

inside

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# HOKIE SPORTS

Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



## A SEASON TO REMEMBER

The Tech women's soccer team set a school record for victories, and for the first time, made it to the NCAA College Cup, where the season ended with a 3-2 loss to Florida State in a national semifinal match

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

Virginia Tech AD Jim Weaver has decided to retire because of health reasons after 16 years as the head of the Tech athletics department

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**Jimmy Robertson**  
Editor

**Marc Mullen**  
Editorial Assistant

**Bill Roth**  
Columnist

**Tim East**  
Executive Editor

**Dave Knachel**  
Photographer

**Stacey Wells**  
Designer

**Contributors**

Terry Bolt - Hokie Club  
Kyle Winchester - IMG

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## A DECADE FOR THE AGES

The Commonwealth Cup will stay in Blacksburg for another year after Virginia Tech beat in-state rival Virginia 16-6 in Charlottesville, Va., on Nov. 30. The win marked the Hokies' 10th straight victory over the Cavaliers, and by this time next season, Tech will have kept possession of the Commonwealth Cup for more than 3,600 days.





“I’m very appreciative for everything the Hokie Club does and for all those who contribute money for scholarships. People contributing is what got me here. If people didn’t give money back and support the program, a lot of guys wouldn’t be here and wouldn’t be able to experience the things they’ve experienced. So I think we’re all appreciative of everything that’s been done for us.”

Derrick Hopkins  
Senior | Football

“I’m very thankful for everything that’s been done. The one thing my mom always told me when I was growing up was, ‘You’re going to go to college. You’re going to get an education.’ I’m thankful for the opportunity to play football and thankful to the people who gave money so that I could come here and get a degree. I’ve had a great five years and couldn’t be more appreciative.”

Logan Thomas  
Senior | Football





## The Donor File

### Jon & Colleen Rucker

**HOKIE CLUB LEVEL:** Golden Hokie Champion

**CURRENTLY RESIDES:** Gaithersburg, Md.

**WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE?** 1996

**FAMILY:** Colleen (wife), Alex (son) and Max (son).



## Q&A

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

**A:** Anyone who instinctively starts jumping whenever "Enter Sandman" plays!

**Q: The Hokie Nation is real because ...**

**A:** We win and lose together, we share a passion and respect for our university that has held strong through awesome times and terrible times, and we believe in the possibility the future holds.

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

**A:** Jan. 4, 2000. We lost to FSU in the national championship game that night, but never gave up. The team and fans left it all on the field. We had every reason to be a proud Hokie Nation that night.

**Q: How did you become a fan of Virginia Tech?**

**A:** I spent four of the best years of my life in Blacksburg ... how could you not love it? My wife didn't go to VT, but quickly fell in love with game day in Blacksburg and joined the Hokie Nation.

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

**A:** Morning/afternoon of tailgating and a big win under the lights in Lane Stadium. It doesn't get any better than that.

**Q: What motivates you to give back to help Virginia Tech athletics and being a Hokie Club member?**

**A:** My time at Virginia Tech helped shape the person I am today. I have so many great memories in the dorms, in the classrooms, in Lane Stadium and Cassell Coliseum. Being able to help to build on what is already an awesome community just feels right.

**Q: Rumor is you have flown directly from Australia to Blacksburg and other venues for Hokies' football games in the past. Can you explain how long that takes and what motivates you to travel that distance?**

**A:** My job has me working a new business opportunity that had me back and forth to Australia for the majority of the 2013

football season. I was down there the week before the Alabama, Marshall and Maryland games and was able to get done and fly straight home. It's about 10,000 miles from Canberra, Australia to Blacksburg and takes about 30 hours door to door involving three airline legs. As for motivation, my wife and I love game day in Blacksburg - just us and 65,000 of our closest friends from the Hokie Nation!

**Q: My favorite Virginia Tech sports are ...**

**A:** Football and basketball.

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

**A:** Antonio Freeman and Corey Moore. They represent what was great about the rise of Tech football.

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

**A:** Shawn Smith. That same move he used to get to the hoop over and over, the free throws he hit to win the NIT ... that was awesome!



# HOKIE CLUB YEAR-END ITEMS OF IMPORTANCE

The fall semester has been filled with many exciting moments for our Virginia Tech student-athletes. The football team is preparing for its 21st consecutive appearance in postseason play, which is the second-longest active streak in the nation, and we hope to see you cheering on the Hokies at the bowl. Congratulations are also in order to Coach Chugger Adair and the entire women's soccer team, as they competed in the College Cup semifinals on Dec. 6 in Cary, N.C. This was the first appearance for our program in the women's version of the Final Four.

I hope that you are enjoying the exclusive content in each issue of Inside Hokie Sports magazine, as I am. The magazine highlights many of our outstanding student-athletes and student life on campus, as well as the community involvement by our players and teams. We are surrounded by terrific young people who will be the leaders of tomorrow, and it is a pleasure to come to work each day to work on their behalf. I know that they appreciate your support from their comments as shown on the Student-Athlete Experience two-page photograph that leads off each issue.

As we think about year end, I ask that you please be sure to make your gift to the Hokie Club by the Dec. 31 Benefits Deadline. Each year, we are challenged to meet the rising cost of tuition, room, board and textbooks, and your annual fund gift helps us meet this goal. Also, I'd ask you to please consider increasing your gift this year. Your investment in Virginia Tech is paying real dividends, and you are making a difference in the lives of hundreds of young Hokies!

## “NEW” HOKIE REFERRALS PROGRAM

Just a reminder that you can earn extra priority points for referring new members to the Hokie Club! All you have to do is refer

someone to join the Hokie Club and then submit your referrals to us on [hokieclub.com](http://hokieclub.com). We will verify that they have joined the Hokie Club and you will earn points for each member who joins. You will earn three priority points for the first member and four for the second member, etc. Go to [hokieclub.com](http://hokieclub.com) for more information.

## 2014 FOOTBALL SEASON PARKING

As has always been the policy, parking for football season ticket holders is assigned yearly, and parking locations are based on Hokie Club member's point priority rank as of the most recent Benefits Deadline. For the upcoming 2014 football season, the opportunity to select parking will be based on your rank as of the Benefits Deadline of Dec. 31. When it is time to select parking, we will once again utilize the Ballena Technology software used last year. Some Hokie Club members also upgraded their seating location this season.

## HOKIE CLUB RECEPTION AT HYUNDAI SUN BOWL

The Hokies will be making their 21st consecutive bowl appearance at the Hyundai Sun Bowl, being played in El Paso, Texas, on Dec. 31. The Hokies will face UCLA. The Hokie Club will once again serve as hosts to its annual Hokie Club Reception at the team hotel. We hope you will support the Hokies by attending the bowl game, and we hope to see you at our event at the Radisson. For more details on the Hokie Club Reception, please visit [hokieclub.com](http://hokieclub.com).

## HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Because of the university's holiday schedule and the bowl game schedule, please make every effort to speak with the Hokie Club staff or visit with our office ahead of time. The Hokie Club office will be closed per the university's holiday schedule on Dec. 23-27 and Dec. 30-31.

## BENEFITS DEADLINE AND YEAR-END GIVING

The Benefits Deadline for all Hokie Club benefits for 2014 is Dec. 31. If you are planning to make a gift to the Hokie Club as we approach the deadline, please make sure to take note of the following reminders and please contact the Hokie Club office at (540) 231-6618 in advance if you have any questions:

- 1) Envelopes containing checks must be postmarked by Dec. 31.
- 2) Online contributions must be made at [hokieclub.com](http://hokieclub.com) before midnight, Dec. 31.
- 3) For your security, please do not send credit card payments via the mail. They may not be processed until after Dec. 31 and therefore would not count for 2014 priority points.

## GIFT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND YEAR-END GIFT ACCOUNTING

Once the Hokie Club receives a gift, donors receive a gift acknowledgement letter or receipt. This letter is usually mailed within one to two weeks after the donation is made and serves as your VTAF tax receipt. As we move toward the end of the year, the number of gifts received and processed by the Hokie Club typically increases. Because of the added volume of gifts, the amount of time it takes to mail out gift acknowledgement letters may increase. Our gift accounting staff is working diligently to process and acknowledge all gifts as quickly as possible, and we thank you for your patience.

## UPDATED POINT PRIORITY SHEETS TO BE MAILED IN LATE JANUARY, 2014

Once all 2013 gifts are received, processed and acknowledged, the Hokie Club will send out updated point priority sheets to each member. We anticipate that these updated point priority sheets will be mailed to the entire Hokie Club membership in late January, 2014.

Best wishes for a joyous holiday season,

**LU MERRITT**

Senior Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics

## Longtime Tech supporter passes away

Sonny Merryman, Jr., a longtime supporter of Virginia Tech athletics and the person for whom the Merryman Center on Tech's campus is named, passed away on Saturday, Dec. 7, at the age 89.

Merryman, a native of Rustburg, Va., graduated from Rustburg High School in 1942 and matriculated to Virginia Polytechnic Institute – now, of course, known as Virginia Tech. He enthusiastically supported the university's academic programs and the athletics teams until his final days. In 2006, the university presented Merryman with the school's

most prestigious individual honor – the Ruffner Medal recognizing his lifetime of contributions and service to his beloved alma mater.

Merryman and his wife, Lou, founded Sonny Merryman, Inc. – a small trailer equipment and bus dealership. Six decades later, the company has grown into one of the nation's most prominent bus dealers and today has more than 125 employees.

In the mid-1990s, Merryman and his family made a generous donation to the Tech athletics department that led to the building of the

Merryman Center. This 48,000-square foot facility features two floors, with the bottom floor serving as the home of the football team's strength and conditioning area, rehab area and team doctors' offices. The top floor is the home of individual position meeting rooms, a team meeting room and a memorabilia area that commemorates the greatest moments in Tech football history.

Merryman left behind wife Lou, daughter Pat, son Floyd and grandson Lee.

## Fuller named ACC's Defensive Rookie of the Year

Tech freshman cornerback Kendall Fuller received the ACC's Defensive Rookie of the Year honor in a vote by the Atlantic Coast Conference Sports Media Association (ACSMA).

The honor marked the first for a Tech player since the school joined the ACC. Fuller, who has started 11 of Tech's 12 games this season, ranks fifth nationally in interceptions with six, and he is leading the ACC with 16 passes defended. He stands fourth on Tech's team in tackles with 56 (37 solo).

Fuller was one of four Tech players to receive second-team All-ACC nods, joining defensive tackle Derrick Hopkins, mike linebacker Jack Tyler and punter A.J. Hughes. Hopkins has 49 tackles, including 7.5 for a loss, and four sacks, while Tyler is leading the team in tackles with 93, including 10.5 for a loss, and four sacks. Hughes averaged 44.5 yards per punt, which ranks second in the ACC.

Three Hokies received third-team nods, including defensive tackle Luther Maddy, cornerback Kyle Fuller and cornerback Brandon Facyson. Kyle Fuller has now received All-ACC recognition three times (second team in 2011 and honorable mention last season).

Four Hokies received honorable mention recognition, including guard Andrew Miller, center David Wang, defensive end James Gayle and rover Kyshoen Jarrett.

Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston received the league's Offensive Rookie of the Year honor and the league's Player of the Year honor. Duke coach David Cutcliffe was named the ACC Coach of the Year after guiding the Blue Devils to a 10-win regular season.

## Tech and ODU agree to extend football series

Virginia Tech and Old Dominion University have agreed on a four-year home-and-home football series that comes on the heels of the three-year deal that the two programs agreed to in December of last year.

The new four-year deal will begin in Norfolk in 2022, with the Monarchs traveling to Blacksburg in 2023. Tech plays again in Norfolk in 2024, and the Monarchs return to Tech in 2025.

The two schools already had three games scheduled, two in Blacksburg in

2017 and 2019, and one in Norfolk in 2018. They now will play seven times over a nine-year span. Tech hasn't played in the Hampton Roads area since the 1987 Oyster Bowl in Norfolk against Temple, Bill Dooley's last season as head coach.

The Monarchs are transitioning into FBS [Football Bowl Subdivision] and will play a full Conference USA schedule in 2014.

Tech still has vacancies for nonconference opponents on its 2015, 2017 and 2018 schedules.

## Rapp places 55th at NCAA Cross Country Championships

Sarah Rapp recorded a 55th-place finish out of 254 women's runners at the 2013 NCAA Cross Country Championships held in Terre Haute, Ind., on Nov. 23.

Rapp, a junior from Raleigh, N.C., finished in a time of 20 minutes, 56.10 seconds. She missed All-America honors by just 10 seconds, as the top 40 finishers earned the honor.

In the men's race, Thomas Curtin, a junior from Leesburg, Va., recorded

a 69th-place finish out of 253 runners. He was in 15th place at the 3000-meter mark, but fell back to 34th place at the 5000-meter mark. Curtin slipped to 62nd place at the 8000-meter mark before falling to his 69th-place finish. He ran the course in 31:02.40, missing All-America honors by 17 seconds.

Rapp and Curtin were the only two qualifiers for Tech participating at the NCAA Championships. 



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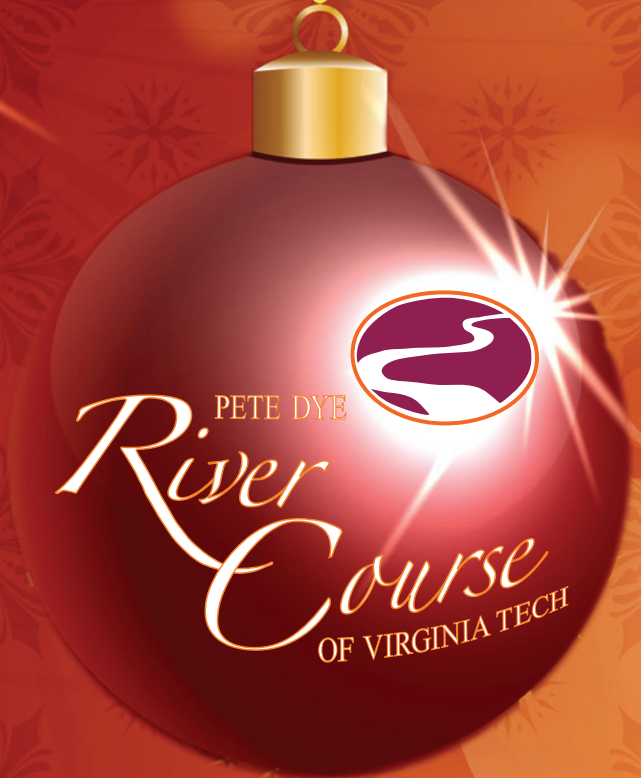
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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

# Success should be the mark of Jim Weaver's legacy

We're four months into the academic year, which means four months into college sports' playing seasons, and already, it's been a bit of a bizarre fall/early winter in Blacksburg.

Consider the following: the football team won six of its first seven games, reached No. 16 in the rankings and then lost to Duke, BC and Maryland down the stretch. The Hokies went into late November needing a Duke loss, which tells you how crazy the ACC was this season.

Also, no one outside of Blacksburg expected much of the Tech women's soccer team heading into the season. After all, the league's coaches picked the Hokies to finish ninth in the ACC in the preseason poll. Yet, behind a wonderful collection of young ladies guided by a pretty sharp coach in Chugger Adair, the Hokies made the ACC championship game and went to the College Cup and came pretty close to becoming the first team at Tech to win a national championship.

But the big news of the fall came when AD Jim Weaver announced his retirement because of health reasons. The AD with the second-longest tenure of any AD in Tech history decided the pain just kept him from putting in the time to do the job the way he wanted to do it.

Weaver's retirement announcement in early November dominated all storylines this fall. It's necessarily not because he retired, but because of the overwhelming legacy he leaves behind.

Weaver took nearly every area of Tech athletics and made it better. His best moves were his most visible ones – helping to get Tech into the BIG EAST for all sports, helping guide the school into the ACC, constructing all the facilities and upgrading the football schedule with additions like Alabama, LSU, Texas A&M and Nebraska.

Yet he also made important moves that never garnered public spotlight. He fought for additional staffing in the Student-Athlete Academic Support Service office to help student-athletes with academics and ultimately increase graduation rates. He expanded auxiliary units such as sports medicine and strength and conditioning. Of course, he kept the department running in the black, a rarity in college athletics these days.

"When I left there, I didn't think anybody could do any better than we did," former Tech AD David Braine told David Teel of The Daily Press. "But he [Weaver] obviously has."

Weaver led with an unmatched work ethic

and impeccable organizational skills. He once showed me his folder on football scheduling, and it was a couple of inches thick. It contained all his hand-written notes following every conversation with an opposing AD on the subject. He dated his notes and kept them in chronological order within the file. He used different colors of ink, too, so as to not get confused.

Though he had the final say on matters, he valued others' input. He often signed off on additional staffing and pay increases for those who received offers from rivals. With facilities, he solicited the input of those who were going to be using the facilities. For example, he let Mike Gentry and his staff design the new Olympic sports training facility, and he let Lester Karlin design the new equipment room.

Weaver's path to such a tremendous legacy wasn't always a stroll down Spring Road. It took people within the department some time to adjust to Weaver's businesslike approach, which contrasted with Braine's patience and charm.

Maybe that goes back to Weaver's Pennsylvania roots. The son of a high school football coach, Weaver played at Penn State under legendary Joe Paterno. Toughness and work ethic are just parts of a player's DNA and never exit a player's blood.


But people came to respect and like Weaver because they saw his moves making a difference. And Weaver softened some as the years went on, becoming more comfortable in Southwest Virginia, and in particular, after he and wife Traci had their son, Craig.

Now, the thing Weaver will miss most about being the AD at Tech is the people.

"I am most proud of the people we have," he said. "You've got to have the right kind of people to make facilities work, so it's not just making the facilities. It's getting the right kind of people who philosophically believe what you believe and can handle the issues that need to be taken care of to move forward."

Weaver and his family plan on staying in Blacksburg. He's invested a lot in Tech athletics and wants to see where the programs go in the future. Those in the department want to see him around, too, knowing the role he played in getting the department to this point in its history.

A lot of people respect Jim Weaver not for the position he held, but for the person he is.

Count this writer among those who hold that same view. 



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# Tech to head out West for its 21st straight bowl game

Since 1993, Virginia Tech football coach Frank Beamer has taken his team bowling from Louisiana to Florida to Nashville to California to Arizona to Georgia.

And now, Beamer will take his 27th Virginia Tech team to West Texas to face UCLA in the 80th Sun Bowl. A new destination against a first-time foe adds a new flavor to the Hokies' 21-year bowl buffet, and while the game presents some logistical issues for the traveling fan base – especially those who have driven to Tech's recent bowl games in the Southeast – this is a game that will play well on the national stage and one that gives both teams an opportunity to end the season with a name-brand opponent in a high-exposure game.

Tech is gunning for its ninth win of the season, while UCLA is shooting for its 10th victory under second-year coach Jim Mora. Here are some thoughts on the matchup as we approach kickoff:

**Virginia Tech has struggled with Pac-10 (Pac-12) quarterbacks:** Now to be fair, the Hokies have faced some of the most accomplished college quarterbacks in previous games against West Coast teams.

In 2003 at the Insight Bowl in Phoenix, California's Aaron Rodgers completed 27 of 35 passes for 394 yards and two touchdowns in the Bears' 52-49 shootout win over Tech.

In 2004 at FedExField, USC's Matt Leinart threw for 272 yards and three touchdowns (all to Reggie Bush) in the Trojans' 24-13 win over the Hokies.

In the 2011 Orange Bowl, Stanford's Andrew Luck completed 18 of 23 passes for 287 yards and four touchdowns against Tech.



Tech head football coach Frank Beamer will be guiding the Hokies to their 21st consecutive bowl and is one of only four coaches to have taken teams to 20 or more straight bowl games.

Now, Tech will see UCLA's athletic and remarkable Brett Hundley, a redshirt sophomore who scored a touchdown on his first collegiate snap and who is already third on UCLA's all-time passing list. While it's unfair to compare Hundley to the other California quarterbacks the Hokies have faced, this Arizona native leads the Bruins in both rushing and passing. He threw for 2,845 yards this season, firing 22 touchdowns and just nine interceptions.

He's not Rodgers, he's not Leinart and he's not Luck, but Hundley's career is off to a great start, and he's a multi-dimensional threat who's the key to UCLA's offense. How the Hokies handle him will be a key to this game.

**The Sun Bowl on CBS gives both Tech and UCLA great exposure:** CBS televises

just one bowl game, the Sun Bowl, and it's done traditionally well in the ratings each year. Here are the numbers for the past five games:

YEAR	TEAMS	RATING	VIEWERS
2008	Oregon vs. Pittsburgh	2.2	3.310 million
2009	Oklahoma vs. Stanford	3.3	5.022 million
2010	Notre Dame vs. Miami	3.0	4.610 million
2011	Utah vs. Georgia Tech	2.7	4.100 million
2012	USC vs. Georgia Tech	2.7	4.000 million

Now, those aren't BCS-like ratings, and in fact, they pale in comparison to SEC games on CBS. But with the Bruins finishing strong during the regular season, and playing a new foe, it wouldn't be a shocker if this game gets a 3.0 rating buoyed by a strong Los Angeles showing. Unlike, say New York, Los Angeles is into college football,



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particularly when USC and UCLA are good. In many ways, this game plays better nationally than regionally in as much as it's an intersectional game between teams who have never met.

**UCLA wide receiver Shaquelle Evans vs. Tech's outstanding corners will be a fun matchup:** Evans is one of the best receivers on the West Coast and a key for the Bruins as both a receiver and punt returner. He started his career at Notre Dame before transferring to UCLA, and other than Pittsburgh's Devin Street, Evans might be the best receiver the Hokies will have faced this season. He'll be going up against Tech's defense, which ranked third nationally against the pass this season and fifth in interceptions with 19, led by corners Kendall Fuller and Brandon Facyson.

**UCLA has three terrific linebackers and a super rookie:** In Anthony Barr, Eric Kendricks, and Jordan Zumwalt, the Bruins have really solid linebackers in their 3-4 scheme. And in Myles Jack, they have a kid who won the Pac-12 Offense and Defense Rookie of the Year award (not a typo.) Barr was a Lombardi Award finalist who moved to defense last year and could be a high NFL draft pick next spring. Kendricks leads UCLA in tackles, and Zumwalt is third. And Jack has starts at both linebacker and running back for the Bruins, which makes him one of the most unique players in college football. It also shows that while UCLA doesn't have a great tailback per se (Hundley is the leading rusher and a star linebacker is the starting tailback), it has a lot of skill with tremendous athletes on the field.

**Thomas to end career in El Paso:** When Logan Thomas takes his first snap at the Sun Bowl, it will be his 40th consecutive start at quarterback for Tech, which is the all-time school record. Thomas has already placed his

name among the greatest quarterbacks in school history and holds the Tech career records for total offense, passing yards, attempts, completions and passing touchdowns.

"I think the one record I'm most proud of is the consecutive starts," Thomas told me. "I've sacrificed my body a lot over the last few years ... never missed a start."

He's been beyond durable during his Tech career where he's been, at times, underappreciated. As a leader, as a talent and as a performer in big games, Thomas has been sensational. He hasn't enjoyed the supporting cast of some previous Tech quarterbacks, and he's been asked to do more than just about anyone at Tech since Michael Vick. His last game could be one to remember.

**If it wins the game, Tech will have won at least nine games for the 15th time in the past 16 years:** The consistency of Tech's program has been remarkable. This past season was quite odd in that the Hokies won some tough road games – at East Carolina, at Georgia Tech and at Miami – yet whiffed in home games against Duke and Maryland.

The biggest difference for the 2013 Hokies was their margin for error. When Tech had guys like Lee Suggs, Kevin Jones, Branden Ore, Ryan Williams, Darren Evans and David Wilson carrying the football, it had a much bigger margin for error offensively. Those were backs who could make people miss. They could hit a home run at any time. They were money in the red zone. If you look back at the yardage totals those kids put up, it blows away anything we've seen from Tech's backs over the past two seasons. There have been injuries (and Trey Edmunds will miss the Sun Bowl with a broken leg) and inexperience in recent years, but at the end of the day, Tech hasn't fielded elite, NFL-caliber backs, and that


void has made a huge difference over the past 25 games.

Still, if Tech figures out a way to win in El Paso, it would get to the nine-win mark, which – all things considered – would be a major accomplishment for this team.

**Two incredible streaks will continue in El Paso:** As I wrote last year before the Hokies played their bowl game in Orlando, only four coaches in college football history have taken teams to 20 or more consecutive bowl games: Bobby Bowden, Tom Osborne, Bear Bryant and Frank Beamer. For Beamer, that streak hits 21 this year. Here's the list:

1. Bobby Bowden, Florida State (1982-09), 28
2. Tom Osborne, Nebraska (1973-97), 25
3. Paul "Bear" Bryant, Alabama (1959-82), 24
4. Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech (1993-2013), 21

I don't know if there's any other coach out there today who will a.) stay at a school for 20-plus years and b.) make a bowl every year. Today's most highly successful coaches (Nick Saban, Les Miles, Chris Petersen, Mack Brown, Urban Meyer, etc.) seem to move around. So what has happened at Tech since 1993 is pretty special and will continue in El Paso. One guy who eventually could make this list is Bob Stoops of Oklahoma. He's led the Sooners to 15 consecutive bowl appearances.

Tech is now one of only six programs in college football history that has appeared in a bowl in at least 20 straight years. The list includes Nebraska (35), Michigan (33), Florida State (32; active), Alabama (25), Florida (22) and Virginia Tech (21; active). You don't see schools like Texas, Penn State, Notre Dame, USC, Oklahoma or Ohio State on that list, showing again the remarkable run Beamer's had at Tech, considering the inherent advantages of those other national powers. 

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## Going pro in something other than sports

by Reyna Gilbert-Lowry

As the famous NCAA slogan goes, “There are over 400,000 NCAA student-athletes, and most will go pro in something other than sports.” As December graduation ceremonies loom, a handful of Virginia Tech student-athletes will do just that, and many will ask themselves “What’s next?” as they embark upon a life outside the walls of Lane Stadium and Cassell Coliseum. For many student-athletes, the reality of a life without college athletics doesn’t materialize until their last day of practice, or even months after graduation. Although athletics transition is an important aspect of being a college student-athlete, it is often overlooked.

The Virginia Tech Athletics Office of Student Life is committed to assisting student-athletes in utilizing athletics as preparation for success in life. The office sponsored the annual Senior Transition in October, an event aimed at exposing senior student-athletes to the pros and cons associated with transitioning out of college athletics. Another goal of the program is to help student-athletes begin to consider, and eventually develop, the skills needed to make their transitions successful. Several campus members and alumni served as panelists for the event, including Dr. Gary Bennett, Tech’s sport psychologist. He shared some of the challenges he has seen student-athletes face when transitioning from college athletics.

“There is a definite adjustment period for student-athletes when they have completed their competitive collegiate athletic careers,” Dr. Bennett said. “A number of factors influence how that process will play out, including the reasons their careers are over (e.g. injury, cut from their team, exhausted their eligibility, and choose to retire) and the degree to which their identities have been built around their status as an athlete. The quality of this transition can be enhanced when athletes have other outlets and passions to which they can commit to after their playing days are over.”

One of the most beneficial elements of the event is the first-hand experiences shared by former Virginia Tech student-athletes. This year, softball legend Angela Tincher O’Brien and three-time NCAA wrestling qualifier David Marone served as panelists and revealed many of the challenges they faced after completing their eligibility.


After graduating from Tech in 2008, Tincher O’Brien played for two seasons with the National Pro Fastpitch’s Akron Racers and spent time coaching at Syracuse and the University of Maryland. She returned to Blacksburg in the fall and is currently the pitching coach and recruiting coordinator for Tech’s softball program. Although Tincher O’Brien prolonged her athletics experience by continuing to play softball at the professional level, she admitted

that it took a while to determine what else she was passionate about other than her sport.

Marone ended his athletics career on a high note in 2012 with an individual and team ACC wrestling championship, a trip to NCAA Championships, and a place in the record books with the 11th-most career wins. He is currently in his second year of the MBA program in the Pamplin School of Business, and after being out of competitive wrestling for the past year, he admitted that he is still adjusting to life post-wrestling. His advice to the seniors in attendance was not to procrastinate and to plan ahead for their futures. He also discussed how many of the skills he learned through athletics helped him throughout his master’s program and internship with the Virginia Tech Foundation. Marone was recently offered a full-time position with the organization and attributed this opportunity to establishing strong connections and networking during his time as a Tech student-athlete.

Through their participation in sport, student-athletes inherently acquire a variety of qualities that are important to their future success. These transferable skills include communication, resilience, confidence, leadership and determination and make student-athletes highly marketable in the work force. Johanna Smith, assistant director for careerservices, also served as a panelist and discussed several of the skills that employers look for in top candidates, many of which include those previously mentioned. She also provided information on ways student-athletes can gain experience in their chosen career fields through job shadowing, co-ops and internships. Annie Weese, staff counselor at Cook Counseling Center and newest addition to the sport psychology staff, was also on the panel and provided student-athletes with concrete ways to determine their own transferable skills. Weese asked the group how many had ever watched film and then made adjustments and related that to the transferable skill analytical thinking.

The feedback from the students in attendance was very positive, and all agreed the program provided them with tools to assist in their transition out of sport. Senior lacrosse player Kelly Naslonski said, “The Senior Transition Seminar really opened my eyes to the opportunities after college. What I have learned during my time as a student-athlete here at Virginia Tech will prove to be so valuable in my success and in my life after graduation.”

With the majority of Tech student-athletes going pro in something other than sports, the Virginia Tech Athletics Office of Student Life is committed to helping student-athletes think about their futures beyond intercollegiate athletes well before their last team huddle. 

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Tech women's soccer coach Chugger Adair and the Hokies won a school-record 19 games this season and came one win short of the national championship game, falling to Florida State 3-2 in a national semifinal match.



# HOKIES' HISTORY-MAKING SEASON ENDS AT COLLEGE CUP

The Tech women's soccer team lost to Florida State in a thrilling semifinal, ending a season that saw the program accomplish many firsts

by Jimmy Robertson

Fans, students, parents, children, working class locals or some combination thereof shelled out hard-earned money to watch the women's soccer College Cup semifinal matchup between Virginia Tech and Florida State at the fancy digs at WakeMed Soccer Park in Cary, N.C.

As the patrons walked to their vehicles afterward, they should have reached into their wallets and purses and left some money at the ticket office.

For sure, they got a discount the first time around.

On an evening that defied normal December weather patterns, the Hokies saw their glorious season come to an end following one of the most

magnificent soccer matches many in these parts had ever witnessed. A fluke-like goal in the 82nd minute by FSU's Jamia Fields turned out to be the game winner in a 3-2 decision and left the Hokies dissecting the best season in school history.

"It's been amazing, no matter what happened," Tech's Jazmine Reeves said. "I'm really proud of our team. To make it to the College Cup is outstanding. I'm disappointed obviously with the result, but sometimes that happens. I couldn't be more proud of my team and couldn't be more excited about what was done this season."

The disappointment comes not so much from losing the match, but how the Hokies lost it.



Fields' goal – her second of the game – came just four minutes after Tech had tied the game at 2. The tying goal came when Ashley Meier received a perfect ball from Ashley Manning, who delivered it to Meier's feet, and Meier found the back of the net in the 78th minute.

Four minutes later, Fields made her way up the right flank and launched a shot from well outside the box toward the upper left corner of the goal. Tech goalkeeper Dayle Colpitts got a hand on it, but the ball ricocheted off the post, hit Colpitts in the back and lazily rolled into the net for a goal.

"It was a tricky ball," Colpitts said. "It went off my hand, off the post, off me, off everything ... and it went in. It's unfortunate. I'm disappointed."

Tech nearly tied the match in the waning moments. With 1:05 remaining, Reeves launched a shot that beat FSU goalkeeper Kelsey Wys – but unfortunately hit the crossbar. She missed tying the game by inches.

"I'll probably think about it every day," Reeves said of the shot. "There's nothing I can do about it now. I can only just hopefully remember the good memories of the season and move forward from there."

"Sometimes in this game, you've got to have a little luck," FSU coach Mark Krikorian admitted.

Tech certainly had its chances. Reeves hit the left post in the 67th minute with a shot that would have tied the game at 2. In the 52nd minute, Wys made a diving save of a Manning header. In the 49th minute, Katie Yensen played a good ball in to Morgan Conklin, who had a great look, but the shot sailed left. Early in the game, a Meier header skimmed wide.

"We were a bit unlucky," Tech coach Charles "Chugger" Adair said. "Florida State is a good side, but we were a bit unlucky. We hit the post twice. Going down 2-1 and fighting back to make it interesting and then giving up an unfortunate goal ... that's just how it worked out. Jazzy [Reeves] hit the post twice.

"It just didn't fall for us."

For the Hokies, a fantastic season ended. Yet it was truly a season of firsts.

Tech won a school-record 19 games, finishing 19-5-3. The Hokies scored a school-record 56 goals. Reeves became the Hokies' first All-ACC first-team choice and first All-American. They earned the program's first No. 1 seed in an NCAA Tournament. They made it to the NCAA quarterfinals for the first time. Then they made it to the College Cup.

They've enjoyed an amazing run under Adair, who wrapped up his third year. Kelly Cagle resigned three years ago because of family reasons, and Tech's entire team marched into Sharon McCloskey's office. The players told Tech's senior associate AD and senior woman



**Ashley Manning, who scored a goal and had an assist in the national semifinal against Florida State, is one of seven seniors departing from the best Tech women's soccer team in school history.**

administrator that they wanted Adair, an assistant under Cagle for five seasons, as their coach.

The parents then called McCloskey. Recruits called her. As she later joked, "Everyone called me wanting Chugger."

Normally these types of decisions can be a little dicey. School AD's and administrators often like to hire females to coach women's sports.

But the support for Adair was overwhelming, and Tech AD Jim Weaver decided to tab him as the leader of the women's soccer program.

"Honestly, Kelly was the first woman coach I'd ever had, so it wasn't any different for me personally," Reeves said. "They have different coaching styles, but they're both very effective. He pushes us, day in and day out. He's amazing. He has great standards, and that's what you need

as a coach.

"We already had a great foundation built, and he was firsthand around it. We knew he would keep those values and things like that, and he's a great coach. You could tell how intelligent he was. He knows the game of soccer, and he knows how to relate to people. We knew without a doubt that we wanted him to be our coach."

Colpitts agreed.

"We all knew him well, and he knew us so well," she said. "We had complete confidence in him from the start."

That confidence has been rewarded. Adair is now 46-19-5 as the Hokies' head coach, with a 17-13-3 mark in the ACC – the toughest women's soccer conference in the nation. The program appears to be built for the long run, too, as many key players return for next season.

For Reeves and Colpitts, that provides little

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## college cup | women's soccer

consolation now. They are two of seven seniors – the most important two. The finality of what transpired in Cary, N.C., hurts.

But they do expect the future to be great.

“Since I’ve been here, I’ve seen the program get better and better, and I don’t see that stopping now,” Reeves said. “Even before I got here, the program was building and building, and we have a great foundation. It’s going to continue to build, and I’m excited to see what’s going to happen next. I really am. It’s going to be great.”

### LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Adair didn’t take any time off to celebrate Tech’s terrific season after the Hokies’ loss to the Seminoles in the College Cup. In fact, he took the opposite approach.

He went recruiting.

Adair planned on going to a junior soccer tournament in the Cary, N.C., area the day after the Hokies’ loss. Tech loses the seven seniors, including two of the program’s best ever players in Reeves and Colpitts. The Hokies also lose steady Manning and her 13 career goals – Manning had a goal and an assist against FSU – and defender Taylor Antolino, who started 26 games this season.

In fact, the Hokies lose 45 career goals and 34 career assists off this team, and that doesn’t include Kelly Conheeney’s 26 career goals and 23 career assists. Conheeney missed all of this year and most of last year because of a concussion suffered in the fourth game last season.

Colpitts leaves with 82 career starts, 274 career saves and a 1.154 career goals against average. She ranks as one of the best goalkeepers, if not the best, in school history.

So Adair needs to find replacements, and he also figures to look at underclassmen. Unlike a lot of ACC programs, which focus on recruiting international players, Adair – and Cagle before him – focus on bringing in regional talent and developing that talent. Tech’s 2013 roster included 13 Virginians and an assortment of players from North Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

That plan has worked in other sports. Actually, Frank Beamer has made that strategy work in football. And if a coach can get to the College Cup doing this, why not continue recruiting this way instead of pursuing international talent?

“You have to find the right international kids. That’s the first thing,” Adair said. “But I think we just continue to build and get the girls that believe in themselves. As we learned from Kelly [Cagle], she always focused on baby steps and

the positives as we moved along the way. We’ve tried to continue on that process and continue to grow and continue to get better and better as we move forward.

“We’ll continue to work hard and push forward. The girls have had a little taste of it now. I’m sure they want to get back here.”

Tech returns a ton of firepower for next season. The Hokies return three of the top four point scorers this season in Murielle Tiernan, Meier and Yensen. Tiernan, a freshman this season, tied Reeves in goals (11) and assists (5), while Meier had nine goals. Yensen finished with seven goals – five game-winning goals, tying for the team high with Tiernan. Interestingly, the Hokies have not lost in Yensen’s career when she scores a point (19-0).

Three of the four All-ACC players return in Tiernan, Meier and Jordan Coburn, a defender who started all 27 games. Midfielder Kelsey Loupee and her 29 career points return, along with 27-game starters and defenders Jodie Zelenky and Danielle King.

The Hokies, who were picked to finish ninth in the ACC this past season by the league’s head coaches, easily could make a run back to the College Cup in 2014.


“We’re going to move forward,” Adair said. “We’re going to miss some seniors, but we’re going to push and hold the standards high for the girls and grow as a program.

“Every year, the expectation is going to be getting back here [Cary, N.C.] and try to win a national championship. That’s where we’re going to set our standard. We’re going to continue to try to climb up that rung and get into the finals and win a championship. That’s the goal of the program.”

### REEVES BECOMES TECH’S FIRST HERMANN TROPHY SEMIFINALIST

Reeves became the first Tech women’s soccer player to be named a semifinalist for the Missouri Athletic Club’s Hermann Trophy, the highest intercollegiate soccer award. The finalists were named Dec. 12, and the winner will be announced at a banquet on Jan. 10, 2014.


Reeves tied for the team lead this season in both goals (11) and assists (5), and she finished tied for third on the team with two game-winning goals. She started 25 of Tech’s 27 games.

Reeves also became the program’s first All-American this season, earning first-team honors by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America in an announcement made the same day as the College Cup semifinal. A few weeks earlier, Reeves became the first Tech player to make the All-ACC first team. 



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In 16 years as the AD at Virginia Tech, Jim Weaver guided the department into two conferences, ran a fiscally responsible operation and made sure the sports teams never ran afoul of the NCAA.

# END OF AN ERA

Citing health reasons, Tech AD Jim Weaver announced his retirement effective at the end of the year after 16 years as the head of the athletics department – and he leaves some big shoes to fill

by Jimmy Robertson

Jim Weaver slowly walked up to the podium in the Merryman Center football team meeting room and got ready to address the athletics department for probably the last time.

He delivered the news that most expected, and after thanking a few people, he did something that few, if any, in the athletics department had ever seen him do.

He shed tears.

“I told myself that I was going to keep my emotions in check,” Weaver said. “Now they’re running out the damn door.”

After serving more than 16 years as the athletics director at Tech, Weaver announced plans to retire at the end of December. He leaves with two years remaining on his contract, and university president Dr. Charles Steger named Sharon McCloskey as the interim AD effective Jan. 1. McCloskey, Tech’s senior associate athletics director and senior woman administrator, performed this same role 16 years ago when Dave Braine left to take the AD job at Georgia Tech.

Weaver cited health concerns as the reason for his retiring. The 68-year-old was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, a disorder of the nervous system that impairs speech and coordination, in 2004 and has undergone a brain surgery and numerous back surgeries in the past several years.

Two months ago, Weaver learned that he needed to have both of his hips replaced – even though his

left hip actually was replaced in 2008. The pain in his hips prevented him from working full office hours, and in early September, he began talking with Steger about an early retirement.

“I started thinking about it in mid-August, and I made the decision some time at the end of September or maybe mid-September,” Weaver said. “It’s basically a situation where I can’t give 100 percent effort, and this job is a terrific job in the industry, but it demands your full attention, and unfortunately I’m not able to do that right now. It’s in the best interest of all the parties to do what we did.

“It [the decision to retire] was very difficult, but it became more realistic as I went along. I’m absolutely convinced it was the right thing to do. As much as I love the business and love the university, it was the thing to do. I have no second thoughts about it.”

Weaver leaves behind big shoes to fill. From overseeing the transition into two conferences, to administering offices and coaching staffs that never compromised on NCAA compliance, to graduating student-athletes at never before seen levels at Tech, to running a department that is as fiscally sound as any in college athletics, Weaver took the lead in every area.

More importantly, he was the supervisor of a group of people who have put together a strong foundation for the athletics department going forward.

## CONFERENCE AFFILIATION AND BUDGET WOES

Weaver didn’t exactly ease into his role as the AD at Tech after spending two years as the AD at Western Michigan on the heels of a three-year stint as the AD at UNLV. He wouldn’t get that luxury.

The most pressing issue of the time centered on Tech’s conference situation. Braine had tried desperately to get the Hokies into the BIG EAST for all sports, and while league commissioner Mike Tranghese was open to the idea, the league’s presidents blocked those prospects. So Tech found itself in the BIG EAST for football, the Colonial Athletic Association for wrestling and the Atlantic 10 for all other sports.

Weaver possessed experience in dealing with this exact situation. At UNLV, he led the way, as UNLV moved from the Big West Conference into the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) for all sports.

He knew most of the parties involved with the BIG EAST office, including Tranghese. He spent an inordinate amount of time on the phone with people who could help Tech’s case, and he constantly pitched the Hokies in meetings with league officials.

“I spent a considerable amount of time on that issue,” Weaver admitted. “I had multiple conversations with people, making sure people knew what our aspirations were.”

In August of 1999, the BIG EAST invited Tech into the conference for all sports beginning for the 2001-02 season. League presidents later decided to invite Tech for the 2000-01 season.

Tech got into the BIG EAST largely because of its success in football. But it also got in largely because Weaver had begun implementing plans to make the school even more attractive.

It started with making the department a fiscally viable operation. That turned out to be a difficult chore largely because the annual payout from the Atlantic 10 Conference back then was the equivalent of peanuts. Weaver had to make some difficult choices, including the postponement of some facilities projects.

Obviously, the growth of Tech's football program brought in needed revenue, but Weaver restructured some organizations within the department to save money, and he also cut in certain areas. Under his watch, the department ran in the black every single year of his tenure, and today, stands as one of the few athletics departments in the nation that runs in the black.

"We, as a senior administrative staff, made the tough calls to get the organization running the way we wanted it to run," he said. "We needed to start work on facilities, and the first building I wanted to build was a new field house. As I looked over the course of time, we had to push that to the backburner because there were other things that were more pertinent."

Though he couldn't have known this at the time, Weaver's ability to put Tech on solid financial footing partly led to the biggest moment in the athletics department's history – its invitation into the Atlantic Coast Conference for all sports beginning in 2004. A lot of factors led to that invitation, including some strong-arming done by former governor Mark Warner, but because of Weaver's strong fiscal management, his leadership on facilities projects, and his oversight in compliance areas, Weaver deserved a lot of credit for making the Tech athletics department an appealing product.

## FACILITIES BOOM

While at Florida, Weaver cleaned up a compliance mess following the NCAA's charging of the Gators with 107 major rules violations under former football coach Charley Pell. The NCAA ultimately determined that the Gators had committed 59 infractions, put the Gators on probation for two years and banned them from bowl games and live television for two years.

Weaver obviously spent a lot of time in then-Florida AD Bill Carr's office discussing compliance issues. He got to know Carr's administrative assistant, Nancy Gabbard, quite well, and he even enlisted her services from time to time because he did not have his own administrative assistant.

She later took another job outside of athletics, but when Weaver received a promotion at Florida, he called her and offered her a job, and she took it, getting back into athletics. Meanwhile, her

husband, Tom, ran a real estate company that the two of them had started, and he had sold Weaver's home (Weaver had built a new home). So Weaver and the Gabbards became close friends.

Within a year or two after that, Weaver interviewed for the AD job at Furman and didn't get it. He then interviewed at UNLV and landed that one, starting in October of 1991. He put his house on the market with Tom Gabbard.

Weaver came back to Florida for Christmas that year, and he called Gabbard, wanting him to come over to the house. Gabbard thought he wanted to discuss the selling of Weaver's home and gathered all his marketing materials in preparation for the meeting.

"What's that stuff?" Weaver asked.

"I want to show you what we're doing to sell your house," Gabbard said.

"I don't want to talk to you about that," Weaver told him. "I want to talk to you about changing careers."

Weaver wanted to hire Gabbard for a spot on his staff at UNLV. He wanted someone without any prior knowledge of athletics, preferring instead to teach that person his own perspective of athletics. Gabbard thanked Weaver for the offer and said he would consider it, and then he cut to the chase.

"You want your secretary back, don't you?" Gabbard asked. "And you're trying to find a job for the old man?"

Weaver said, "Yes, I want Nancy back."

In March of 1992, Tom and Nancy Gabbard moved to Las Vegas – and Tom and Weaver have been building facilities ever since.

Gabbard's experience in real estate and building construction made him an ideal person to carry out Weaver's ideas on facilities. At UNLV, Weaver talked a lot of the high rollers on the Las Vegas scene into giving him the money needed to build facilities, and then Gabbard oversaw the construction those facilities. At UNLV, they built a baseball stadium, a tennis facility and an athletic complex, and installed a new track and renovated the basketball offices.

"His philosophy was, 'If you ain't growing, you're dying,'" Gabbard said. "Jim's always been a facilities guy. Now, certainly his strength was in compliance when he came to Vegas because he had taken Florida through all that. But he's been a facilities guy from the very beginning."

Gabbard decided to stay in Las Vegas after Weaver resigned and later took the job at Western Michigan. But when Weaver got the job at Virginia Tech, he called the Gabbards and convinced them to come to Blacksburg.

Together, they have spearheaded an unbelievable boom in athletics facilities. In fact, when most people discuss Weaver's legacy, they tend to think of all the building that went on during his tenure.

Weaver and Gabbard oversaw the building of the south end zone structure at Lane Stadium and then the west side expansion of the stadium. They oversaw the building of the Hahn Hurst Basketball Practice Center, the new football locker room,

the new baseball hitting facility and many other projects and renovations. Earlier this year, they received approval to build a new indoor field house for the football team, and plans call for that project to be concluded by the start of the 2015 football season.

They also took what Weaver described as a "trickle-down" approach. In other words, they found ways to benefit Olympic sports with each project. For example, when they decided to move the football practice fields to behind the Jamerson Athletics Center, they then decided to build a soccer/lacrosse stadium on the vacated space, in addition to two practice fields – one consisting of natural grass and one consisting of artificial turf. Also, while overseeing the building of the new football locker room, they included a floor for the wrestling program, and they came up with plans to create new locker rooms for the baseball, men's soccer and men's track and field teams in the old football locker room.

In short, everyone benefitted in some way with each project.

All told, the athletics department has committed \$200 million to facilities under Weaver, including the \$20-30 million needed for the new indoor field house and the renovation of Rector Field House.

"We did a lot of everything," Weaver admitted. "You've got to have the right facilities if you're going to compete with the upper echelon. There is no question about it."

Does the Tech athletics department stop building once a new AD gets hired? Not a chance. Athletics departments everywhere are building something newer and bigger, and to be competitive, Tech needs to continue the building legacy that Weaver and Gabbard started.

## HIRING COACHES

In 2006, Weaver faced a dilemma. Tom Brands, the head coach of the wrestling program – a man whom Weaver had given his first head coaching job – rocked everyone when he decided to take the Iowa job. Brands also took five prized freshmen with him. He left Tech's program in tatters, and there was talk of disbanding the program.

Instead, Weaver hired a local high school coach to oversee the program – and last year, Kevin Dresser led the program to its first ACC championship and first top-10 finish at the NCAA Championships.

"I was appreciative that he kept wrestling and also that he gave me the opportunity to be the guy here," Dresser said. "Jim tends to make hires on gut feeling, and any time you do that, sometimes you're right and sometimes you're wrong. I'd like to think he was right with wrestling. I think he's made more right calls than wrong during his tenure at Virginia Tech."

Weaver refused to box himself into a corner when it came to hiring head coaches. At times, he made the unorthodox hire, as he did with Dresser. At times, he looked nationally to fill spots and hit grand slams with the hiring of guys like Dave

Cianelli, Jim Thompson and Pete Hughes. Cianelli's track and field and cross country teams have won eight ACC titles, and Thompson has led the men's tennis program to seven straight NCAA regionals. Hughes guided the baseball program to two NCAA regionals, including last season when the Hokies played host to their first baseball regional.

At times, Weaver promoted from within the ranks. Charles "Chugger" Adair, the women's soccer coach, has been Weaver's biggest success with that strategy, as Adair has guided the Hokies to three NCAA appearances, including this year's College Cup appearance.

"Primarily," Weaver said when asked if his hires came down to a "gut" decision. "You get to know the people and you have reasons why you need to do certain things and you match them up. If they

match up, you make the call.

"I know there are some people who think I shouldn't have done what I've done, but I believe in it."

Adair had been an assistant for more than 10 years at four different stops, including a five-year stint with the Hokies under former coach Kelly Cagle. Cagle resigned in December of 2010 for family reasons, and Weaver decided to promote Adair instead of conducting a national search. He wanted to continue the program's upward trajectory, so promoting the assistant made perfect sense to him.

"I had interviewed at mid-major positions in my career," Adair said. "I had never gotten offered. They [officials at those schools] wanted head coaching experience, and I didn't have that.

"I'll always be in debt to him [Weaver] for the opportunity to be a head coach. It's a difficult thing to get a head coaching job these days. A lot of assistants put a lot of time in. I was an assistant for 10 years before getting that opportunity. Not only did he give me a head job, but a quality head job here at Virginia Tech and in the ACC."

Ultimately, the legacy of Weaver's hiring choices may come down to his basketball coaches – men's coach James Johnson and women's coach Dennis Wolff. After firing Seth Greenberg in 2012, Weaver turned to Johnson, one of Greenberg's assistants. Johnson's career as an assistant took him to numerous schools, but he had no head coaching experience. His passion for Virginia Tech, though, sold Weaver.

Like Johnson, Wolff, now in his third year as

## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT JIM WEAVER

"Jim is a terrific administrator and friend who has led Virginia Tech with great success and accomplishment. He was instrumental in Virginia Tech's transition into the ACC and is extremely well respected throughout the league, as well as intercollegiate athletics. Jim is a courageous person, and I have a lot of admiration for him." – **John Swofford, ACC Commissioner**

"Jim Weaver is one of the greats in intercollegiate athletics, both professionally and as a person. He has truly made a difference everywhere he has been. His legacy at Virginia Tech encompasses leading the athletics department through two conference transitions - all sports membership in the BIG EAST and then full membership in the Atlantic Coast Conference. Jim's coaching background allowed him to have a terrific feel for putting the right people in the right spots to insure Virginia Tech's athletic success while providing the student-athletes and coaches with first-class competition and practice facilities. It is not an accident that Virginia Tech has been able to move up the conference ladder on two occasions and still compete for conference championships and NCAA Championship bids. Jim leaves some very large shoes to fill, but he also leaves a program that will be attractive to the very best and brightest athletic director candidates in the nation." – **Terry Holland, former UVa men's basketball coach and former East Carolina AD**

"Jim Weaver's incredible career has been devoted to making things better for the student-athlete. His work ethic and integrity made him one of the giants in intercollegiate athletics. Above all, I'm proud to call him my friend." – **Mike Tranghese, former BIG EAST commissioner**

"Jim Weaver is one of the most knowledgeable and professional ADs that I have had the honor and privilege to know and do business with in my 33 years of sports business. More important than that, he is a man of integrity, character and class. He will be sorely missed by the Virginia Tech family of student-athletes, coaches, students, and the administration, the ACC, the NCAA, the Bowl industry and everyone that he has come into contact with in college sports.

"I offer Jim my heartfelt attitude of gratitude for the opportunity to be his friend and wish him God's blessings for great health and a long happy life!" – **Gary Stokan, the president and CEO of Peach Bowl, Inc., which owns and manages the Chick-fil-A Bowl**

"Jim Weaver personifies the adage of 'a gentlemen's gentleman.' He is the type of person you quickly learn to trust. That is a high and deserving compliment because building trust is the platform for true leaders. I believe that will be a key component of Jim's legacy at Virginia Tech." – **Dave Hart, University of Tennessee AD**

"I am appreciative of the tremendous impact Jim Weaver has made on Virginia Tech and the many contributions he has made to intercollegiate athletics. He is a mentor to me, and I am grateful for the role he has played in my professional career. He provided me with a great opportunity to join his staff at Virginia Tech and offered his full support a short time later when I had an opportunity to become the athletics director at Eastern Kentucky University. He truly considered my best interests rather than his own. That is indicative of his commitment to his student-athletes, coaches and administrators and one of the reasons he has enjoyed such a long and distinguished

career in intercollegiate athletics." – **Jeff Long, former Tech associate AD and current Arkansas AD**

"Jim and I worked together at Villanova in the 1974-75 timeframe, so we've known each other a long time. There are few people anywhere that have the same love for intercollegiate athletics that Jim Weaver has. From Penn State to Iowa State to Villanova as a coach and from Florida to UNLV to Western Michigan to Virginia Tech as an administrator, Jim has been highly respected by his peers all over the country." – **Craig Littlepage, University of Virginia AD**

"Under Jim's leadership, Virginia Tech's athletic programs took enormous strides, and the Hokies are a nationally recognized and respected brand because of his efforts. Jim was passionate about intercollegiate athletics, and the positive effects that it had on the student-athletes as well as the larger Virginia Tech community. I know when I first got the job at West Virginia, Jim Weaver was one of the first athletic directors I sought out to ask for advice, and he so graciously spent time with me. I will never forget his hospitality and his willingness to help a new person get started in intercollegiate athletics. Jim leaves large shoes to fill at Virginia Tech, and the community of athletic directors will miss his wit, humor and positive outlook." – **Oliver Luck, West Virginia University AD**

"It was an honor and privilege to work alongside Jim Weaver during his time at Florida. He was very dedicated, loyal and always set the tone for doing things the right way. As much as I enjoyed our time together at Florida, I've enjoyed our friendship over the years even more." – **Jeremy Foley, University of Florida AD**

the head of the women's program, had worked for Greenberg as an assistant, serving as the director of basketball operations for a year. Weaver got to know Wolff and liked him, and more importantly, liked Wolff's track record as the head men's coach at Boston University from 1994-2009. He viewed him as a great choice to replace Beth Dunkenberger, whose contract had expired.

Weaver stands by these two, and all of his hiring decisions.

"I'm hopeful that the people who take over the leadership role will give those people the time that's needed," he said. "When you make a change, regardless of whether it's inside or outside, if they [the new leadership] will give them a chance, they will be fine."

**AN UNDENIABLE LEGACY**

So much more could be written about Weaver and his impact on Virginia Tech athletics. He took the lead in adding high-profile opponents to the Hokies' football schedule, much to fans' delight. The Hokies have played such teams as USC, Alabama, LSU, Boise State, Texas A&M and Nebraska under his watch, and he has scheduled future games with Ohio State, Wisconsin, Michigan, Penn State, and of course, Tennessee in Bristol, Tenn.

In terms of departmental infrastructure, he expanded auxiliary units, doubling the staffs in strength and conditioning, sports medicine, marketing, athletics communications and the

video department. Some of these areas directly benefit student-athletes, while others enable the department to branch out toward fans.

He fought for a larger staff in Tech's Student-Athlete Academic Support Services. When he started, the staff essentially consisted of a few people. Now, it consists of 10 full-timers, and that staff has played a huge role in Tech's impressive rise in graduation rates among student-athletes. Tech's recent Graduation Success Rate of 90 percent (combined all sports) ranked in the top 10 nationally.

He added women's golf to the list of varsity sports at Tech, which provided an opportunity for female student-athletes. He also made sure coaches and staff members followed NCAA rules and regulations to the letter.

He will leave with an impressive legacy. "I've never worried about that," Weaver said. "I haven't taken the time or had the time to think about it since I announced I was retiring. I'm sure there will come a time when I will. When I get away from it, I will."

Steger announced to the athletics department that he wanted Weaver to help him with the search for his replacement. That makes sense. After all, who better to help find the person to lead the athletics department into the future than the man who helped the department overcome the past and put them in a positive place in the present?

Weaver knows the new person will face


challenges. Schools everywhere continue to deal with the realities of dipping ticket sales and donations, marketing dollars appear to be tougher to come by, and facilities seem to need to be bigger and better. It takes a special person to deal with such myriad issues.

"It takes somebody who has a strong work ethic," Weaver said. "It takes someone who understands the realm of college athletics. It takes someone who is willing to be a good listener and not try to solve the problems right away, but rather get a grasp of the environment and then make decisions that are in the best interests of the program."

Weaver leaves with only a lone regret. His father passed away six months after Weaver took the AD job at Tech and never made it to Blacksburg. Weaver wishes he had brought his parents down for the Miami game during the 1997 season because some dear friends of his parents had a son who played for Miami.

"I kick myself for not having him down," Weaver said. "I didn't because I was so busy being an AD that first year."

That's a personal regret, though. After decades of working in athletics, whether it be as a coach, administrator or an AD, he will leave with a clear conscience – and that's the perfect way to depart.

"I have no regrets," he said. "This has been a wonderful career and a wonderful way to make a living and to raise a family. I have no second thoughts." 

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## SMOOT FINDS HIMSELF IN A FAMILIAR ROLE

Former head of the Virginia Tech Foundation Ray Smoot chaired the search committee that led to Jim Weaver's hiring and will do so again

by Jimmy Robertson

A little more than two years ago, Ray Smoot decided to retire from his leadership position at the Virginia Tech Foundation and remain on only in a part-time role to help the university and the foundation.

The longtime Tech employee, who had served in many roles during his 30-plus years on campus, planned on watching the trains roll past his house – he loves trains – and to do as much fishing as possible.

Yet instead of fishing these days, he finds himself casting for a successor to Jim Weaver, Tech's AD who announced his retirement effective at the end of the year. Smooth now chairs a committee that is conducting a national search for Weaver's replacement.

"I'm finding that I'm not as retired as I hope to eventually become," Smoot laughed.

In tabbing Smoot to chair the search committee, outgoing university president Dr. Charles Steger couldn't have picked a better person. After all, Smoot possesses experience in this sort of thing.

In 1997, then-AD David Braine left Virginia Tech to become the AD at Georgia Tech. A search committee headed by Smoot hired a search firm, and the committee later forwarded Weaver's name and those of a couple of others to then-president Dr. Paul Torgersen, who hired Weaver.

This time, Collegiate Sports Associates has been tasked to help find Tech's next AD.

"This is typical in AD searches and other positions in the university," Smoot said. "They're [search firms] knowledgeable about people around the country – they tend to have people who were AD's

themselves. They'll receive applications from people who are interested and quietly seek out persons who may be a good fit here based on the profile of what our committee is looking for in an AD.

"After some time, they'll bring to the committee some people to consider. We'll reduce that number to around six and interview each one separately. We'll check references, and after that, reduce the number to two or three and submit those names to the university president.

"It is not our function [as a committee] to choose the AD. That will be up to the president."

In 1997, the stakes were high for the search committee, as school searched for someone to guide it toward a home for all its sports – Tech played football in the Big East and wrestled in the Colonial Athletic Association, while the rest of the sports were in the Atlantic 10. Weaver helped the school get into the BIG EAST for all sports and later played a role in getting Tech into the ACC.

But the stakes are high this time around, too. The new AD theoretically will be making the biggest hire in the history of Tech athletics – the hiring of the replacement for football coach Frank Beamer when Beamer decides to retire. Beamer's contract runs through 2016, but he has left the door open to coach beyond that point. Yet no one coaches forever.

"Obviously, one of the attributes we're looking for is an AD who has made successful appointments where he or she was previously," Smoot said. "That's just one of many things that are important.

"We're also looking for someone who has shown a strong record of compliance. We're looking for academic successes, financial stability,

competitiveness in all sports and fan and donor relations. All those things will be looked at and analyzed."

Smoot understands the challenges that an AD faces. He once sat in that chair, serving as the interim AD for eight months following Dutch Baughman's abrupt resignation in June of 1987.

He expects to be interviewing the cream of the crop among ADs in intercollegiate athletics. Much has changed since Smoot and his search committee recommended Weaver in 1997. The school resides in the ACC, the athletics department is one of the few nationally in good financial shape, the graduation rates are among the best in the nation, the facilities are outstanding and the sports programs are winning (16 ACC championships in nine years).

"I think we've got one of the premier jobs in the country," Smoot said. "I think we're going to be highly sought after by the best talent."

Steger, Smoot and the other power figures on Tech's campus know the value of athletics to the university landscape. Thus, this decision will command the utmost of attention.

"Athletics is of great interest to high school students and their parents, and doing well in athletics provides great attention to the public," Smoot said. "If you have a competitive athletics program, you're going to attract the interest of prospective students.

"Athletics also connects alumni and fans in a way that few other things on campus do. Many donors who support athletics also support academics. The relationship with the donors spills over.

"So not having a successful athletics program is not an option." 

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A three-year starter at quarterback, Logan Thomas has set at least nine school records at Tech during his time with the Hokies, including career marks for passing yards, total offense and touchdown passes.

# FAMILY, FRIENDS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FAME, FOOTBALL FOR THOMAS

## Despite the ups and downs, quarterback Logan Thomas has enjoyed his time at Tech and credits his family and friends – many of whom are outside of sports – for helping him along the way

by Jimmy Robertson

It's 7:30 or so in the evening, and a small crowd has gathered at Bull & Bones Brewhaus & Grill, a brewpub with an upscale dining area and also a separate sports bar with a casual dining area. This place, popular with both locals and Tech students, resides in the trendy First & Main shopping area along Blacksburg's South Main Street.

The clack of billiards balls signifies a game going on. The soft voices emanating from the many flatscreen televisions tell of the latest sports news, and the hum from general conversations permeate throughout the place. It is neither loud nor quiet here.

A group of college students sit at a table, talking and laughing. They seem to be taking a break from academic rigors and social pressures.

In walks a young man, one of commanding presence. He stands at least 6-foot-6 and looks huge. He says hello to a friend at the bar and then joins the group of students at the table. Because of his size and because, as one would correctly surmise, he is an athlete, he looks out of place.

But Logan Thomas isn't.

Virginia Tech's quarterback owns just about every school record for a quarterback. He's thrown for more yards than anyone, has more touchdown passes and has accumulated more yards of offense. He plays in front of thousands every week, and he deals with the emotional swings, the exhilarating highs and the brutal lows.

He could select a depth chart for friends. But Thomas isn't like that. He casts a wide net for friends, and he feels most relaxed not necessarily when hanging with teammates, but during times like these, the ones at Bull & Bones with just a bunch of ordinary college guys and girls – ones he considers friends. They like him not for what he does each Saturday, but for whom he is during the week. And he likes that about them.

"My best friends don't even play football," Thomas said. "That's who I am. You don't have to be an athlete to be a good friend of mine."

Thomas means that. You only need to be around him briefly to see an inherent goodness within him. Sure, that's probably part of his natural DNA, but hang around young people for any length of time and you see who usually comes from good families and who doesn't.

Thomas is the child of a single mother, but he also is the child of a family, a great one at that. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins ... they all

teamed to raise Thomas.

They did a great job, too. Witness his graduating in four years, his play on the field and his voluntary work within the community, and it all provides ample evidence that the family's efforts were not in vain. But his popularity among wide swaths of diverse people, that may provide the overwhelming evidence.

As Logan Thomas walks into the athletics communications office in the Jamerson Athletics Center, he carries a wary look on his face. This is where he meets reporters wanting to do interviews, and he already knows the questions. He's answered them all the past two seasons – why is the offense struggling, why have you turned the ball over so much, why can't you guys run the ball, why this, why that and so on.

He answers as best he can. For some things, he has no answer, and for some, that would be frustrating.

"The frustrating part is losing," he said. "I hate losing more than anything."

It wasn't supposed to go like this, not after his fabulous redshirt sophomore season. Normally, teams get better as quarterbacks grow older and wiser, but nothing has ever been normal for Logan Thomas.

He grew up without a father, which goes a long way toward explaining his close relationship with his mother, Kim Tarazona, a former volleyball player at James Madison. She played the obvious role in helping raise him, but so, too, did her family. She worked third shift at a detention center, so she needed – and got – help from her parents [Cliff and Shirley Thomas], her sister [Dina McCray] and her sister's husband [Charles McCray].

"My grandparents picked me up after school, and then my mom would pick me up," Thomas said. "She worked third shift, so she would take me to Zack's [McCray] place, and they [Zack's parents, Dina and Charles McCray] would take me to school in the morning. That's how I developed my family and how close we are. My fatherhood came from them two [his grandfather and his mother], and they taught me everything."

Zack, a tight end on the Hokies' team, and Logan are biologically cousins. But truthfully, they're brothers. They lived together, ate together, played together, went to school together and ultimately became great football players at Brookville High

School in Lynchburg, Va., together. Even today, they live together as roommates.

Cliff Thomas willingly took on the fatherhood role for Thomas. Cliff looked after his grandson, going to practices and games, talking to him about the importance of getting good grades, and cautioning him to stay away from the perils that tend to gravitate toward young adults (or vice versa). On Sundays, he and his wife saw that Thomas went to church.

"They didn't make me go," Thomas said. "That's just what we did as a family."

He saved his deepest discussions, though, for his mom, who echoed everything her family told him. He still saves his innermost thoughts for her, most of which he reveals after tough games.

Thomas' father eventually wandered back into his life, right around Thomas' senior year of high school. His father's daughter and Thomas actually connected first through social media, and then later, father and son connected. The two don't have the relationship that he and his mother have, and probably never will, but Thomas holds no grudge.

"He's a good guy. He just wasn't ready for a child at the time, and that's why he left," Thomas said. "He played basketball and was overseas. That's why he wasn't around. He wasn't ready, which is understandable. Now he lives in Maryland and has a daughter of his own, and he's taking care of her. I think my situation helped him grow up. I have no ill feelings toward him."

Thomas talks to his father once a week, and his father has seen Thomas play several times. He came down to Blacksburg for Thomas' senior day game against Maryland. But he was not on the field for the pregame ceremonies.

That time and space was reserved for those especially close to Thomas, the ones who molded him, cared for him and cared about him, the ones who made him into the man he's become today.

It was a rather large group.

"I turned out just fine, and my family was fine," Thomas said. "That's what makes family so important."

Like all good quarterbacks, Thomas possesses an uncanny ability to put things in the rearview mirror and look ahead, but what transpired Nov. 1 of last year rattled even him.

The Hokies limped to Miami, having lost three of their past four games. They were 4-4 on the

season, 2-2 in league play, and needed a win to buoy their sinking Coastal Division title hopes. Tech's offense, though, felt optimistic about its chances against a young Miami defense.

The Hokies did put up 421 yards, and Thomas scored on a 73-yard run. But he threw two interceptions and fumbled, the fumble coming in the third quarter on a botched exchange with the center at the Miami 2. The Hokies trailed 20-12 at the time. A touchdown there would have flipped momentum. Instead, Tech lost 30-12.

Thomas didn't talk to anyone for the next 24 hours following the game.

"I took it hard because I didn't think I had done enough to get the team to win," he said. "That's when I was most disappointed (as a player at Tech)."

But Thomas, for whatever his critics say about him, never stays on the mat. He managed to rally Tech to three straight wins to end the season, including a bowl win over Rutgers.

Thomas deserves credit for that, but he doesn't really want it. Going 7-6 and beating Rutgers in a bowl game wasn't what he expected, particularly after throwing for more than 3,000 yards and 19 touchdowns (10 interceptions) and rushing for nearly 500 yards and 11 more scores as a redshirt sophomore. He guided Tech to an 11-win season that year, a spot in the ACC Championship Game (the Hokies lost to Clemson) and to an at-large spot in the Sugar Bowl, an excruciating affair in which Tech lost to Michigan in overtime.

"I always have high expectations of myself," he said. "I expect to play the best and expect to be the best. Therefore, you know, things went well that year [his sophomore year]. We didn't have much adversity. Don't know why it hasn't happened the same way the past couple of years, but I still have that high expectation of myself."

This year has been equally frustrating, both for Thomas and the Hokies. They played respectably against No. 1 Alabama in the season opener in a loss and then ripped off six straight wins afterward. Given their schedule, they appeared to be in great shape to make the ACC Championship Game. Alas, Tech lost to Duke and at BC. After gaining revenge against Miami in their best performance of the year, the Hokies came back with a clunker, dropping one to Maryland on senior day.

Thomas was asked after the BC loss if he ever wondered about being benched for Mark Leal, given the inconsistency of Tech's offense. He refused to take the bait, giving a terse, "No comment."

The question, though, smacks of ignorance. Thomas had accounted for 73 percent of Tech's yardage heading into the New Year's Eve Sun Bowl game against UCLA. So bench your best offensive weapon for a guy who has played in seven games in three years?



Quarterback Logan Thomas (3) celebrated senior day at Lane Stadium with those closest to him - his family.

Thomas' struggles go back to the struggles of those around him. Two years ago, he played with David Wilson, Danny Coale, Jarrett Boykin and Andre Smith. Three of those four guys still play in the NFL. The offensive line that season featured four senior starters. But Tech's offensive firepower the past two years has fizzled since all those guys departed.

Yet Thomas points no fingers.

"Last year we had the up-and-down season. This year, we've had losses that we shouldn't have to teams that aren't better than us," Thomas said. "For me, I think that's preparing me for something bigger down the road - knowing how to bounce back from a loss and dealing with a situation that isn't ideal. I think God is putting me through this to see how I'm going to react and to prepare me for my future whether it's on the field or off."

Tech's bowl game will mark the last game of Thomas' career. It will be the 46th game in which he's played at Tech, 40 of them starts. Then he heads off to prepare for the NFL Draft, which is held in May. Opinions vary wildly on when he gets drafted.

He eschewed that opportunity a year ago, returning to Tech for his senior season after head coach Frank Beamer named Scot Loeffler the offensive coordinator. Loeffler possesses NFL coaching experience and educated Thomas on what it takes to succeed as an NFL quarterback. Thomas' mechanics and fundamentals are much better now than a year ago, and more importantly, he mentally understands how to prepare for an opponent.

"It was the best decision I could have made," he said.

Thomas will depart with at least nine school

records. That alone makes him worthy of Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame consideration when his class becomes eligible in 2023. An ACC title eluded him, though, and that will gnaw at him.


Just what will Thomas' legacy be? It's an interesting question for Tech fans. Opinions probably vary, though most fans respect him for being such a good ambassador for the school - one willing to speak to groups of young people within the community and for good-naturedly providing autographs and photo opportunities.

"I guess it's not really up to me how people portray me," he said. "I think a lot of people know that I've given everything I can possibly give. I hold however many records there is. I'm not as bad of a football player as people say I am. There have been a lot of great players come through here, and I don't compare myself to anyone else. I'll let everyone else do the comparing."

"I just want to be remembered as someone who gave it all every single play and wasn't afraid to back down from anything. I might not have been loved the entire time, but I think people will look back and see that I wasn't as bad as they thought."

Only a vocal minority foolishly considers him a bad player. Knowledgeable Tech fans appreciate and respect the way he's played the past four years. They admire that he got his degree in human development in four years and are proud that he plans on working with teenage kids should the NFL not work out for him.

All his friends - and there is a significant group of them - like, appreciate, respect and admire him, too. Albeit for a different reason.

They see him for who he really is. That guy who hangs out with them at Bull & Bones, well, he's just like them. 

## GETTING TO KNOW LOGAN THOMAS

**Q: It's a Friday night in the offseason, what are you doing?**

**Thomas:** "Probably the same thing I'm doing on a Friday night during the season – watching a movie and just chilling. I'm not much of one to go out. I play a good amount of video games and watch a ton of movies. For me, it's an escape of the realities of football. My family and friends are big to me, and I'm usually with them. I usually stay low key."

**Q: What's your favorite movie?**

**Thomas:** "Gladiator. Just from all the stuff he went through and stuff that he did."

**Q: Are you sure your favorite movie isn't The Notebook? You tweeted once that you liked it.**

**Thomas:** "That was the first time I had watched it. Most guys would say it's a great movie. It's the ones that don't say it that you have to worry about. It's a great movie, but not my favorite."

**Q: What's in your iPod these days?**

**Thomas:** "I'm more of a rap guy. I stay within those walls and don't venture too far

out. I've got a couple of favorites – J. Cole, ASAP Rocky, they're more lyrical guys. I do like Lecrae. He's a very good Christian rapper."

**Q: Who's your favorite NFL team?**

**Thomas:** "I grew up a Skins [Redskins] fan. My grandpa is my father figure, and we'd always sit down after church and watch the Skins game. As I've gotten older, it's kind of diminished. I still pull for them, but now that I'm in the position I'm in [to be drafted by an NFL team], I'm not really biased against anyone. Whatever happens, happens."

**Q: Who is your favorite NFL player?**

**Thomas:** "Growing up, it would be [former Minnesota Vikings receiver] Randy Moss and [former Green Bay Packers quarterback] Brett Favre. Randy is the Calvin Johnson of now, and of course, now my favorite player is [Detroit Lions receiver] Calvin Johnson. My favorite quarterback is [Denver Broncos quarterback] Peyton Manning. He's a lot of fun to watch because he's so smart. Growing up, I liked Brett Favre because of the way he played, not because of his stats. He wanted to win so badly, and he wore his emotions on his sleeve. He'd

throw a touchdown and he'd be the first one down there to meet his guy. I think that's what it is all about."

**Q: What is your most memorable moment at Tech?**

**Thomas:** "It probably was against Miami my sophomore year. It was a crucial game, and we had a come-from-behind victory and how much emotion there was with that game. It's something I'll never forget."

**Q: If you could trade places with anyone for one day, who would it be?**

**Thomas:** "I don't really have that one person and say, 'Man, I'd love to have his life.' I'd probably say Rob Dyrdek [a professional skateboarder often seen on MTV reality shows]. He looks like he has fun all the time. He has tons of fun."

**Q: In 10 years from now, what will you be doing?**

**Thomas:** "'Hopefully, I'll still be in the NFL. Hopefully have a wife and kids. It'd be a blessing to be in the NFL at that point of my career.'"



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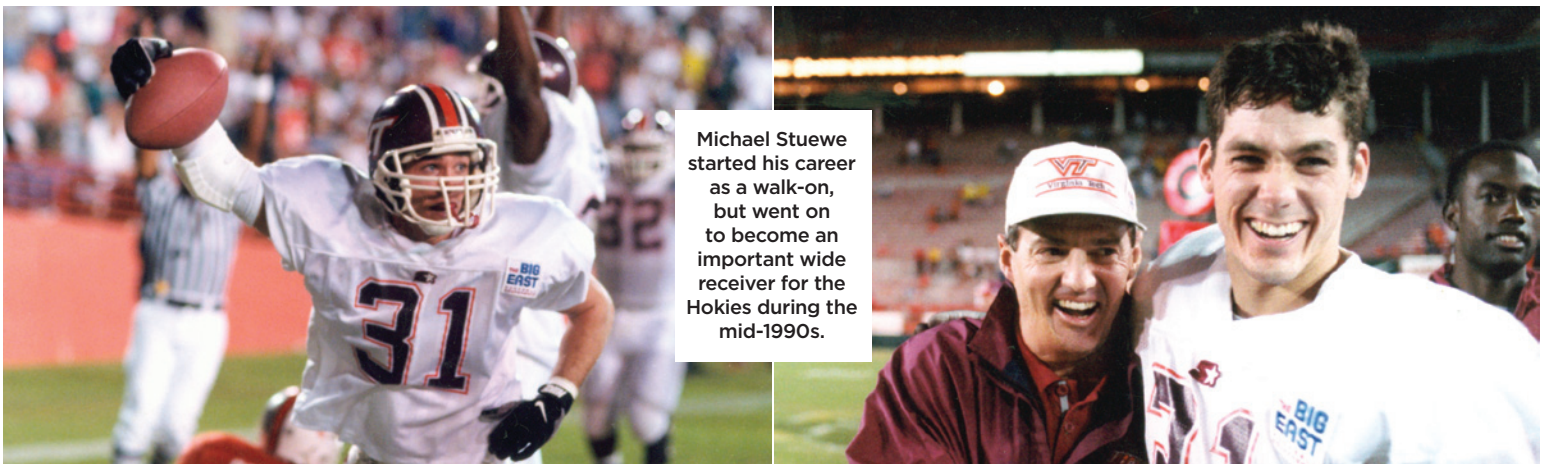
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# FORMER RECEIVER ONE OF THE EARLY WALK-ON SUCCESS STORIES AT TECH

Michael Stuewe worked his way into being a success story at Tech, and not surprisingly, he is now successful in his management position at Travel Centers of America

by Jimmy Robertson



Even more than 20 years later, Michael Stuewe still laughs when thinking about how he ended up at Virginia Tech.

The New Jersey native got noticed when Tech's coaching staff watched film of one of his teammates, a tailback, and they noticed this gangly kid wearing a No. 88 jersey playing receiver and making a bunch of plays. Then-receivers coach Terry Strock got in touch with Stuewe's high school, and later, with Stuewe himself, ultimately inviting him down for a visit.

Stuewe and his dad took a trip that summer to visit several colleges, and Stuewe was all set to go to the University of Richmond. But his dad wanted him to visit Virginia Tech, and they made their way to Blacksburg. Along the way, Stuewe was grumbling about the additional travel, so his dad turned the car around and started to head back to New Jersey.

Rather than make his dad upset, Stuewe told him to turn the car back around and head toward Southwest Virginia.

"I knew it would have been a long trip back," Stuewe said. "He turned it around, and we went to Blacksburg and had a great visit. Sharon McCloskey [current senior associate AD and senior woman administrator at Tech] showed us

around, and I got to meet all the coaches. They offered me the chance to walk on, and I decided to take it."

Stuewe ended up becoming another successful Tech walk-on story, one of many under head coach Frank Beamer over the years. The former receiver, who played at Tech from 1994-97, earned a scholarship in the spring of his redshirt freshman season and earned letters his final three seasons. He caught 53 passes in that span, five for touchdowns.

Of course, he didn't exactly walk into greatness right from the start. It took time, patience and a lot of hard work. In fact, his first season, he didn't have a locker in Tech's football locker room.

"There were about 12 of us who were walk-ons, and our lockers were in a room down the hall from the locker room," he said. "I think my locker number was 113. Two years later, I think all 12 of those guys were gone but me.

"That first year, I was basically an unknown. Then you try to go through spring and try doing something to get the coaches to notice you. The next season, I started to earn some respect as a scout-team player. My goal was to be the scout team player of the week."

In the spring of 1995, Beamer pulled Stuewe

aside following one of the team's practices and told him that he wanted to see him in his office. During their brief meeting, he told Stuewe that he was going to put him on scholarship.

Stuewe became a steady performer over the course of his final three seasons at Tech. In 1995, he caught 13 passes for 122 yards and helped Tech to the Sugar Bowl. The next season, he caught 25 passes for 385 yards and five touchdowns, as the Hokies made it to the Orange Bowl.

That season marked Stuewe's best in Blacksburg, and his most memorable moment as a Hokie came that season. In a November game at the old Orange Bowl, Stuewe caught a third-quarter touchdown pass from Jim Druckenmiller to break a 7-7 tie with Miami. With less than two minutes left in the game, Keion Carpenter intercepted a pass and returned it 100 yards for a touchdown, giving the Hokies a landmark win over the Hurricanes.

In the Orange Bowl against Nebraska, Stuewe caught two passes for 23 yards in the Hokies' 41-21 loss – a game in which Nebraska scored the final 17 points of the game. But the game was memorable for the entire Stuewe family despite the loss.

Stuewe's father, Dennis, played at Nebraska

from 1960-62 for then-coach Bob Devaney. A guy named Tom Osborne was a graduate assistant on that staff. Of course, Osborne went on to become a Hall of Fame coach at the school.

“He [Stuewe’s dad] got a chance to say hi [to Osborne], and I got a chance to meet him,” Stuewe said. “That was pretty cool.”

Stuewe caught 15 passes for 180 yards in his last season at Tech. The 1997 team went 7-5 and lost to North Carolina 42-3 in the Gator Bowl. The Tar Heels should have been in a major bowl and ended up finishing with an 11-1 record.

Stuewe graduated in 1998 with a degree in hospitality and tourism management. In late spring of that year, he signed a free-agent contract with the NFL’s Detroit Lions and went to their preseason camp.

“That was an unbelievable experience,” Stuewe said. “To be in the huddle with guys like [running back] Barry Sanders and [receiver] Herman Moore and [receiver] Johnnie Morton and [quarterback] Scott Mitchell and to play for a coach like Bobby Ross ... it was just surreal.”

Stuewe injured himself that preseason and decided to end his pursuit of playing professional football. He married longtime girlfriend Suzanne Natili, a former HighTech who got her undergraduate and master’s degrees at Tech, the following May. The two had dated since his freshman year at Tech.

He landed a job in management with Travel Centers of America, and while he’s changed job positions over the years, he still remains with the company, selling diesel fuel and truck maintenance services. He, his wife and their four sons – Michael (age 11), Matthew (9), Luke (7) and Gabriel (2) – live in Avon Lake, Ohio, just outside of Cleveland.

With his kids involved in all sorts of sports, he rarely finds time to get back to Blacksburg for games in the fall – the last time he came to a regular-season game at Lane Stadium was the 2009 Tech-Nebraska game. He and his dad also went to Lincoln, Neb., in 2008 for the Tech-Nebraska game out there.

Even though he doesn’t get back in the fall that often, he has brought his family to town for the spring game, including last year’s game.

“We’ve got games here, there and everywhere, so we don’t get back often,” Stuewe said. “We’ll come down once or twice a year, usually for the spring game.

“It’s amazing. My kids got a picture with Logan Thomas. They were excited about that, and he was just great about it. We got to see Coach [Frank] Beamer and Coach [Bud] Foster and Coach [Charley] Wiles. I saw Coach [Jim] Cavanaugh and Coach [Billy] Hite, too. Of course, I played with Shane [Beamer] and Cornell [Brown] and Torrian [Gray].

“It’s crazy. I don’t know if there is any place in the country with that type of longevity. Those guys have been there a while, and it’s nice, as a former player, to go back and have that and be able to see all those familiar faces.”

Stuewe stays modest about his status as a former football player. But it crops up in conversations every once in a while.

In fact, he relayed a story about something that transpired when his wife taught fourth grade before they started their family. He keeps a picture of him and Sanders, considered by many to be the greatest running back ever to play in the NFL, standing on the sidelines during a preseason game in one of the rooms in their home. His wife told her fourth graders that her husband played football. She took the picture to the class, and Stuewe later found himself speaking to the class about putting school first.

A short time later, he received a thank-you note from one of the students.

“She said, ‘That was a cool pic of you and some guy named Sanders,’” he laughed. “I got quite the kick out of that.”

It was, indeed, cool that he got to play with Barry Sanders. But Tech fans will remember him for more than that. They’ll remember him for working hard and becoming a success at Tech, like many of the Hokies’ walk-ons over the years.

For them, it’s a story that will never get old. 

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Jarell Eddie, who scored a career-high 34 points in Tech's win over Winthrop, has produced at a high level in the early going for the Hokies.

# EDDIE OFF TO FAST START

Tech senior Jarell Eddie has already broken his career high in scoring and recorded three double-doubles in the Hokies' first 10 games

by Jimmy Robertson

Jarell Eddie has no plans of pursuing a career with the U.S. Postal Service. He's not looking for a position at FedEx, or UPS, or DHL or any other package delivery service.

Yet he certainly knows a lot about delivering. He's been doing quite a bit of that early on in the 2013-14 basketball season for the Virginia Tech Hokies.

The 6-foot-7 senior from Charlotte, N.C., has started every game through 10 games, played four different positions and leads the team in both scoring and rebounding in that span. Through 10 games, he was shooting 44.7 percent from the floor and 48.6 percent from beyond the 3-point arc, though those numbers get skewed because of a rough outing against USC Upstate in the season opener. Toss out that 6-for-21 performance (2-for-9 from beyond the 3-point arc), and Eddie is shooting 47.3 percent from the floor and 52.4 percent from beyond the 3-point line.

"I'm definitely feeling confident in my play," Eddie said. "My teammates have confidence in me. They're finding me in the right places, and I'm shooting with confidence. I'm going to continue playing with that confidence."

His best performance to date came in the Hokies' 81-63 victory over Winthrop. On an evening in which Tech played without starter Adam Smith (strained calf) and key bench cog Ben Emelogu (post-concussion symptoms), Eddie scored a career-high 34 points.

He hit 13 of 18 from the floor, including 6 of 8 from beyond the 3-point arc. Eddie's six 3-pointers were one shy of the school record held by three players, most recently by Malcolm

Delaney at North Carolina in 2011. Eddie's 13 baskets were a career high and his six 3-pointers tied a career high.

"He got in a zone, and we went to him," Tech coach James Johnson said of Eddie. "He delivered. He made some nice plays. He didn't force anything. I thought he was very, very efficient. He scored the ball, he rebounded the ball, he played the point – he was our backup point guard ... that was a performance by him."

Eddie played some point guard for the first time in his career. With Smith out and without the services of Marquis Rankin, who hasn't played a game this season while dealing with personal issues, the Hokies went into the game with only one point guard – Devin Wilson. Normally Smith rotates to the point when Wilson leaves a game. So to give Wilson a breather at points during the game, Johnson played Eddie at the point position.

"It was fun," Eddie said. "I hadn't ever played the point before. Running the team, there is a lot of pressure up there, with everyone looking at you and the ball in your hand. I don't think I had any bad turnovers. It was just fun when I was out there."

Point guard was the latest of the positions in which Eddie has seen playing time. A natural small forward, he has played briefly at the shooting guard position in certain games and the power forward spot in certain games, depending on matchups.

Johnson likes to post Eddie up against smaller defenders and let him use his 6-7 frame. He took 18 shots against Winthrop, with eight of them being 3-pointers. But some of the other 10 shots

included turnaround jumpers against smaller defenders.

Eddie also has rebounded well this season. He recorded three straight double-doubles at one stretch, scoring 19 points and grabbing 10 rebounds against Seton Hall, 14 and 10 against Furman and 13 and 10 against Radford. The three double-doubles give him six for his career.

He nearly missed another double-double in Tech's 61-60 overtime win in the ACC opener against Miami. He scored 24 points and grabbed eight rebounds in that one.

"I was a center all the way up until my sophomore year [of high school]," Eddie said. "I feel kind of natural down there. I'm just taking advantage of mismatches.

"They're [Tech's coaches] on me real hard in practice about offensive rebounding, so I'm trying to do that a little bit more. As far as defensive rebounds, I'm just going and getting them. I'm going after them in my area and getting as many as I can."

A year ago, former guard Erick Green scored in double figures in every game and went on to lead the nation in scoring. He earned the ACC's Player of the Year honor as well.

But Eddie isn't trying to reach that level. He only wants to do what the team needs for him to do to win games.

"It's not about living up to what Erick did last year," he said. "It's about doing what I can for the team now. It's not about living up to past players. I would love to have a great year like Erick, but it's just about doing whatever I can to help this team win."



## HOKIES NOTCH ROAD WIN IN ACC OPENER

A year ago, Tech won exactly one ACC road game, a 75-70 overtime decision at Georgia Tech.

But this season, the Hokies have already equaled that total, registering a 61-60 overtime win at Miami on Dec. 8 in the ACC season opener for both teams. Tech rallied from a 13-point deficit with 15:05 left to force overtime. Eddie scored Tech's last 11 points of regulation, including a 3-pointer with 46 seconds left that tied the game at 56. He had a jumper blocked in the waning moments that would have won the game.

In overtime, Eddie's jumper with 20 seconds left gave the Hokies the lead for good. Miami's Garrius Adams made a free throw with seven seconds left to cut the lead to 61-60, but he missed the second. Donnavan Kirk got the rebound for the 'Canes, but rushed a shot that hit the back of the backboard, giving the ball back to Tech, and the Hokies threw the ball inbounds to run out the clock.

"We talked to the guys [in the second half] about keep plugging away," Johnson said on the postgame radio show after the game. "I knew we hadn't played our best basketball, and give Miami credit. They played really well, but I knew we had a little more in the tank. We got things

going, and we got stops, and that helped."

Eddie's 24 points are the most that he has scored in an ACC game, surpassing the 21 he scored at BC last season.

## WILSON TIES SINGLE-GAME MARK BY A TECH FRESHMAN

Freshman point guard Devin Wilson put his name into the Tech record books by dishing out 11 assists in the Hokies' win over Furman. He tied former star Dell Curry's mark for assists in a game by a Tech freshman. Curry handed out 11 assists on Dec. 4, 1982, in an 88-62 win over Maryland-Eastern Shore.

Wilson's 11 assists came one short of the Tech single-game record shared by former standouts Dave Sensibaugh (vs. Oregon, 1975), Bimbo Coles (vs. Missouri, 1987), and most recently, Troy Manns, who had 12 in Tech's win over St. Bonaventure on Jan. 2, 1997.

Tech won the game against Furman by shooting 47.5 percent from the floor and knocking down 12 3-pointers.

"They were giving me lanes where I could drive and kick to my teammates," Wilson said. "Will Johnston was knocking down 3's (four of them), Jarell [Eddie] was knocking down 3's (two) and Adam [Smith] was knocking down 3's (three). Big Joey [van Zegeren] was finishing his dunks. All my teammates were helping me."

Wilson dished out 55 assists in the Hokies' first 10 games and has become a favorite among his teammates for feeding them for open shots.

"I love playing with Dev," said Marshall Wood, who scored 13 points and hit three 3-pointers against Furman. "It's definitely enjoyable to go out there and know that he's going to dish the rock off."

## WOOD BOUNCES BACK AFTER SLOW START

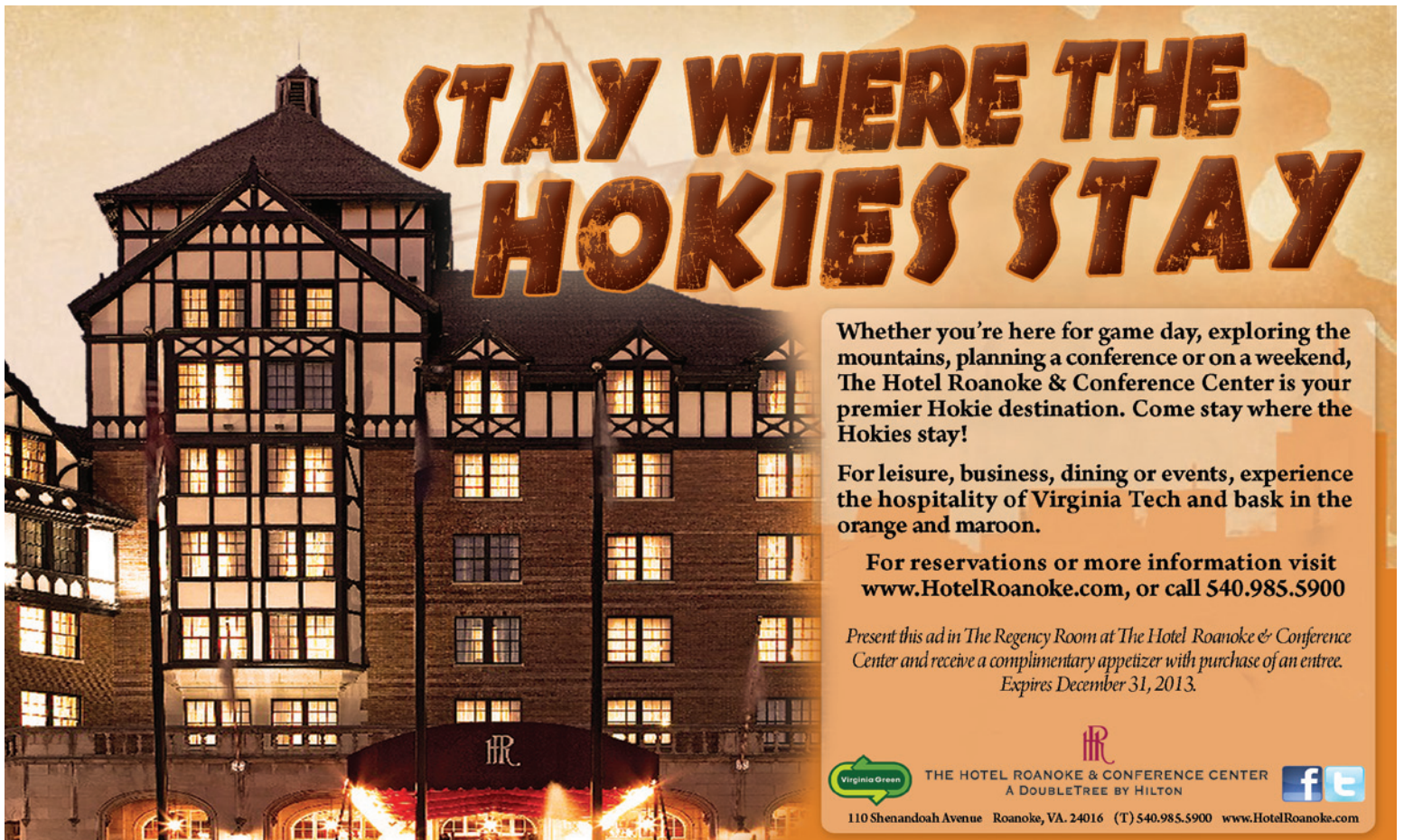
Wood, the sophomore from Rustburg, Va., got off to a slow start this season. He scored just 10 points combined in the Hokies' first three games and 25 combined in their first six games.

But he got it going against Furman, scoring 13 points in 19 minutes. He hit 4 of 8 from the floor, including 3 of 5 from beyond the 3-point arc.

"I haven't been looking for my shot as much as I should be," Wood said. "I haven't been as aggressive as I know I can be. Coach [Johnson] has told me that. I decided to go out and be aggressive and take what the defense gives me, and it all came out well."

Wood followed his Furman performance with a 10-point outing against Radford in which he hit 3 of 4 from the floor and 1 of 2 from beyond the 3-point arc. He also grabbed six rebounds – a season high.

"We need him," Johnson said. "He's a stretch





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4 [power forward who can shoot], and when he puts the ball on the floor and attacks the basket, he can be dangerous.

"What he's able to do is stretch things out, open the floor for us, and he can rebound the basketball. With these stretch 4's and the way these smaller teams have smaller guys that drive the basketball, he's able to guard those positions for us, too."

#### BARKSDALE'S RETURN

Johnson suspended forward C.J. Barksdale for the first three games of the season for a violation of team rules. But Barksdale returned with a vengeance, scoring 16 points in Tech's win over VMI in his first game of the season.

Barksdale hit 7 of 12 from the floor against the smaller Keydets, and he also grabbed six rebounds. His three assists against VMI were a career high.

"It hurt being away," Barksdale said after the game. "But I try not to let that bother me at all. I just wanted to leave that in the past and not even think about it. I want to just go out and play basketball.

"I've been working on my game all summer, and I'm pretty confident with my game. I still don't think I did as well as I could do. Just like everyone else, we've just got to keep getting better."

Barksdale scored 14 points in the Hokies' win over Radford and 13 in the win over Winthrop.

#### JOHNSON RECEIVES PRAISE FROM IZZO

Tech traveled to Brooklyn, N.Y., for two games in the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic held Nov. 22-23, with one of those games coming against then-No. 1 Michigan State. The Spartans topped the Hokies 96-77 in the first game, while Seton Hall made some plays late to beat Tech 68-67 in the second game.

After the Michigan State game, Johnson and Izzo had a rather extended handshake at midcourt. Then a few moments later, Johnson ran into Izzo as Johnson left the media center and Izzo was walking in. The two shook hands and exchanged more pleasantries.

"He said he really like our team, and he told me that he was going to call me," Johnson said. "We've been playing phone tag. But he was very complimentary of our program, and I'd be foolish not to gather some insight from him. He's a championship coach."

Izzo has guided the Spartans to seven Big Ten championships, six Final Four appearances and a national championship (2000) in his career.

#### RAINES RESPONDS TO SITTING


Johnson has been pretty clear about wanting

to see effort and intensity out of his players, and when he didn't see it from Cadarian Raines early in the Furman game, he put him on the bench for the remainder of the game.

Raines sat the last 37 minutes of that game and then did not get to play against Radford, even though Tech beat the Highlanders by 25 points. Johnson, though, inserted Raines early in the Winthrop game, and the 6-9, 238-pounder made the most of his time. He scored eight points in 15 minutes, hitting 3 of 4 from the floor and both of his free-throw attempts.

The Hokies are learning, occasionally the hard way, that Johnson demands effort. A year ago, he sat Barksdale for a game because of a lack of doing things the right way. This time, Raines learned the hard way.

"That's the way I coach, and that's how it's going to be," Johnson said. "This year, we're fortunate that we have more bodies, but it has to be like that no matter what. Guys have to work hard and compete, and there's going to be competition out there.

"I don't want anyone to get relaxed. We've got to bring it every day. We've got to bring it every day individually, and we've got to bring it as a team every day because that's what we're going to see in the games. That's what we're going to see in the league. It's going to be tough." 

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TC67321 (03/12)

# JOHNSON REPLENISHES PERIMETER

The Tech men's basketball coach signed three perimeter prospects to letters of intent during the fall signing period

by Jimmy Robertson

James Johnson has made no bones about his desire to press more and to play at a more rapid pace, but the second-year Tech men's basketball coach simply has lacked the bodies, particularly on the perimeter, to accomplish that.

Johnson and his staff took steps to remedy that problem, signing three prospects during the fall signing period – all perimeter players.

"I am really happy about this entire class," Johnson said. "It gives us depth in the backcourt and gives us guys who can play multiple positions. We want to play an attacking style on offense and defense, and this class will give us a lot of guys who can do a lot of different things on the court."

The class consists of Justin Bibbs, a 6-foot-5, 205-pound guard from Dayton, Ohio; Jalen Hudson, a 6-5, 190-pound guard from Akron, Ohio; and T.J. Lang, a 6-7, 190-pound small forward from Mobile, Ala.

Of those three, Lang possesses the most name recognition. His father, Antonio, played at Duke from 1990-94 and later played professionally in the NBA and overseas before getting into coaching. T.J. Lang plays at McGill-Toolen Catholic High School and averaged 17.1 points and 4.9 rebounds per game as a junior. He hit 53 of 100 3-pointers and 156 of his 221 free throws.

Behind Lang, McGill-Toolen went 25-7 and made it to the South Regional final. He earned first-team Class 6A all-state recognition from the Alabama Sports Writers Association and was named the Mobile Press-Register's Player of the Year.

Lang, ranked a three-star recruit by Rivals, had 20 offers, choosing Tech over Oregon State, Memphis, Oklahoma State and South Alabama. Other schools that offered included Samford, Georgia State, Tulsa, Louisiana Tech and Northwestern.

"T.J. has a great basketball mind, being the son of a former NBA player and professional coach," Johnson said. "He is a skilled 3-point shooter with size. He can really shoot the ball. He projects as a small forward."

Though an Ohio native, Bibbs – a left-hander – plays his prep basketball at Montverde Academy in Montverde, Fla., transferring after his sophomore year from Chaminade Julianne High School in Dayton. He averaged 15.7 points, 3.8 rebounds and 2.6 assists as a sophomore at that high school.

He helped lead Montverde to a 26-2 record as a junior and the No. 1 ranking nationally according to ESPN (no personal stats were available). He chose Tech over UCF and Xavier, and he also had offers from Wichita State, Dayton and Ohio University.

Rivals ranked Bibbs as a three-star recruit and the No. 142 prospect in the nation, and 247Sports ranked him as the No. 132 prospect.

"Justin is an athletic wing who can score the basketball in multiple ways," Johnson said. "He is very good with the ball. He is a good passer, he rebounds his position extremely well and he has a college-ready body. He plays for Montverde, a nationally recognized program that plays against top competition night in and night out."

Hudson plays for St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in Akron – the same school that produced Miami Heat star LeBron James. He averaged 15

"Jalen is another young man who comes to us from a very good basketball program, St. Vincent-St. Mary's," Johnson said. "He is a versatile player who can play either guard position. He is a strong, athletic player who can get to the basket and shoot the deep 3 and has the potential to be a very good defensive player. He's played against top competition all of his high school career."

Given that the Hokies lose only Jarell Eddie among perimeter players on this year's squad




The son of former Duke standout Antonio Lang, T.J. Lang averaged more than 17 points per game as a junior and will be looked upon to be a small forward at Tech. (Photo courtesy of Mike Kittrell/AL.com)

points, five rebounds and three assists as a junior in leading his team to the Division III Ohio state finals. He earned special mention to the Division II All-Ohio boys basketball team.

Hudson chose Tech over Arkansas and a host of other schools. He was born in Akron, but spent a majority of his childhood in Richmond, where he attended Benedictine High School until leaving after his sophomore year to live with his father. He helped Benedictine win the state title in 2011.

ESPN ranked Hudson as the No. 40 shooting guard prospect in the country, and 247Sports ranked him No. 41 (and No. 161 overall).

following the season, they go into next season with a stocked roster on the perimeter for the first time in years. These three prospects will give Tech at least eight perimeter players heading into the 2014-15 season.

"This is a great group of young men who are outstanding people both on and off the court," Johnson said. "They come from winning backgrounds and winning programs, much like this season's freshman class. We feel good about the class. If you are trying to improve in the ACC, you have to put multiple good recruiting classes together, and we feel that we have accomplished that." 

Uju Ugoka recorded four double-doubles in the month of November and has been the Hokies' most consistent weapon during the early part of the 2013-14 season.

# MAKING THEIR POINTS

The Virginia Tech women's basketball team won six games in November largely behind increased production on the offensive end of the floor

by Marc Mullen

It has been quite a start for the Virginia Tech women's basketball team, as the Hokies opened the 2013-14 season with five straight victories and won six total games during the month of November.

The first four came with relative ease, as the Hokies dispatched Howard by 52 points – Tech's largest margin of victory since Dec. 28, 2004 (vs. Southern Miss) – knocked off Old Dominion and Florida by 12 points each, and beat Bucknell by 38 all while scoring at least 70 points of their own. All came in a nine-day span.

"I'm really proud of the girls – four games, nine days, and they still have a lot of life and a lot of energy," Tech head coach Dennis Wolff said after the Bucknell win. "I told them in the locker room, I've coached a lot of games and I don't know if I've had a stat line where there were 28 assists and only nine turnovers. We are happy to be 4-0."

It took a shot at the buzzer by senior Monet Tellier in regulation and an overtime period at Hofstra for the Hokies to register their fifth straight win, marking the first time since the 2008-09 season that the team had started 5-0 and only the fifth time in school history.

But again, the team, which struggled to score points at times last year, eclipsed the 70-point threshold and became the first Tech team since the 1985-86 Hokies to open the season by scoring

at least 70 in five straight games.

"We were a little sluggish at first. I think, with the week off, we weren't quite as sharp as we had been in the first four games, but they [his players] showed a lot of toughness at the end of the game and in the overtime period," Wolff said in Hempstead, N.Y., that night. "Obviously Monet's shot was big. If you want to have a good season, then you need to win games like this, so I'm really proud of the girls."

Tech lost its first game to a visiting Richmond squad, but rebounded with a win over Presbyterian on Nov. 30 which gave Wolff his 300th career victory as a head coach and gave the Hokies the most wins in a single month by a Tech team since December of 2007 (six).

They will play just five games in December, which includes a pair of Big Ten foes and then ring in the New Year with a trip to Hampton, Va., before opening conference play at Boston College. The Hokies averaged almost 72 points per game in November with a more balanced offensive attack, but will need to keep that going to, as Wolff said, "have a good season."

## UGOKA STARTS THE SEASON HOT

Senior Uju Ugoka has established herself as one of the primary weapons on Wolff's roster. Plagued by a disjointed first season in Blacksburg

– the transfer missed nine games to start the year for eligibility reasons and then missed four more because of injury – Ugoka has shined so far this year.

She tallied four double-doubles in November, tying her number of double-doubles from all of last year, but she seems to perform her best when her team needs her the most. In Tech's only two losses this year – the team also lost at Indiana on Dec. 4 – she scored 59 points and grabbed 28 rebounds combined, which included a career-high 17 boards versus Richmond to go with 27 points.

Against the Hoosiers, she scored 26 second-half points to pull the team back from a 19-point deficit and make it a one-possession game late. She netted a career-high 32 points, with 11 rebounds, to mark just the third time a Tech player had at least 30 points and 10 rebounds in a regulation game.

"It all comes from the defensive side. Play good defense and the offense will come," Ugoka said after the Bucknell win. "I just try to be patient on offense and let the game come to me and look for open shots.

"I've been working on my mid-range jumper, and I told my teammates that I feel so comfortable with that, but not all the time is it going to fall in. But if I keep shooting and it keeps going in, I'm

hot and I'm just going to keep taking it. If not, I'll take it to the basket."

Jenny Root (32 and 13) at Morehead State on Feb. 25, 1992, and Joyce Waddy (31 and 11) versus Mercer on Feb. 22, 1986, are the only other two Hokies to book a 30-plus-point, 10-plus-rebound efforts in a regulation game. The 32 points were also tied for the sixth-most ever scored by a Hokie.

**YOUNG HELPS HOKIES SET 3-POINT RECORD**

In the blowout victory over Bucknell at Cassell Coliseum on Nov. 17, Tech set the school record for 3-pointers made in a single game with 13 and tied the program record for assists in a game in the building (done three times) with 28.

Helping the team to the record was sophomore Hannah Young, who had two in the game, and has knocked down at least two in a game five times this season. She made just five total last year in 21 games.

"It's just all hard work. Getting into the gym every day and putting up shots that we take in games helps us make those," Young said after that contest. "I think having a whole preseason, which I didn't have last year, has helped a lot. I've been in the gym working on my game, and it's obviously coming through now. So I'm happy."

Young also missed the first nine games of last

season because of eligibility issues, and Wolff thought about redshirting her, but ultimately did not.

"I've had confidence in her ever since she stepped on campus," Wolff said. "I thought 100 percent she could do this. I put her in a bad situation last year, but I had every thought since the minute she came here that she could play like this."

**PANOUSIS TAKES OVER POINT GUARD ROLE**

Freshman Vanessa Panousis is certainly one of the reasons why the Hokies have been able to score more baskets this season, as the true point guard with international experience leads the Tech offense.

Not only can she distribute, but the Australian native also can put the ball in the basket. She scored in double figures four times in November, which included a 24-point effort in the win over the Florida Gators on Nov. 14.

"I just didn't know [how they would defend me]. It just came to me as the game went on," she said after the victory. "I got my feet set on my shot, and I wasn't rushing it as much as the first two games.

"Scoring is not the only thing I want to do. I want to lead the team by making sure they are all organized, moving the ball well and making sure we're together on defense and making sure everyone is getting into the game."


It's early, but she's averaging more than four assists per game, and if she continues the pace, she would shatter the record for assists in a season by a freshman currently held by Carrie Mason (2002-03) with 106.

**TELLIER CLIMBING THE CHARTS**

Entering the season, Tellier was sitting in 21st position on the school's all-time scoring list. Just eight games into the season, she already passed a number of former Tech players, and she sat in the 13th spot with 1,132 career points heading into a home game against Michigan State.

She's also been moving up the charts in career 3-pointers made, as she sat in fifth all-time with 89 after making one against Indiana. But in postgame press conferences, those things don't seem to matter to Tellier as much as team success.

"We're just a better team," Tellier said in the difference between this year and prior years. "We have a lot better ball movement. Nobody's being selfish, and I think that's a testament to how hard we're working in practice.

"It's very fun when you're putting points up on the scoreboard. I think also we are playing a lot better defense, which allows us to get fastbreak points, and like I said, I think we're just getting better ball movement overall and people are just knocking down their shots." 

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# WOLFF AND STAFF SIGN THREE DURING FALL SIGNING PERIOD

Brielle Blair, Rachel Camp and Khadedra Croker give the Hokies some scoring punch and should alleviate the loss of four seniors following this season

by Marc Mullen

After his first two recruiting classes saw him bring in six foreign players on his current 13-player roster, Tech women's basketball coach Dennis Wolff and his staff have more of a local feel surrounding their recent recruiting class.

Those who inked national letters of intent to join the Hokies for the 2014-15 academic season



Rachel Camp, a guard from Forest City, N.C., has scored more than 2,000 points in her high school career and should provide offensive production for the Hokies in years to come. (Photo courtesy of Garrett Byers/The Daily Courier)

back in mid-November include a pair of players from the state of North Carolina and one from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Four seniors depart at the end of this year, taking with them size – Tech loses three players at least 6-foot tall – and a major scorer in Monet Tellier. The three players who signed letters of intent are Brielle Blaire, Rachel Camp and

Khadedra Croker, and should help to compensate for those departures.

“As a group, these are talented additions to our roster,” Wolff said at the time of the signings. “I would like to commend Coach [Bett] Shelby, Coach [Thomas] Joyce and Coach [Jermaine] Woods for all the effort they put in to the recruitment of these ladies.”

Blaire, a 6-2 forward from Salisbury, N.C., played her first three high school seasons at Salisbury High School. She twice scored 600 points in a season, which led the county, and averaged 24.1 points per game as a junior. In her career at Salisbury, she averaged 14.7 points and 9.9 boards a game.

She helped lead the Hornets to a 2A state title in 2011 and was named the game's MVP. She also earned NCPreps 2A all-state honors as a sophomore and junior. For her upcoming final high school season, Blaire will suit up for North Rowan High School.

According to ESPN HoopGurlz, Blaire, who had interest from Louisville and South Carolina, was rated a four-star recruit and is ranked No. 72 overall and No. 17 at her position. An evaluation of her per ESPN stated that she's an “athletic perimeter performer with college-ready frame (that) stretches the defense to the arc; puts on deck, attacks and finishes in traffic, brings a scorer's mentality; tenacious on glass, completes the play; secondary ball handler in transition, half-court sets.”

Wolff's take on Blaire is that she “is a multi-talented forward who is extremely skilled for her size. She should help offset the departure of Monet Tellier.”

Camp, a 5-11 guard from Forest City, N.C., touts a similar resume as Blaire while playing for East Rutherford High School. A prolific scorer in her own right, Camp is already well over 2,000 points for her high school career and averaged more than 31 points, 8 rebounds, 5 assists and 3 steals per game last year for the Cavaliers.

The past two seasons, Camp's name has been listed on the NCPreps 2A all-state team as well –

just two spots below Blaire's (listed alphabetical) – and enters her senior year with a 28.4 points-per-game average.

According to ESPN HoopGurlz, Camp, who had offers from East Carolina, Furman and Gardner Webb, was rated a three-star recruit and is ranked 59th nationally at her position. An evaluation of her per ESPN stated that she's a “slashing perimeter performer (who) handles and attacks in transition finishes vs. contact; emerging mid range game; driver.”


Wolff's says that Camp “is a skilled guard capable of playing on or off the ball.”

Croker, a 6-2 center/power forward from Suffolk, Va., has established herself as one of the top high school basketball players in the Hampton Roads area over the past two seasons. She led King Fork High School to a Southeastern District regular season and tournament title as a sophomore, while averaging more than 16 points, 13 rebounds and 7 blocks a game. That, along with her 11 triple-doubles, helped her secure Player of the Year honors.

Croker followed that season with another district tournament title as a junior and added first-team all-district and second-team All-Eastern Region honors while averaging more than 15 points, 13 boards and 6 blocks a contest. She also passed the 1,000-point plateau.

According to ESPN HoopGurlz, Croker, who was receiving interest from East Carolina, was rated a three-star recruit and is ranked 22nd nationally at her position. An evaluation of her per ESPN stated that she's a “pro-frame insider with developing interior consistency; active on glass, rebounds and initiates fast break; mobile in up-tempo game; potential next level impact.”

Wolff's take on Croker is that she is “an extremely active post player and she should immediately bolster our rebounding efforts when she arrives at Virginia Tech.”

With just 13 players on the roster and four exhausting their eligibility at the end of the year, Wolff still has the ability to bring in a couple more players during the spring signing period. 



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Ryan Hawkins' career has been a perfect '10,' as he's earned All-America honors both in the pool and in the classroom.



# DESIGNING A STORYBOOK CAREER

Overcoming the demands of being an architecture major, Tech diver Ryan Hawkins has earned three All-America honors athletically and two academically – but he isn't done yet

by Marc Mullen

It isn't that common of a first name, Logan, even though parents have used it for both boys and girls for some time now. The name's never been higher than 17th on the most common names' list, and that ranking came in 2007. Coincidentally, however, seven Virginia Tech student-athletes had that name during the 2012-13 academic year – more than the previous 15 years combined – and, as chronicled earlier in this magazine, the people on that list includes one of the best quarterbacks ever to suit up for the Hokies.

The same could be true for the Virginia Tech diving program, as many will long remember the exploits of Logan Shinholser over the past four seasons. He became the most decorated diver at the school and graduated as both the pool and school record holder in every diving discipline.

His former teammate and synchronized diving partner, Ryan Hawkins, is hoping to supplant Shinholser from that top spot as he constructs his own legacy. Hawkins' goals for the season are lofty, as even he admits, but for a man who has overcome a physical disability at birth, logs more hours in the studio than in the pool and believes he performs better under pressure, he loves the challenge – and it would be hard to imagine him not succeeding.

“Personally, I kind of set a pretty big goal for myself at ACCs [the ACC Championships], but I want to go top three in everything [all three diving events], which would be insane,” Hawkins said. “That would be a huge ACC meet. Like what Logan did the past two years. That would be wild, but would require a perfect meet.

“Then at the NCAAs [the NCAA Championships], I want to go top eight on all three, which again is another huge goal. Final on everything at NCAAs and top three on everything at ACCs would be amazing. I usually like to set two goals, so I'll say that, and then I will go top eight on everything at ACCs and top 16 at NCAAs and that would be a great year.”

Shinholser walked away from Blacksburg with three ACC titles, one each in the 1-meter, 3-meter and platform events. He was actually on his

way to winning all three disciplines at the 2012 ACC Championships, going for a repeat on the platform. But Hawkins – who was kind of in the middle of a sophomore slump – battled him dive for dive.

Hawkins' freshman campaign saw him place fourth in both the 1-meter and 3-meter events at the 2011 ACC Championships, actually ahead of Shinholser in both. Shinholser edged him in the platform event, winning it while Hawkins finished

said, ‘Go up there and hit this one, man. You've got this.’ And as soon as he said that, I knew we were like really close. So I knew whoever hit the last dive was going to win it, and I guess, knowing that I controlled that, I kept my composure and actually did a good last dive. It was kind of crazy, but I knew I could do it.

“Then he goes up and hits his last dive, too. That was the best part. He hit his last dive, too, and we were less than a point apart. So I barely



Ryan Hawkins decided to major in architecture to put his creative side to use and because of his love of designing things.

fifth. But Hawkins turned in quite respectable performances at his first NCAA meet.

In 2012, though, Hawkins didn't reach the finals in either of the first two diving events at the ACC meet, but he found himself in gold-medal contention with Shinholser in the finals of platform diving.

“I would say the first meet I knew I could dive at this level was the ACCs on platform my sophomore year when I got first place,” he said. “That was kind of a huge deal because [Duke's] Nick McCrory was redshirting [in preparation] for the Olympics, and that's when I beat Logan – the first and only time I ever beat him on platform.

“Logan talked to me before my last dive, and he

knocked him out. That was probably one of my best moments of my diving career.”

Hawkins, who won by 0.70 points, would go on to earn an All-America honor with a seventh-place finish at the 2012 NCAA Championships in the platform event and would follow that with two more honors last season (in the 3-meter and platform events), bringing his total to three, just one shy of Shinholser's four.

In qualifying for the 2013 platform finals, Hawkins finished the preliminaries in third place – the highest finish by any Tech diver or swimmer in the preliminaries of an NCAA event – and he went on to finish eighth in the finals.

“Last year, preliminaries at NCAAs – finals

## swimming & diving spotlight | ryan hawkins

were kind of rough – but prelims, on platform, I knew that I could get top five, but when I got third place, that was a pretty big deal,” he said. “That one was strange, too, because I wasn’t even worried about keeping my composure or getting nervous. I was just diving, and that was cool.”

It has been chronicled several times during his maturation into the diver he is today, but Hawkins’ rise into the sport almost never happened. Hawkins, like his sister, was born with a clubfoot, which appears once in approximately every 1,000 births.

His sister Heather’s was corrected with a cast and corrective shoes, but Ryan’s case was more severe. On Feb. 10, 1993 – almost 19 years to the day before winning his first ACC title (Feb. 18, 2012) – he had surgery.

“Mine was a little bit different, so I had surgery when I was 1, and they took the cast off a year later,” Hawkins said. “They put rods through it to straighten it out and then took them out. I was supposed to have surgery again when I was 5 and then when I was 15, but I didn’t have to go in because it straightened out the first time.

“I have a picture of the cast, and I still have part of it somewhere. The only thing I have left is a scar that starts from my lower calf and goes down below my foot, and my calf [which is noticeably smaller].

“Growing up, I was strangely normal. It’s weird because I don’t even really notice it and other people don’t notice it until I tell them about it. When I was younger, I was probably the fastest runner in my class in middle school. I was the fastest kid, which was kind of strange, and I almost have the highest vertical on the team, with a half calf.”

Hawkins has a pair of Capital One Academic All-America honors on his resumé as well, so he’s no dummy. His choice to attend Virginia Tech

was whittled down from a number of schools that included Indiana, Ohio State and Georgia. Kentucky was also in the mix because of its diving coach, Ted Hautau, who saw raw talent in an

architecture program here and I saw Cowgill Hall ... when I walked into it, it was just this huge open room with desks and models and a lot of hands-on things. They just make things in there. Kathryn



Ryan Hawkins and other members of his architecture class designed this pedestrian bridge that connected downtown Clifton Forge, Va., to a new public park and the Masonic Amphitheater.

11-year-old Hawkins back in his hometown of Charlotte, N.C., and molded him into a two-time state champion and a finalist at many junior and senior national meets.

“I looked here because I’ve known Ron [Piemonte, Tech’s diving coach] since I was a little kid,” Hawkins said. “They’re all great schools and all have great diving programs, but I was a pretty good student in high school, and academics is what I am going to be doing the rest of my life and will set me up for a job and a career. I either wanted to go into engineering or architecture, so I looked at every school that offered both engineering and architectural programs.

“I narrowed it down to Ohio State and Virginia Tech pretty quick. When I came here and saw the

Albright [chair of the Foundation Program in the School of Architecture] gave me the tour, and when she opened the door and I saw all the stuff, I was like, ‘Wow this is sick! This is what I want to do.’ I think that’s what sold it for me.”

Hawkins never saw himself as a creative person and credits his mom, Robin, in seeing his creative side. When he was younger, he used to make things with Legos or K’NEX building toys, but never really equated the two. He is now majoring in architecture, which requires a hefty commitment to studio hours.

“Looking back, what really drew me in was the hands-on model making ... I just love making models,” Hawkins said. “But people are always saying to me, ‘I don’t know how you do it. You



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don't sleep.' But honestly, it feels natural to me. I like being busy. Last year, I was super busy, and this past year, I've kind of been lazy. I haven't been doing things nonstop.

"I haven't been in studio until 2 in the morning except for a couple of nights. When I stop doing stuff, I feel like I stop doing everything. I was never the kind of person who just sat down and just did nothing. It's not like a chore. I get into a rhythm.

"Last year, when I was busy, I got into a groove where I averaged just four hours a sleep, and that sounds horrible. But at the time, I had so much energy. I felt fine. With that, though, I'm also learning more about myself. I don't know, but I'm almost better under pressure at crunch time."

Crunch time for his collegiate athletics career will begin around the middle of February and end in late March, but the end of the 2013-14 academic year will not mark the end to Hawkins' time in Blacksburg. The architectural program at Tech is a five-year program, so he will be back at school next year. He has been contemplating what his next step athletically and professionally will be.

"I'll be here my fifth year. It's a thesis, so, it's going to be really busy in studio," Hawkins said. "I'm still going to practice, probably, that fifth year. I'll see how it goes. I'm going to try to put

on some weight and learn some new dives. I'll probably only practice two or three times a week, or that's at least what I'm planning on now.

"My sixth year is going to depend on what happens next year. I know that I can stay here and get my master's in architecture. I don't know if I really want to do that. It's just all speculation right now. Next year, I'm going to dive two or three times a week and see how it goes, and that will determine if I stick around for another year for the next trials."

The "trials" that Hawkins referred to is the 2016 USA Olympic Trials, which will determine the divers who qualify for the Games of the XXXI Olympiad being held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Those seem like, again, lofty goals, but it wouldn't be the first time he was at the Olympic Trials.

Back in 2012, Shinholser and Hawkins competed in the trials for the London Olympics as synchronized diving partners. In December of 2011, they finished sixth in the 3-meter and fourth in the platform event at the USA Winter National Championships, and Hawkins still eyes that prize, but he'll need to find another partner.

"The Olympic Trials were awesome. It was amazing," Hawkins said. "It was sick, too, that Logan and I actually qualified pretty early with our synchro - 3-meter and platform. But the competition was just insane. It was pretty cool,


and it just made you feel so special.

"But this time, I'm not doing it with Logan. He's done. He dumped me before he finished his senior year because he's completely done diving. So I've actually been looking for a synchro partner lately. It's really strange. It's really like relationships.

"The thing is, if you want to do synchro with someone, they already have a partner typically. So then they'd have to break up, and then you have to ask them out. So it's really awkward and strange. Then, some people have asked me to do synchro, but I'm like, 'I want to do it with this person, and they want to do it with me, but they already have a partner.' So it really is like relationships."

For now, though, Hawkins, who just recently broke the 3-meter diving record previously held by Shinholser by 11 points, is concentrating on creating as few splashes as he can in the pool over the next four months to finish his Tech career as one of the best, if not the best, Hokie ever, athletically or academically.

Only Jessica Botzum (2004-08), with five, and Shinholser, have earned more All-America honors than Hawkins, and he joined Botzum as the only Hokies to be named two-time Academic All-Americans.

He's already constructed quite a career. Tech fans will have to wait and see where his future designs take him. 



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# ROBERTSON ANNOUNCES FIRST CLASS FOR THE TECH WOMEN'S GOLF PROGRAM

by Jimmy Robertson

Virginia Tech head women's golf coach Carol Robertson signed two prospects to letters of intent during the fall signing period, and these two prospects represent the first members of the new women's golf program, which was added as a varsity sport this past May.

Amanda Hollandsworth and Allison Woodward will be the foundation of the program. Hollandsworth gives the program a local presence, coming from Floyd County High School in Floyd, Va. – 45 minutes from Tech's campus – while Woodward hails from Unicoi, Tenn.

"I was very selective on whom I chose for the first class because they will set the standard for many years to come," Robertson said. "Being the face of a new program is an important obligation and comes with a lot of responsibility. We all are so lucky to be a part of Virginia Tech history and want nothing more than to make the Hokie Nation proud."

Hollandsworth became the Hokies' first ever commitment in women's golf when she committed to the program in July. She has enjoyed a storied junior career, as she won the 2013 Virginia State Golf Association Junior Girls Championship in July. She was also a finalist at the 2013 VSGA Women's Amateur Championship and won the 2013 Virginia High School League Group A championship. Her older sister, Jessica was a recent three-time All-ACC performer at Maryland.

"Amanda was my first commitment, and I'll never forget that," Robertson said. "Growing up not too far from Blacksburg, she knows what it means to be a Hokie, and I am thrilled that I will get a front row seat to her college career."

Woodward was the winner of the 2013 AJGA Chateau Elan tournament and finished third in the 2013 Tennessee PGA Junior. She is a member of the prestigious Tennessee Junior Cup team, whose captains are current PGA Tour members Brandt Snedeker and Scott Stallings. She is the president of her class at Science Hill High School in Johnson City, Tenn.

"Allison has all the tools to get the Hokie women's golf team off to a fantastic start," Robertson said. "She is extremely driven with a relentless work ethic. I have no doubt that Virginia Tech is the perfect platform for her to reach her full potential."

Hollandsworth and Woodward will take



Amanda Hollandsworth was the first commitment to the Tech women's golf program, and she has enjoyed a storied junior golf career while attending Floyd County [Va.] High School. (Photo courtesy of The Roanoke Times)

redshirt years during the 2014-15 academic year. The Tech women's program begins competition as a team in the fall of 2015, and both Hollandsworth and Woodward will have four years of eligibility from that point forward.

## HARDWICK ADDS ONE TO MEN'S GOLF PROGRAM

With only one senior on his roster, Tech men's golf coach Jay Hardwick signed just one prospect

to a letter of intent during the fall signing period – Ian Hildebrand, a native of Purcellville, Va.

Hildebrand attends Loudon County High School, where he is a member of the National Honor Society. An all-state selection in 2011, 2012 and 2013, he won the Virginia High School League Group AAA individual title in October following rounds of 72 and 69.

This past summer, Hildebrand represented Virginia in the Virginia/Carolinas Junior

Matches, leading the Virginia team in points earned. He has numerous high finishes on the AJGA circuit, including a runner-up performance in the 2013 William Penn Championship, and he was the youngest qualifier for the 2012 Sun Trust State Open of Virginia, finishing 21st in the tournament. Earlier this year, the sports editors of the Northern Virginia Media Services' weekly newspapers named him the 2013 Northern Virginia Golf Athlete of the Year.

"Ian is accustomed to success academically and athletically and should have an outstanding career at Virginia Tech, both on the course and in the classroom," Hardwick said. "He is a fine player who should contribute immediately, but more importantly, he's a quality young man who will be another outstanding member of the Virginia Tech community when he arrives next fall."

**THOMAS SIGNS FIVE FOR SOFTBALL**

Tech softball coach Scot Thomas and his staff signed five prospects to letters of intent during the fall signing period. The group includes one in-state prospect and four out-of-state athletes.

Chelsea Whitcomb, a utility player and pitcher from Chesterfield, Va., is the lone in-state prospect. The two-time Times-Dispatch Player of the Year hit .413 last season for Cosby

High School, with three homers and 18 RBIs. She also went 17-1 in the circle, with a 0.52 ERA. She struck out 122 in 134 innings. She earned the Group AAA Player of the Year honor from the Virginia High School Coaches Association.

Mikaela Aiken, a utility player and pitcher from Longwood, Fla.; Breanna Davenport, an outfielder from Statesville, N.C.; Baylee Jensen, an outfielder from Visalia, Calif.; and Caroline Schoenewald, a utility player from Jamison, Pa., round out the rest of the class.

Aiken, a three-time, first-team all-state player at the 8A level, hit .549 as a junior at Lake Brantley High School, with five homers, 32 RBIs and 11 stolen bases. In the circle, she struck out 68 and had a 1.92 ERA. Davenport hit .417 for North Iredell High School, with four homers, 22 RBIs and eight stolen bases.

Jensen hit .508 as a junior at El Diamonte High School, with 16 stolen bases, and hit .431 as a sophomore with 22 stolen bases. Schoenewald hit .362 as a junior at Central Bucks East High School, with five home runs and 18 RBIs.

"This is probably one of the more talented and athletic classes that we've signed in a long time," Thomas said. "I'm really excited about what they add and the kind of depth they'll give us for the future. It's just a quality group, and they'll be joined by several top-tier walk-ons who will make

this whole class a very good one once they get on campus next summer."

**DRESSER INKS ANOTHER HIGHLY TOUTED CLASS**

Tech wrestling coach Kevin Dresser signed four prospects to letters of intent during the fall signing period, including two who are ranked among the top 100 nationally and two others who won state championships in their home states. Soloman Chishko, Zack Zavatsky, Taylor Misuna and Jake Spengler comprise the class.

Chishko, a projected 149-pounder, hails from Jeanette, Pa., and attends prep powerhouse Canon-McMillan High. InterMat ranked him as the No. 12 overall recruit in the country, and both Amateur Wrestling News and FloWrestling ranked him second nationally at 145 pounds. After missing much of his junior season because of injury, he returned late to go 11-0 and claim his first Pennsylvania state title.

Chishko went 44-2 as a sophomore and 46-5 as a freshman, placing third in the state both years. He won the 2011 Powerade folkstyle tournament at 145 pounds after taking second place at that same tournament in 2010. He finished second at the 2012 Super 32 Challenge after placing third in 2010 and eighth in 2009.

Zavatsky, a projected 184-pounder, hails

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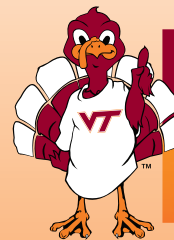
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from Latrobe, Pa., and attends Greater Latrobe High. InterMat ranked him the No. 71 overall recruit in the nation, and FloWrestling rated him eighth nationally at 182 pounds, while Amateur Wrestling News listed him 11th nationally at 182.

Zavatsky went 42-2 as a junior, placing third at the Pennsylvania state meet, and he went 41-5 as a sophomore in placing eighth. He also went 41-11 as a freshman, but failed to place at the state meet. He has won the always tough WPIAL AAA region twice and took second as a freshman. This year, he won the Super 32 Challenge to propel him up the national rankings.



Zack Zavatsky is ranked as one of the top 100 prospects in the country and projects as a 184-pounder at Tech.

Misuna, a projected 165-pounder, hails from Chesapeake, Va., and attends Grassfield High. InterMat ranked him the No. 20 prospect nationally at 160 pounds.

Misuna won the Group AAA title as a junior

after placing second as a sophomore despite still recovering from a torn MCL he suffered during that season. He is a two-time Virginia state Cadet champion as well, once in freestyle and once in Greco-Roman. He went 39-9 as a freshman, placing eighth in the state at 125 pounds, and then went 24-4 as a sophomore, placing second at 138 pounds. He won the 152-pound title last year with a 51-4 mark.

Spengler, a projected 157-pounder, is from Orlando, Fla., and attends Lake Highland Prep. He is a two-time state champion at the Class 1A FHSAA level, and he also placed third twice. He went 48-2 as a junior and won a second state crown.

“Obviously, this year’s class is small in numbers, however, the talent is there,” Dresser said. “Chishko and Zavatsky are already national players, and we feel Misuna and Spengler have the potential to be very good. All four guys have great athletic ability and are very good at wrestling and especially scrambling. Being a good scrambler is such a valuable tool to have coming to Division I wrestling.”

#### VOLLEYBALL STAFF BRINGS IN FOUR

Tech volleyball coach Chris Riley and his staff signed four prospects to letters of intent during the fall signing period, a group that includes two setters, an outside hitter and a middle blocker.

The two setters are Kyra Coundourides and Rhegan Mitchell. Coundourides, a 5-foot-10 player from Walsh Jesuit High School in Cleveland, Ohio, is a four-time All-Ohio honoree and earned first-team all-district honors all four years. She has been tabbed as a PrepVolleyball Top-100 Senior Ace and earned honorable mention All-America honors by Under Armour this season. In addition, the Akron Touchdown Club named her its player of the year three times.


Mitchell, a 5-9 prospect from Atlanta, earned honorable mention All-America honors from Under Armour this season. She helped McIntosh High School to a Georgia state title and earned all-state honors all four seasons. As a member of Club Tsunami, Mitchell helped the team to the USAV Junior National Championships title, earning all-tournament honors, and she was named the MVP at the national event.

“We are really excited about Kyra and Rhegan coming in as setters,” Riley said. “They will add a lot of depth to that position, and we’re going to expect big things from them.”

Briana Lanktree, a 5-10 prospect from Redondo Beach, Calif., helped Redondo Union High School to a national ranking of 31st and a state ranking of fourth this season. In addition, Redondo Union twice advanced to the California Interscholastic Federation finals in her career. Lanktree competed on the club scene for Club Troy, and she helped the team to a third-place finish at the 2012 USAV. She earned all-tournament team honors for her efforts.

“Briana is a hitter who is going to add some depth to the position that we are needing,” Riley said. “She’s a big jumper and will definitely be able to score at the Division I level. We are looking forward to the prospect of what Briana will look like in a few years playing here.”

Clara Payne comes to Tech as a middle blocker. The 6-2 Payne hails from Sanford, Fla., and played at Pine Ridge High School, where she helped the team to a district runner-up finish. While competing for Top Select club team, Payne was tabbed the team’s MVP.

“Clara is just a very good blocker, a good attacker,” Riley said. “She’s a big, physical kid who is going to be a much-needed space-eater in the middle for us and will shore up our blocking and our defense.” 

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