who has the potential to come back and hit home runs and has done that in the past, and Dani Anderson, who had a great freshman year. She had a little bit of a slump last year, but came back late in the season.”

“Logan Spivey, who came up with a lot of big-game hits for us last year, is a potential DP (designated player). Kat Banks, who hit the grand slam against Maryland, hasn’t started the last few seasons at 100 percent, so if she gets on track early, that could be really big time for us.”

No doubt, we are as deep as we’ve ever been, ever,” Thomas said. “And just the quality of kids we’ve got playing behind them, they could be starting somewhere else, but here, they are going to be waiting.

“We were one of the best defensive teams in the nation last year, and I expect us to be the same this year. But the exciting thing after all of that, and knowing what we’ve got pitching wise, you sit back and look at Amanda also.”

“He bit a couple of home runs in the fall, and she’s going to find a spot in the lineup somewhere. She was a junior-college transfer and did a heck of a job for us in the fall. Then there’s Kacey Smith. We used her as a pinch hitter, and she did a good job, and Jess McNamara, who played a lot of AAU basketball and was a late bloomer in the world of softball, she’s really looking good now.”

“Scheduling is a science of sorts. You really have to look ahead and predict what your team is going to look like and what you are going to try and get out of them. That being said, this schedule is very similar to what we put in front of them in 2008, with the expectations of going to the World Series. I think this team, overall, is more talented.”

“We’ve got a great pitching staff. It’s deep. Now, we don’t have an Angela Tidewater [former pitcher], but we’ve got some kids that can really get it done. When you have that, and with everyone coming back, you say, ‘Let’s go play a tough schedule.’

“It’s a tough schedule that, when we get into postseason play, the team has seen everything and they shouldn’t be fazed. The team has seen it and postseason play, the team has seen everything and they can go out and be more successful.”

As Thomas stated, more than 90 percent of the team’s pitching staff returns, in terms of innings pitched.

Senior Jasmin Harrell, a 2012 second-team NFCA Mid-Atlantic Team selection and an ACC All-Tournament team member, anchors the rotation. Her numbers last year included a 31-16 record, 47 runs scored, 59 hits, 14 doubles and 24 stolen bases and will return as the team’s leadoff hitter.

She had some things there that were kind of rolling around, and it was catching on her. So I think she’s going to be good.

“It’s one of those things that you wish, in hindsight, it would have been taken care of before last year because she ended up playing with some pain and discomfort. But what a trooper she was all the way down to the end for us, and we think she’s going to be back 100 percent.”

Also returning is sophomore Bailey Liddle, who was 8-4 with a 3.98 ERA in 26 games. She was second on the team with 91 innings pitched and 58 strikeouts. She had three shutouts, combined on a fourth, and matched Harrell with a save to her record.

Joining the staff are two highly recruited in-state freshmen in Kelly Heinz, the 2011 Gatorade Player of the Year, and Maggie Tyler, the 2012 Virginia Group AA State Pitcher of the Year. And each impressed during the fall season.

Looking around the infield, there is senior Courtney Liddle at first base (92 starts in 2012), sophomore Kylie McGoldrick at second base (69), senior Blayke Smith at shortstop (54) and sophomore Kelsey Merick at third base (58). In the outfield, there are juniors Dani Anderson (39 starts in left field) and Kat Banks (44 starts in left or right field) and sophomores Lauren Gaskill (63 in centerfield), while behind the plate senior Betty Rose and her 60 starts return as well.

“Betty Rose, who has the potential to come back and hit home runs and has done that in the past, and Dani Anderson, who had a great freshman year. She had a little bit of a slump last year, but came back late in the season.”

“I think Jasmin is doing pretty well. She had a little bit of a slump last year, but sometimes this season, just to give teams different looks, because we are so deep there, and that’s a positive.”

“We needed that staff to be a defensive unit that finished last year 12th in the nation in fielding percentage at .970 and was ninth in double plays turned per game (10.48). And everyone returns.

The object of the game is to score runs. With great pitching and defense, the demand for a high-powered offense is not a necessity. For good measure, though, the Hokies return their top-eight hitters in terms of batting average.

With that thought in his mind—of another run coming—surgery was basically a cleanup job done to a bumed knee late in the season.

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GETTING TO KNOW JASMIN HARRELL

Q: My summer vacation was spent...
JH: “First, in California with my family, but the majority of it was spent here in Blacksburg because, after I got knee surgery, I was doing things here mainly with rehab.”

Q: My pregame routine consists of...
JH: “Putting on my purple Beats, and I have to listen to my Nicki Minaj songs, especially her song, ‘Tim the Prod’. That’s my favorite. Then just watching my team warm up and getting a feel of the game and getting pumped up.”

Q: My favorite Tech moment, so far, was...
JH: “Last year, the run we made of making the ACC Tournament championship game up to playing in the NCAA Tournament. The ACC Tournament was just exciting, starting with the walk-off win over Maryland and then beating UNC, which was a good win. Then making the NCAA Tournament because that was the first time we’ve made it there (since she’s been at Tech).”

Q: I wear No. 22 because...
JH: “My favorite, No. 12, was already taken when I got here. But also, one time, I wore No. 22 when I lost my jersey in travel ball and 22 was the only extra one, so that’s why I picked it. But now, it’s my favorite number. I love it.”

Q: My favorite uniform combination is...
JH: “Orange jersey, white pants and orange socks.”

Q: Tech fans will be excited for the 2013 season because...
JH: “It’s going to be a lot different than any other team we’ve had in the past. We have a lot of flexibility. We have a great pitching staff – we actually have a staff now. We have a stacked lineup, and our defense is going to be solid.”
FIDDLER’S GREEN
BLACKSBURG’S FINEST COMMUNITY

View of the Stable at Hoge Pasture and the Blacksburg Municipal Golf Course.

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