SEIZING HER MOMENT

Tech standout Uju Ugoka has traveled a lengthy road to get to Blacksburg, but her work ethic and passion for hoops has enabled her to become one of the ACC’s best players.

WHAT'S INSIDE:
The Virginia Tech football team's season ended with a loss to UCLA in the Sun Bowl.
SWITCHING TO SUNTRUST HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER.

Switch to the award-winning service of SunTrust. From Direct Deposit to Online Bill Pay, we’ll move everything for you.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU SHINE TODAY?
Stop by or visit suntrust.com/switch

Published by the Virginia Tech Athletics Department

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES: $37.95 for one year (11 issues) and $69.95 for two years. You can get an online subscription for $25 and both the online and the print version for $50. Mail all subscription inquiries, renewals, address changes, Written inquiries and complaints to Inside Hokie Sports, Jamerson Athletic Center, Virginia Tech, 165 Spring Rd., Blacksburg, Va. 24061 or call (540) 231-3908.

Inside Hokie Sports assumes no responsibility for companies and persons who advertise in this publication. Reproduction of contents in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Publisher does not guarantee accuracy of information contained in any advertisement.

ATTN POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Inside Hokie Sports, Post Office Box 757, Blacksburg, Va. 24061-757.

Printed by Southern Printing Co., Inc. of Blacksburg, Virginia.
Tech wrestler Austin Gabel went 5-2 at the Las Vegas Invitational to finish in seventh place at 174 pounds. Seeking a second straight NCAA bid, the redshirt sophomore from Parker, Colo., is 11-4 overall on the season and 7-2 in dual meets heading into the Virginia Duals on Jan. 10-11 in Hampton, Va.

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

Austin Gabel
R-Sophomore | Wrestling

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

Brooks Morrison
Sophomore | Wrestling
Q: The Hokie Nation is real because …
A: We have a great fan base. We also have teamwork among our fans and university administration to support the athletics program.

Q: What is your best memory of Virginia Tech athletics?
A: My best memory would have to be attending the national championship game in New Orleans after the 1999 undefeated season. A close second would be attending the West Virginia game in the same season to see Shayne Graham’s game-winning field goal that preserved the undefeated season.

Q: What caused you become a fan of Virginia Tech?
A: My first visit to Virginia Tech was when I was a high school student looking at colleges to attend. I loved the campus and saw an opportunity to get an engineering degree and a commission in the military as a member of the Corps of Cadets. After that visit, I was a Virginia Tech fan and have been a Hokie for 61 years.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.
A: Have a safe drive from Richmond to Blacksburg. Enjoy ESPN Gameday live at Lane Stadium and pregame tailgating with family and friends. Watch the pre-game and halftime activities including Corp of Cadets, Highty-Tighties, Marching Virginians, a flyover and “Enter Sandman.” Win the game and have a safe trip home.

Q: How are you involved with the local Richmond Hokie Club?
A: I serve on the board for the Richmond Hokie Club. I have been chairman of the Richmond annual recruiting night program for several years and I enjoy working with club members on numerous other events during the year. Our club has supported the general fund, many individual teams and new facilities projects in the athletics department.

Q: I’m a Hokie Club member because …
A: I enjoy helping to provide athletics scholarships and funds to improve facilities to make the sports programs at Virginia Tech the best in the ACC. Athletics provides exposure to the university like no other medium and that exposure benefits all aspects of Tech.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech football player is …
A: Carroll Dale. He was an outstanding tight end and was on the team when I attended Virginia Tech. He had a fantastic career with the Hokies and also a great career with the Green Bay Packers in the NFL.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech student-athlete from another sports is …
A: Bimbo Coles. Our family lived in Lewisburg, W. Va., from 1973-1984 which is also Bimbo’s hometown. Our children went to Lewisburg schools with Bimbo and we watched his athletics career through high school. He was a special player for Tech basketball, the U.S. Olympic team and he had a great career in the NBA.
Tech adds Purdue to football schedule

Virginia Tech and Purdue have agreed to play a home-and-home football series that begins in 2015. The Hokies will travel to West Lafayette, Ind., for a Sept. 19, 2015 game against the Boilermakers. Purdue then comes to Blacksburg for a game on Sept. 9, 2023. Tech officials juggled a game with East Carolina in 2015 to fit in Purdue, agreeing with ECU officials to move a scheduled Sept. 19 game to Sept. 26. That game will be played in Greenville, N.C.

The addition of Purdue fills the vacancy on the Hokies’ 2015 schedule. The Hokies, who will play Ohio State, Furman, at East Carolina and at Purdue in 2015, have their future schedules filled through the 2016 season.

Coincidentally, the 2016 season marks the first meeting between the Hokies and Notre Dame. Tech will play at Notre Dame on Nov. 19 of that season.

Purdue marks the fifth Big Ten team on the Hokies’ future schedules, joining Ohio State, Wisconsin, Michigan and Penn State.

Rankin leaves Tech basketball program

Marquis Rankin has decided to leave the Virginia Tech basketball program because of personal reasons. Rankin, who had been around the program and sat on the bench with the team during home games this season, notified Tech coach James Johnson of his intentions shortly after Christmas.

“I completely support Marquis on his decision,” Johnson said. “He is an outstanding young man who had to make a difficult choice, and I know that he took the time to make sure it was the correct decision. While we will miss not having him on the team, I am very happy that he has decided to stay at Virginia Tech and work toward his ultimate goal of a degree from our university.”

Rankin, a junior, played in 53 games during his Tech career, starting 13 of them. Last season, he started seven of the 29 games in which he played and averaged 3.4 points, 1 rebound and 1 assist per game. He shot 39.3 percent from the floor.

For his career, he averaged 3 points, 1 assist and 1 rebound per game and shot 37 percent from the floor.
In November of 1994, the former editor of the athletics department publication, Chris Colston, came up with a unique headline for the issue that capped the 1994 regular season. It said, “8-3 ain’t bad.”

Nineteen years later, the Hokies finished up their season with eight wins. While the season ended horribly, with a bad performance against UCLA in the Sun Bowl, it resembled the 1994 season – it wasn’t a bad one. It just had a bad ending.

Tech lost four of its final six games (in 1994, the Hokies lost three of their final four, including a 45-23 loss to Tennessee in the Gator Bowl). Without quarterback Logan Thomas for almost three quarters of the Sun Bowl, Tech lost to the Bruins 42-12. Head coach Frank Beamer didn’t spend a lot of time in the postgame press conference talking about the impact of Thomas’ injury. He instead expressed disappointment at his team’s overall performance in the game.

“We’re going to look at the video and learn from this,” he said. “This isn’t one of those [videos] where we’re going to say, ‘Hey, we’re not going to look at it.’ I’m going to look at it and talk about communication on defense and execution on offense and what needs to happen to play better in a big ball game to finish the year.”

Tech’s recent struggles in bowl games make for a future column topic, one to come after further reflection by the coaching staff. The performance left a sour taste in everyone’s mouths, but should not diminish what turned out to be a solid season. The Hokies didn’t go 8-5 because of the bowl outcome. But the bigger story is over.

“The spring, you couldn’t really call it a spring because it was so basic,” receiver Willie Byrn said. “This spring, we’re going to be able to implement some new stuff and find out who else can contribute to this offense. Another six or seven months in this offense and with the coaches and getting comfortable with our quarterback is going to make a world of difference.”

Byrn said. “This spring, we’re going to be able to implement some new stuff and find out who else can contribute to this offense. Another six or seven months in this offense and with the coaches and getting comfortable with our quarterback is going to make a world of difference.”

Tech’s youth, particularly on offense, wasn’t going to allow for a run at an ACC title. For starters, the Hokies played 11 true freshmen last season – a span of 11 seasons. This season, the new coaches found out the strengths and weaknesses of players and whether, or how, they fit into the scheme.

“There is this – a young team in an injury-filled season with new coaches on offense finished 8-5. It just had a bad ending.”

For sure, that ain’t bad.
Well crew, another season is over, and this one did exactly how we were hoping, didn’t it? You know, the past few months have represented a true transition period at Virginia Tech, both institutionally, where school officials have hired a new university president, and athletically, where the Hokies are in the final stages of hiring a new director of athletics to replace Jim Weaver. On the football field, this past season was one of transition as well, with a new offensive coordinator, new system, and an entirely new blocking scheme. When there’s change, the hope is for immediate results, and in some ways, we saw that on the football field. But in reality, the changes are more likely to pay off in the long run, and as a result, this football season turned out to be more of a “hold over” type of campaign.

The Hokies had their moments – at East Carolina, at Miami, at Georgia Tech and in the Gator Bowl, we saw receivers for all four of those teams, to win the conference, you need NFL-type players, too. Like Tim Sims, the university’s new president, and the Hokies’ new AD (whoever it may be), Tech’s new quarterback will be learning on the job in the fall of the 2014. The Hokies lost all-time passing leader Logan Thomas, who was also the team’s key running threat the past two seasons. It’s a gigantic loss.

Mark Leal is clearly the frontrunner heading into spring ball since he played for four seasons and has some playing experience. Don’t judge Leal’s skills on what you saw in El Paso. He’s a very solid quarterback, like “in the Al Clark mold,” as one Tech assistant told me, referring to Tech’s signal caller in the late 1990s. It’s hard to envision a scenario – barring injury – in which Leal isn’t the starting quarterback for the 2014 season opener against William & Mary. Spring ball will be very interesting, and much of the media attention you’ll see will be focused on this position. Without a solid stop at quarterback, the Hokies are going to have to rely heavily on their 2014 quarterback, like they leaned on Thomas. We’ll see who emerges for this vital role at the end of spring ball, but finding someone who can consistently run the ball is going to be job No. 1 – again.

FOUR KICKERS IN ONE SEASON?: In some ways, the Hokies have a lot of holes to fill, but they might be able to recover quickly and mold into another sensational unit by the end of the season.

The bigger element here is the opposition. ACC teams are getting better. Next fall, Tech plays at Duke, at North Carolina, Wake Forest and at Pittsburgh. In Blacksburg, the Hokies will battle Georgia Tech, Miami, BC and Virginia. So by miss Tech Florida State and Clemson (again), the Hokies have a bit of an advantage and should be in the thick of the race for the Coastal Division crown.

A new AD, and a new quarterback, will add a fresh flavor to much of what happens in Blacksburg. It’s a transitional period here, and one that will affect Hokies from Burruss Hall, to the Jamieson Athletics Center, to the football meeting rooms. It’s a chance at a fresh start, and it’s something to be watched as it all develops, starting in the next month or so.

FINAl THOUGHTS: In some ways, the Hokies got everything they could’ve hoped for over this past 2013 team. Tech needed to stay healthy in 2013, and injury-wise, Antoine Exum never really returned, and Kyle Fuller missed half the season. The loss of Ryan Malbec was huge for the offense. Once Thomas, Edmunds and Khalil Clay were knocked out of the bowl game, the team’s chemistry was gone.

This team played so hard and had great chemistry. But it missed too many kicks, blew too many opportunities, and was far too inconsistent for its coach’s liking.

The staff is looking hard at the talent level and determining if players are in the right spots, and those evaluations will continue through signing day and into spring ball. From up close, it looks like the Hokies are ready to make a big jump, but it might take a year until they can feel as though they’re back to their overall talent and will be in the thick of the race again. They can be a nice team next fall. The defense has a lot of holes to fill, but the offense should be able to recover quickly and mold into another

Over the past two years, Tech has not had a game-breaking, home run threat. There is no Leesia, Kevin Jones, Darren Evans, Ryan Williams or David Wilson on this team. There are true weapons on offense. Perhaps Willie Byrn or Josh Stanford can ask with a first-year quarterback, and one who is going to be surrounded by some inexperience. The defense has a lot of holes to fill, but the offense should be able to recover quickly and mold into another

The bigger element here is the opposition. ACC teams are getting better. Next fall, Tech plays at Duke, at North Carolina, Wake Forest and at Pittsburgh. In Blacksburg, the Hokies will battle Georgia Tech, Miami, BC and Virginia. So by miss Tech Florida State and Clemson (again), the Hokies have a bit of an advantage and should be in the thick of the race for the Coastal Division crown.

A new AD, and a new quarterback, will add a fresh flavor to much of what happens in Blacksburg. It’s a transitional period here, and one that will affect Hokies from Burruss Hall, to the Jamieson Athletics Center, to the football meeting rooms. It’s a chance at a fresh start, and it’s something to be watched as it all develops, starting in the next month or so.

FINAl THOUGHTS: In some ways, the Hokies got everything they could’ve hoped for over this past 2013 team. Tech needed to stay healthy in 2013, and injury-wise, Antoine Exum never really returned, and Kyle Fuller missed half the season. The loss of Ryan Malbec was huge for the offense. Once Thomas, Edmunds and Khalil Clay were knocked out of the bowl game, the team’s chemistry was gone.

This team played so hard and had great chemistry. But it missed too many kicks, blew too many opportunities, and was far too inconsistent for its coach’s liking.

The staff is looking hard at the talent level and determining if players are in the right spots, and those evaluations will continue through signing day and into spring ball. From up close, it looks like the Hokies are ready to make a big jump, but it might take a year until they can feel as though they’re back to their overall talent and will be in the thick of the race again. They can be a nice team next fall. The defense has a lot of holes to fill, but the offense should be able to recover quickly and mold into another

Over the past two years, Tech has not had a game-breaking, home run threat. There is no Leesia, Kevin Jones, Darren Evans, Ryan Williams or David Wilson on this team. There are true weapons on offense. Perhaps Willie Byrn or Josh Stanford can ask with a first-year quarterback, and one who is going to be surrounded by some inexperience. The defense has a lot of holes to fill, but the offense should be able to recover quickly and mold into another

The bigger element here is the opposition. ACC teams are getting better. Next fall, Tech plays at Duke, at North Carolina, Wake Forest and at Pittsburgh. In Blacksburg, the Hokies will battle Georgia Tech, Miami, BC and Virginia. So by miss Tech Florida State and Clemson (again), the Hokies have a bit of an advantage and should be in the thick of the race for the Coastal Division crown.

A new AD, and a new quarterback, will add a fresh flavor to much of what happens in Blacksburg. It’s a transitional period here, and one that will affect Hokies from Burruss Hall, to the Jamieson Athletics Center, to the football meeting rooms. It’s a chance at a fresh start, and it’s something to be watched as it all develops, starting in the next month or so.

FINAl THOUGHTS: In some ways, the Hokies got everything they could’ve hoped for over this past 2013 team. Tech needed to stay healthy in 2013, and injury-wise, Antoine Exum never really returned, and Kyle Fuller missed half the season. The loss of Ryan Malbec was huge for the offense. Once Thomas, Edmunds and Khalil Clay were knocked out of the bowl game, the team’s chemistry was gone.

This team played so hard and had great chemistry. But it missed too many kicks, blew too many opportunities, and was far too inconsistent for its coach’s liking.

The staff is looking hard at the talent level and determining if players are in the right spots, and those evaluations will continue through signing day and into spring ball. From up close, it looks like the Hokies are ready to make a big jump, but it might take a year until they can feel as though they’re back to their overall talent and will be in the thick of the race again. They can be a nice team next fall. The defense has a lot of holes to fill, but the offense should be able to recover quickly and mold into another

Over the past two years, Tech has not had a game-breaking, home run threat. There is no Leesia, Kevin Jones, Darren Evans, Ryan Williams or David Wilson on this team. There are true weapons on offense. Perhaps Willie Byrn or Josh Stanford can ask with a first-year quarterback, and one who is going to be surrounded by some inexperience. The defense has a lot of holes to fill, but the offense should be able to recover quickly and mold into another

The bigger element here is the opposition. ACC teams are getting better. Next fall, Tech plays at Duke, at North Carolina, Wake Forest and at Pittsburgh. In Blacksburg, the Hokies will battle Georgia Tech, Miami, BC and Virginia. So by miss Tech Florida State and Clemson (again), the Hokies have a bit of an advantage and should be in the thick of the race for the Coastal Division crown.

A new AD, and a new quarterback, will add a fresh flavor to much of what happens in Blacksburg. It’s a transitional period here, and one that will affect Hokies from Burruss Hall, to the Jamieson Athletics Center, to the football meeting rooms. It’s a chance at a fresh start, and it’s something to be watched as it all develops, starting in the next month or so.

FINAl THOUGHTS: In some ways, the Hokies got everything they could’ve hoped for over this past 2013 team. Tech needed to stay healthy in 2013, and injury-wise, Antoine Exum never really returned, and Kyle Fuller missed half the season. The loss of Ryan Malbec was huge for the offense. Once Thomas, Edmunds and Khalil Clay were knocked out of the bowl game, the team’s chemistry was gone.

This team played so hard and had great chemistry. But it missed too many kicks, blew too many opportunities, and was far too inconsistent for its coach’s liking.

The staff is looking hard at the talent level and determining if players are in the right spots, and those evaluations will continue through signing day and into spring ball. From up close, it looks like the Hokies are ready to make a big jump, but it might take a year until they can feel as though they’re back to their overall talent and will be in the thick of the race again. They can be a nice team next fall. The defense has a lot of holes to fill, but the offense should be able to recover quickly and mold into another

Over the past two years, Tech has not had a game-breaking, home run threat. There is no Leesia, Kevin Jones, Darren Evans, Ryan Williams or David Wilson on this team. There are true weapons on offense. Perhaps Willie Byrn or Josh Stanford can ask with a first-year quarterback, and one who is going to be surrounded by some inexperience. The defense has a lot of holes to fill, but the offense should be able to recover quickly and mold into another
Keeping up with Compliance

The compliance corner answers questions concerning the governance of intercollegiate athletics and its impact on our athletics department. Have a question? Please send it to inside@hokiesports.com and we’ll answer it in upcoming issues. Now, here are a couple of questions that we’ve received from Tech alums and fans over the past few months, with responses from Tim Parker, Associate AD for Compliance & Governance:

Q: How big is the NCAA rulebook?
TP: “All of the NCAA Constitution and Bylaws are available online at any time. Athletics departments also receive printed copies. A couple years ago, several bylaws were consolidated and duplicative language was removed. Also, a decision was made not to include the NCAA bylaws dealing strictly with governance protocol (committee composition, etc.) in the printed manuals that are received annually by athletics departments. Because of those changes, the manual actually shrunken down by nearly 100 pages.

Currently, the NCAA Division I Manual is comprised of 502 pages, including table of contents and index. That may seem like a lot to some people, but keep in mind that certain parts of the manual are only applicable to certain groups. Some bylaws are only relevant to athletics directors, some to presidents and faculty athletics representatives, some only to a single sport. Coaches need to be well versed in about 75 of the manual’s pages (slightly more for football and basketball coaches), and knowledgeable of about 100 more.”

Q: Can you explain how it took the NCAA a few weeks to rule on the Johnny Manziel case?
TP: “All of the NCAA Constitution and Bylaws are available online at any time. Athletics departments also receive printed copies. A couple years ago, several bylaws were consolidated and duplicative language was removed. Also, a decision was made not to include the NCAA bylaws dealing strictly with governance protocol (committee composition, etc.) in the printed manuals that are received annually by athletics departments. Because of those changes, the manual actually shrunken down by nearly 100 pages.

Currently, the NCAA Division I Manual is comprised of 502 pages, including table of contents and index. That may seem like a lot to some people, but keep in mind that certain parts of the manual are only applicable to certain groups. Some bylaws are only relevant to athletics directors, some to presidents and faculty athletics representatives, some only to a single sport. Coaches need to be well versed in about 75 of the manual’s pages (slightly more for football and basketball coaches), and knowledgeable of about 100 more.”

Q: Can you explain how it took the NCAA a few weeks to rule on the Johnny Manziel case?
TP: “All of the NCAA Constitution and Bylaws are available online at any time. Athletics departments also receive printed copies. A couple years ago, several bylaws were consolidated and duplicative language was removed. Also, a decision was made not to include the NCAA bylaws dealing strictly with governance protocol (committee composition, etc.) in the printed manuals that are received annually by athletics departments. Because of those changes, the manual actually shrunken down by nearly 100 pages.

Currently, the NCAA Division I Manual is comprised of 502 pages, including table of contents and index. That may seem like a lot to some people, but keep in mind that certain parts of the manual are only applicable to certain groups. Some bylaws are only relevant to athletics directors, some to presidents and faculty athletics representatives, some only to a single sport. Coaches need to be well versed in about 75 of the manual’s pages (slightly more for football and basketball coaches), and knowledgeable of about 100 more.”

Q: I recently heard where there is a proposal on the table to allow schools to provide unlimited food for student-athletes. I was wondering where that stood, Thanks, Grant in Blacksburg.
TP: “There are two proposals that would loosen the reins on how institutions can feed student-athletes and both will be discussed at the NCAA convention this month. The one sure to draw the most opposition states, ‘that an institution may provide meals to student-athletes incidental to practice activities during the playing season and while a student-athlete is representing the institution in noncompetitive events (e.g., student-athlete advisory committee meeting, media appearances); further, to specify that an institution may provide snacks to student-athletes at any time.’

‘A lot of institutions like this idea. For starters, it ensures that student-athletes get the calories they need for food better tailored for performance. Many schools, including Virginia Tech, already have nutritionists who handle meals and snacks under the current NCAA rules.

‘Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, if you provide enough snacks and all-you-can-eat meals, then student-athletes living off campus can save some of their room and board stipend for other expenses. This might be a way to appease those opposed to the $2,000 per year stipend proposal that continues to face widespread opposition.’”

How do you turn your desire to help others into a lifelong mission?

At the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM), medical students learn to provide patient centered care from experiences extending far beyond the classroom. VCOM provides state-of-the-art medical education and research. The college has national award winning programs in primary care, global medical outreach, and a sports medicine department caring for athletes at Virginia Tech, Radford University, the 2010 Olympic Ski Team, and the PGA Greenbrier Classic golf tournament. Find out more about VCOM and our primary care sports medicine residency program on the website.
A second-quarter injury sent Logan Thomas to the sidelines, and the Hokies’ defense couldn’t contain a strong UCLA offense, as Tech ended the season with a 42-12 defeat

by Jimmy Robertson

The Virginia Tech football program traveled to the West Texas city of El Paso to play a bowl game and hoped for its day in the sun. But a hit on Logan Thomas certainly darkened Tech’s chances of winning.

A wicked hit in the second quarter forced Tech’s quarterback and team leader to the sideline with concussion-like symptoms for the rest of the game, and the Hokies struggled from then on, falling 42-12 to the 17th-ranked UCLA Bruins in the Sun Bowl played at Sun Bowl Stadium in El Paso, Texas on New Year’s Eve.

The loss marked a disappointing end to a season that began with such promise. Tech played their home game and hoped for its day in the sun.

That was huge,” Tech backfield J.C. Coleman said of not scoring a touchdown there. “That would have swung the momentum a little bit. Our defense would have gained momentum as well. Maybe they would have gotten a stop and we could have gone up 21-14. But it didn’t happen, that way and that was very unfortunate.”

“I wanted to go for it [on fourth down] and get it tied up, but it was just a little bit long [13 yards],” Beamer said. “Let’s take the points, and we got the points, but they went right back down the field on us.”

The Bruins responded following the Hokies score with an 83-yard march. The big play came on third-and-10 from the UCLA 25 when quarterback Brett Hundley threw a short pass to receiver Josh Reddick. Hundley’s 40th consecutive start – scrambled to his left 12:13 left in the first half, Thomas – who made his first collegiate field goal, a 22-yarder with 3:55 left in the third that cut the lead to 14-10.

“The loss marked a disappointing end to a season that began with such promise. Tech played their home game and hoped for its day in the sun.”

The loss marked a disappointing end to a season that began with such promise. Tech played their home game and hoped for its day in the sun.

“I’m disappointed we didn’t function better as a team,” Tech linebacker Jack Tyler said. “We did things we shouldn’t have done all year. Like Coach said, it was a lack of communication. It was breakdowns that we didn’t do all year. We were just sloppy.”

It’s very frustrating to go out this way, especially being the leader of the defense. I would have liked for us to play a little better and communicate better and not be so sloppy. I put a lot of that on my shoulders. So I’m disappointed.”

The Hokies allowed a season-high 397 yards rushing, UCLA finished with 447 yards of offense.

Tech’s best drive of the game came in the first quarter. The Hokies drove into UCLA territory and then came up with a big play when Thomas found tight end Kelvin Cline for a 37-yard gain to the UCLA 1. On the next play, Coleman scored, and Beamer’s extra point put the game at 7-3 with 8:14 left in the first quarter.

The Hokies ended up scoring just one touchdown in each of their final two games this season. Leal completed 12 of 25 for 130 yards and two interceptions to pace a Tech offense that had to watch a game from the sideline.

“I’m disappointed that Mark didn’t play better,” Beamer said. “I’ve got a lot of confidence in him. I think it’s a lesson that you need to be ready to play each and every week. He did a couple of things really nice and really good, and then he had a couple of things that weren’t so good.

“Mark’s going to be okay. Losing Logan and losing our tight end [Cline injured a knee in the second half], that’s tough, but I expect those guys behind them to step in there behind them and perform, and that’s disappointing.”

In his final collegiate game, Thomas led the Hokies in rushing with 49 yards on three carries. He completed 5 of 12 for 64 yards.

The Virginia Tech football program traveled to the West Texas city of El Paso to play a bowl game and hoped for its day in the sun. But a hit on Logan Thomas certainly darkened Tech’s chances of winning.

A wicked hit in the second quarter forced Tech’s quarterback and team leader to the sideline with concussion-like symptoms for the rest of the game, and the Hokies struggled from then on, falling 42-12 to the 17th-ranked UCLA Bruins in the Sun Bowl played at Sun Bowl Stadium in El Paso, Texas on New Year’s Eve.

The loss marked a disappointing end to a season that began with such promise. Tech played their home game and hoped for its day in the sun.

“I wanted to go for it [on fourth down] and get it tied up, but it was just a little bit long [13 yards],” Beamer said. “Let’s take the points, and we got the points, but they went right back down the field on us.”

The Bruins responded following the Hokies score with an 83-yard march. The big play came on third-and-10 from the UCLA 25 when quarterback Brett Hundley threw a short pass to receiver Josh Reddick. Hundley’s 40th consecutive start – scrambled to his left 12:13 left in the first half, Thomas – who made his first collegiate field goal, a 22-yarder with 3:55 left in the third that cut the lead to 14-10.

“The loss marked a disappointing end to a season that began with such promise. Tech played their home game and hoped for its day in the sun.”

The loss marked a disappointing end to a season that began with such promise. Tech played their home game and hoped for its day in the sun.

“I’m disappointed we didn’t function better as a team,” Tech linebacker Jack Tyler said. “We did things we shouldn’t have done all year. Like Coach said, it was a lack of communication. It was breakdowns that we didn’t do all year. We were just sloppy.”

It’s very frustrating to go out this way, especially being the leader of the defense. I would have liked for us to play a little better and communicate better and not be so sloppy. I put a lot of that on my shoulders. So I’m disappointed.”

The Hokies allowed a season-high 397 yards rushing, UCLA finished with 447 yards of offense.

Tech’s best drive of the game came in the first quarter. The Hokies drove into UCLA territory and then came up with a big play when Thomas found tight end Kelvin Cline for a 37-yard gain to the UCLA 1. On the next play, Coleman scored, and Beamer’s extra point put the game at 7-3 with 8:14 left in the first quarter.

The Hokies ended up scoring just one touchdown in each of their final two games this season. Leal completed 12 of 25 for 130 yards and two interceptions to pace a Tech offense that had to watch a game from the sideline.

“I’m disappointed that Mark didn’t play better,” Beamer said. “I’ve got a lot of confidence in him. I think it’s a lesson that you need to be ready to play each and every week. He did a couple of things really nice and really good, and then he had a couple of things that weren’t so good.

“Mark’s going to be okay. Losing Logan and losing our tight end [Cline injured a knee in the second half], that’s tough, but I expect those guys behind them to step in there behind them and perform, and that’s disappointing.”

In his final collegiate game, Thomas led the Hokies in rushing with 49 yards on three carries. He completed 5 of 12 for 64 yards.
FORMER TECH PLAYERS REMEMBER FONDLY FIRST TRIP TO EL PASO

Most members of the 1946 squad have passed away, but the few who remain take pride in being the school’s first bowl team and remember well the program’s original trip to the Sun Bowl.

By Jimmy Robertson

The 1946 Tech football team was the first in school history to play in a bowl game, traveling by plane all the way to the El Paso Pan-American Stadium. Here is a photo of the game program from that trip (1946) and a photo of the team as it got ready to board one of two DC-3 airplanes that took them in Texas.

The university shut down its athletics department after scores of cadets in the Corps of Cadets, which served as the foundation of the school in those days, went off to fight. Tech did not field a football team in 1943 or 1944, as many of the football players served as cadets and participated in the war efforts. So, too, did head coach Jimmy Kitts, who joined the Navy and served after the 1945 season.

In 1945, the university resumed athletics, and the 1945 team, under Henry B. Reed, went 2-6. Kitts later returned from the war and assumed his role as the coach, guiding the 1946 team.

“That was when all the veterans came back,” said Beasley, who served but was never in combat. “It was difficult for the coaches because, in 1945, all the veterans were taking the place of the freshmen, and it was difficult for the coaches handling that situation. We had a lot of guys transferring in who had gone to other schools, too. It was an interesting time. All schools had the same situation.”

The 1946 season did not get off to a great start, with the team tying Charlie “Choo Choo” Justice and the North Carolina Tar Heels and losing to Virginia Tech. But with the team tying Charlie “Choo Choo” Justice and the North Carolina Tar Heels and losing to Virginia Tech, the Hokies then being the next two (William & Mary and Maryland). But the Gobblers, as they were known in those days, rallied to win three of their final five games to finish 3-5-1.

That might have made for a rather forgettable season if not for one thing—the invitation to play in the Sun Bowl in El Paso on New Year’s Day. The Gobblers would take on Cincinnati, which sported an 8-2 record heading into the game.

Tech got the bid because an alum who worked for a power company in El Paso. The alum—Marion Adams, Class of 1941—also served on the Sun Bowl committee. Two other teams, Harlinton Simmons and Texas Tech, declined bids, so Adams pitched Tech’s name to the committee, and the Gobblers ultimately received the bid.

The team, of course, wanted to play in the game, and the athletics department was all for it, seeing a way to add nearly $10,000 to the coffers—the payout for each team.

Only 32 players and a handful of coaches went to the game. They loaded up on two DC-3 planes and flew from Roanoke to Knoxville, Tenn., Knoxville to Memphis, Tenn., Memphis to Fort Worth, Texas, and Fort Worth to Big Spring, Texas. They boarded from Big Spring to El Paso because of the weather.

That was the first time I had been in a plane, so that was exciting for me at that age, just going to fly all the way to El Paso,” said Zeber, who now lives in Suffolk, Va. “I think everyone felt the same way.

“We got sealed up in El Paso was more snow. It had snowed here (in Blackshear), and they scraped the Drillfield off so we could practice. When we got to El Paso, they had said, ‘We don’t have snow,’ but there was snow. It wasn’t that much, but it was there. It was cold, too.”

In spite of the weather, the week turned out to be a fabulous one for the players and the coaches. They stayed at the Hotel Cortez, the nicest establishment in El Paso. They got to make a foray into Mexico, journeying across the border to Juarez, where they saw a live Mexican bullfight conducted by Manolete, a renowned bullfighter. The team went to two Texas ranch breakfast parties, went on tours of the city, attended luncheon and received gifts, including watches with the words “The Sun Bowl” engraved on them.

The game didn’t turn out to be as nice for the Hokies. Playing in cold, snowy and icy conditions at Kidd Field, adjacent to the current Sun Bowl Stadium, the Gobblers gave up 12 points in the third quarter and lost 18-6. Tech blocked the three extra points and John Maskas blocked his seventh punt of the season. But the Gobblers’ only score came on a 3-yard run by Ralph Beard in the fourth quarter. Two interceptions by Harold Johnson and Clancy’s 296 yards passing were too much to overcome.

“We woke up [the day of the game] and the whole state of Texas was iced in, nothing but ice,” said Beasley. “They didn’t have lights on the field. It was on old field, not the one they play now. It was a dark day, and it was raining, snowing, slanting and everything. I don’t think it got up to about 25 [degrees], but it was worse than that. I don’t think anyone could make an extra point.”

“I know Cincinnati was a tough, rugged team. I got beat up pretty bad. On two occasions, their players, rather than try to tackle me, gave me good right-hand punches to the face. We didn’t have face masks like they do today. I ended up with a broken nose and swollen lip. But they beat us.”

The Gobblers tried to return home the next day, but the weather got so bad that it forced them to stay in El Paso and an extra day. That started a three-day saga, which included spending a night in Dallas and a night in Knoxville.

“It was quite an experience,” Beasley said.

Tech finished with a 3-5-1 record in 1946, but
this group of players was anything but losers. Most

Va., natives Bob and Frank Taylor worked for the

clinical vascular laboratory (which bears his name)

and later developed the vascular program and the

Hospital in Bethlehem, Pa. He became a surgeon

He then did a residency at St. Luke's University

internship at Ohio State's university hospital.

the Medical College of Virginia and later did an

degree in biology, went on to medical school at

Peanuts in Suffolk, Va., working in all phases of

chemical engineering and took a job at Planter's

Telephone in Richmond, where he worked for 36

days ended. Beasley contemplated going to Florida

Zekert graduated in 1949 with a degree in

college and coaching football at a high school near Tampa,

days before retiring.

were other success stories. Winchester,

The 86-year-old Orr, who graduated with a

era (the department's records only go back to

Tech athletics department learn more about that

about the team, all of which greatly helped the

articles, photos and other general information

The Orr's diligent research resulted in newspaper

an event spearheaded by Orr and his wife, Sandy.

1946 team, including all those mentioned above,

but formed his own company (J.H. Kroehling

A Springfield, N.J., native, has retired twice,

as an engineer before later founding his own

company. He passed away in 2011. John Kroehling,

a Springield, N.J., native, has retired twice,

but formed his own company (J.H. Kroehling

Associates) in 1991 and still works today. In

fact, Kroehling, an engineering graduate, gave

$500,000 to the university to build the Kroehling

Advanced Materials Foundry near campus, a

building used for high-tech metal casting.

In the spring of 2009, 11 members of the

1946 team, including all those mentioned above,

returned to Blacksburg for a two-day reunion –

an event spearheaded by Orr and his wife, Sandy.

The Orr’s diligent research resulted in newspaper

articles, photos and other general information

about the team, all of which greatly helped the

Tech athletics department learn more about that
era (the department’s records only go back to

1950).

Already, the department has used some of

the photos in exhibits commemorating the first

bowl team at the Tech Hall of Fame over at Lane

Stadium. Plans call for using others in Legends

Hall, a football memorabilia area in the Merryman

Center. This will bring attention to their deserving

accomplishments.

“A couple of friends know, and they’re like, ‘You

ought to be proud of that to have your team go

back to the Sun Bowl and you played on the first

Sun Bowl team. You ought to be proud of that.’”

Zekert said. “I said, ‘Well, I am.’ What can you

do but to be proud of that? That’s part of your

memories.”

The 2009 reunion probably marked the last

hurdle for this collection of grunts. As the clock

of life runs, they are in a hurry-up offense.

But as they watched the Hokies play UCLA on

New Year’s Eve, they did so with a sense of pride.

Sixty-seven years ago, they were there, cementing

themselves in Virginia Tech history. Back then,

they were pleased.

Now, they’re proud.

“When most people talk about Virginia Tech

football, they think it began in the 1950s,” Orr

said. “They lost some records, and the people who

write the books, they sort of begin in the 1950s.

“But there were some great people before that.

I think now we’re more proud of what we did than

we were during all those years.”

www.GoSunshineTours.com

Plan a Trip of a Lifetime with us or a 1 Day Getaway with your Friends!

Alaska - Nova Scotia - Florida Keys
Pacific Coast - Grand Canyon
and Everywhere in between!

Let us Show you America

Call for FREE Catalog of Tours
800-552-0022

AAA has Hokies fans covered

TRAVEL PLANNING
HOTEL SPECIALS, AND DESTINATION PLANNING TO HOME AND AWAY GAMES

DISCOUNTS AT RESTAURANTS, MOVIES AND SHOPPING

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE ON YOUR WAY TO AND FROM THE GAME

JOIN TODAY AT AAA.COM/JOIN

AAA is a Proud Partner of Virginia Tech

where are they now? | 1947 sun bowl members
SAME OLD COLES

The oldest player on Tech's team didn't quite have the senior season he wanted, but D.J. Coles handled the situation with a maturity expected from one his age.

by Jimmy Robertson

D.J. Coles turned 24 years old in September, and by nearly every standard, he is a young man. But in the college football world, teammates can be relentless with their teasing, and at Virginia Tech this past season, Coles simply wasn't a young man, at least not to his teammates.

According to them, he wasn't really an older statesman either. They deemed that way too sophisticated of a title for him. Instead, they viewed him as a senior citizen, someone with an AARP card and worthy of getting discounts at local restaurants and shops.

"Oh, man, I've heard it all," Coles said, laughing, in an interview a couple of weeks before the Hokies' Sun Bowl game against UCLA. "People call me 'Grandpa.' They say I've been here eight or nine years. They say I played with Bruce Smith [a former Tech defensive great from the early 1980s]. I've heard all the jokes."

Coles was, indeed, the oldest player on Tech's 2013 roster, and while younger football players tend to be a little faster and stronger than their older counterparts even in their early 20s, they tend to lack the experience and wisdom of older players. It was that wisdom and maturity that Tech's coaching staff credited Coles for handling the situation maturely. In many instances, seniors become disgruntled when losing playing time to younger players, and those same seniors can become cancerous to team chemistry.

"That's what I became after the first game," Coles said of his role as the red-zone receiver. "I embraced it. Any role I could get to help the team, yeah, I'm fine with it. When we get in the red zone, my number is called a lot. I embraced it, and I took it – and I liked it.”

Tech's staff credited Coles for handling the situation maturely. Not Coles. He became good friends with those younger guys – even though he was as much as six years older than some of them. In fact, he is six years older than freshman Deon Newsome, who turns 19 in February, and he was six years older than freshman David Prince until Prince turned 19 in November.

"I put my pride behind me," he said. "I played for the guys out there on the field with me. The younger guys in the room look up to me. They were asking for advice. Just going out and being there for them and mentoring them, I didn't want them to go through the same thing. We had to win, and I couldn't just get down on myself. I would have been hurting us more than helping us - "I told those guys to keep doing what they were doing and not to worry about me. Everything is going to work out for the team. Toward the end of the year, I got more playing time. But I didn't want to be there for them [at the beginning of the season], being the only senior in the room, and I needed to help them out throughout the season." Coles probably will wonder "What if?" when looking back on his career. He enjoyed a sweet 2011 season as a third receiver behind starters Danny Coale and Jarrett Boykin, catching 36 passes for 22 yards in the Hokies' 42-12 loss to the Bruins. He caught 25 passes for 387 yards and six touchdowns for the season. The season wasn't what he expected, being the Hokies' only receiver with any size.

"It wasn't up to my expectations," he admitted.

Tech's coaching staff reduced Coles' role this season after he struggled somewhat in the season opener against Alabama. He dropped a few passes, as did some of Tech's other receivers. But the coaches saw a lack of burst in Coles – something they attributed to a knee injury Coles suffered at the end of the 2011 season – and that concerned them.

Coles, who had suffered a torn PCL and underwent surgery in early 2012, tried to play in last year's season opener against Georgia Tech. But early in the game, Coles re-injured the knee. The injury didn't require surgery, but it forced Coles to take a redshirt year – something he did not do as a freshman.

This year's Alabama game marked his first game in more than 18 months. Coles attributed his struggles in that game to rust more than a sore knee. "I wouldn't blame it on the knee," he said. "It wasn't the knee. I hadn't played in more than a year. I came back a couple of months early [in 2012] and re-injured the knee. I didn't have to have surgery, but I was overweight. I had to get back into playing shape. I hadn't played in a year."

Coles eventually worked himself back into shape and back into the lineup. He played sparingly in Tech's win over Western Carolina, including a 3-yarder for a touchdown. He returned to the starting lineup against East Carolina in the third game of the season, but again, playing sparingly. He caught three passes, including a 3-yarder for a touchdown.

At that point, Tech's staff credited Coles for handling the situation maturely. In many instances, seniors become disgruntled when losing playing time to younger players, and those same seniors can become cancerous to team chemistry.

"I put my pride behind me," he said. "I played for the guys out there on the field with me. The younger guys in the room look up to me. They were asking for advice. Just going out and being there for them and mentoring them, I didn't want them to go through the same thing. We had to win, and I couldn't just get down on myself. I would have been hurting us more than helping us - "I told those guys to keep doing what they were doing and not to worry about me. Everything is going to work out for the team. Toward the end of the year, I got more playing time. But I didn't want to be there for them [at the beginning of the season], being the only senior in the room, and I needed to help them out throughout the season."
passes for 480 yards and three touchdowns. He played a terrific game in the Hokies’ loss to Clemson in the ACC championship game that season, hauling in seven passes for 116 yards and a touchdown – the lone 100-yard receiving game of his career.

That was the type of game Tech’s staff expected from Coles when then-assistant coach Jim Cavanaugh recruited him out of Goochland High School near Richmond. He played tailback at Goochland and led them to the state championship his junior season, beating a Giles High School squad led by former Tech kicker Cody Journell (Coles ran for 118 yards and scored two touchdowns in the game). He also won the state title in the 100-meter dash at the Group A track and field meet in Radford, Va., as a sophomore. He possessed a lot of potential.

He displayed it in that 2011 season, but he tore his PCL in the Sugar Bowl loss to Michigan. That caused him to miss spring practice in 2012, and he probably came back too early, which resulted in the re-injury against Georgia Tech – and in the subsequent redshirt year.

“I was in a lot of pain,” he said. “I couldn’t run on it. I guess it was a sprained knee, with a bone bruise. I had never redshirted, so I felt like I needed to take that time off and let it heal and then come back the next year.

“It [the 2012 season] was hard to watch, going through the year we had, especially after all the 10-win teams we’d had. Finishing 7-6 and knowing that I couldn’t help my team, that was tough.”

Coles nearly didn’t come back for this past season. After missing the 2012 campaign, he contemplated leaving school, going somewhere and getting himself in the best shape possible, and then preparing for the NFL Draft. Already 23 then, he thought maybe it was time to move on to the next phase in life.

But he lacked one thing – his degree. He needed only a semester’s worth of courses to wrap up a degree in human development.

“I thought about it,” Coles said of leaving. “But I hadn’t graduated, so I thought I’d come back and get my degree. It was in consideration, though. If I had graduated, I think I might have tried to get real healthy and then entered the draft last year. But it [coming back] was all because I hadn’t graduated. That’s why I came back.”

Coles hopes to get his shot with an NFL team this spring. He feels the football gods owe him one. Maybe they do.

But if that plan fails to work out, he may get into law enforcement.

“I want to have a job that’s hands on, where you do something different every day,” he said. “I want a job where you never know what you’re going to get, and that’s one job when you don’t know what’s going to happen.”

He probably would be good working in law enforcement. He got that experience this season, policing a bunch of receivers much younger than him.

Then again, wasn’t everyone younger than him? Just ask him. His teammates didn’t let him forget it.
QUARTERBACKS
26 Sam Rogers (5-10, 220, Fr.) – 0/22. Played in seven games.
45 Sam Rogers (5-10, 220, Fr.) – 238/95. Started all 13 games, led Tech with 1167 yards and had 10 touchdowns. Finished second on the team in rushing with 344 yards and had four touchdowns.

FULLBACKS
20 Maurice Taylor (5-8, 172, r-So.) – 0/45. Started nine games, starting one. Rushed six times for 40 yards in the Sun Bowl.
39 Daniel Dyer (5-10, 204, r-Jr.) – 15/30. Started six games and played in all 13 games. Had 54 tackle attempts (33 solo), including 2 for a loss, and two interceptions.

BUCKEYES
72 Zach Trubins (6-0, 216, r-Fr.) – 36/165. Started five games and played in all 13 games. Had 9 tackles (3 solo), including 2 for a loss, and 2 interceptions.
43 Derik DiNardo (6-0, 226, r-Jr.) – 12/19. Started all 13 games and had 9 tackles (3 solo). Also recovered a fumble and forced a fumble.

BORDER BOUNDARIES
16 Max Callender (6-1, 215, Fr.) – 231/22. Started seven games and played in all 13 games. Had 7 tackles (5 solo), including 2 for a loss. Started three games against Western Virginia and one against Georgia Tech.

LINEBACKERS
40 Charles Solomon (5-10, 198, Jr.) – 735/103. Started all 13 games. Finished second on the team in tackles with 100 (35 solo), including 13 for a loss, and 2 sacks. Was second on the team with 5 interceptions. Also forced a fumble and blocked a kick.

WIDE RECEIVERS
21 Charley Meyer (6-1, 215, r-Fr.) – 857/1. Started all 13 games. Finished second on the team in tackles with 100 (35 solo), including 13 for a loss, and 2 sacks. Was second on the team with 5 interceptions. Also forced a fumble and blocked a kick.

WIDE RECEIVERS
21 Charley Meyer (6-1, 215, r-Fr.) – 857/1. Started all 13 games. Finished second on the team in tackles with 100 (35 solo), including 13 for a loss, and 2 sacks. Was second on the team with 5 interceptions. Also forced a fumble and blocked a kick.

KICKERS
24 Sean Murray (5-8, 174, Fr.) – 0/27. Played in 10 games. Kicked off 17 times this season, with 8 going for touchbacks. He was 7 for 8 on field goals and 2 for 2 on extra points.

PUNTERS
27 Der’Woun Greene (5-10, 180, r-Fr.) – 0/17. Played in five games. Five punt attempts went out of bounds, and two were blocked.

PUNTERS
27 Der’Woun Greene (5-10, 180, r-Fr.) – 0/17. Played in five games. Five punt attempts went out of bounds, and two were blocked.
Virginia Tech's appearance in the Sun Bowl marked the end of the 2013 season, but more importantly to a group of young men who took redshirt years, it marked the end of sitting in the stands on Saturdays and the end of being weekly fodder for the varsity squad while working on the scout team.

Tech's staff played 11 true freshmen this past season, and Teller wasn't going to be able to break into the starting lineup. His first two games were shutouts, with the offense tallying just a single point. By the time he entered the game against North Carolina, the coaching staff had decided to give him a shot at tight end.

"I did well, and all the coaches liked it," Teller said. "I did, too. So now I'm trying to get better at catching, running, blocking — everything.

"We'll see what happens this spring [in spring practice]. It's looking like tight end for me. I'm cool with that. It doesn't matter as long as I get on the field."

Defensive tackle Woody Baron and fullback Jerome Wright, members of the 2012 recruiting class who enrolled in January of 2013, also played, along with walk-ons Sam Rogers (fullback), Mitchell Ludwig (kicker) and Eric Kristensen (kicker).

Only 10 members of the 2013 class took redshirt years. Interestingly, that list included two of the most touted players in the class — Teller and Bucky Hodges, who came to Tech as a 6-foot-5, 280-pounder out of Virginia Beach, Va. Both arrived on campus with impressive credentials, as both were among the top 50 prospects nationally at their respective positions by most services that cover recruiting.

But by the end of the 2013 season, both found themselves at different positions.

Hodges worked as a quarterback during the early part of the season, but before the Hokies’ October game against North Carolina, the coaching staff asked him to work as a tight end on the scout team, wanting him to give a good look as to what the defense would see when facing North Carolina tight end Eric Ebron, an All-American who is forgoing his final year in Chapel Hill and declaring for the NFL Draft.

Hodges looked like a natural at the position — and he stayed there for the remainder of the season.

"I felt that it's the best position for me," he said. "I played tight end before I played quarterback, so he's not unfamiliar with the role. I feel that it's the best position for me."

"I can do a lot of things. I think I'm a little bit better," Teller said. "He's a great player and a great dude, and we've become close friends. We'll push each other around, just joking. He's never really gotten mad at me, which is great because I'd hate to make him mad. He's a great player and great dude."

Hodges gives Tech much-needed size and athleticism at the tight end spot. This past season, the Hokies used Ebron twice a week in the running game, Tech returns four starters on the offensive line, but nothing is certain in terms of who'll start next season.

"I'll go. We've got a lot of offensive linemen, new kids coming in, and you never know how a coach will approach that. But I'm excited to play and be on the team.

The additions of Teller and Hodges figure only to help an offense that struggled with inconsistency for much of the season. Teller and fellow freshmen Parker Osterloh and Kyle Chung, who also took redshirt years, at least add size and depth to an offensive line that struggled to open holes in the running game. Tech returns four starters on the offensive line, but nothing is assured, and Teller got much better by taking on All-ACC defensive end James Gayle every day in practice this fall.

"He's made me better, and I think I've made him a little bit better," Teller said. "He's a great player and a great dude, and we've become close friends. We'll push each other around, just joking. He's never really gotten mad at me, which is great because I'd hate to make him mad. He's a great player and great dude."

Malleck comes back for 2014, along with Cline and now Hodges. Offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler likes using tight ends in different formations, and those three give him some weapons. Hodges played tight end before becoming a quarterback, so he's not unfamiliar with the role. Hodges only needs to be a servicable blocker to be of help at the position. After all, Ebron wasn't known as a great blocker. "I played tight end before I played quarterback when I was little," he said. "In Pop Warner, I used to play tight end. I love hitting. I used to play defense, too, so I don't mind hitting people."

"I can do a lot of things. I think I'm a little bit faster than him (Ebron), too. They [the coaches] want to see how I do on the field next year."

Tech's offense may also get some help at receiver, with David Prince and Deon Newsome coming off redshirt seasons. Newsome nearly played this past season, but receivers coach Aaron Moorehead elected to hold him out, and Newsome took advantage. He earned Iron Hokie honors in the strength and conditioning program — the second-highest level in the program.
program behind Super Iron – and he recorded a 35-pound bench press, a 365-pound front squat and a 380-pound power clean. His 375-pound power clean tied the record for an offensive tackle.

The Hokies see steady backup Chase Williams return, but the other candidates – Deon Clarke, Tariq Edwards and Jack Tyler depart. On defense, only three members of the 2013 class projected to play on that side of the ball took redshirt years – linebacker Jamieon Moss, defensive end Seth Dooley. Dooley serves an example of how the “grayshirt” process (enrolling in January) works in a perfect world. He enrolled in January and took a redshirt year the following fall. So before he will have played a down at Tech, he will have spent 18 months in Tech’s strength and conditioning program, participated in two spring practices and worked on the scout team for a year. The benefits could be huge for him and the Hokies in the short term and down the road – as they, for example, were for former Tech standout center Jake Grove, who followed the same path.

Dooley, a 6-4, 247-pounder from Salem, Va., made numerous plays in presesason scrimmages, but found himself in the same situation as Teller. The Hokies’ staff played seven defensive ends this past season, leaving little opportunity for the true freshmen to play.

“It was rough because I really wanted to play, but there were a bunch of seniors in front of me,” Dooley said. “I thought of it [redshirting] as a learning period. So I learned from them and learned a bunch of the plays. In a way, I feel like it helped me. Next year, I’ll come in more prepared.”

Sitting out the season is tough on players used to playing every rep, and in many cases, playing every rep on both sides of the ball in high school. But the work done in the strength and conditioning program is invaluable, particularly for linemen, linebackers and tight ends. In general, a player needs more strength, bulk and maturity to play successfully at these ends. In general, a player needs more strength, bulk and maturity to play successfully at these ends. In general, a player needs more strength, bulk and maturity to play successfully at these ends.

The Hokies return every receiver except D.J. Dawman McKinnon and Drew Burns – are unproven entities. The 240-pound Motuapuaka earned Orange honors in the strength and conditioning program, recording a 395-pound bench press and a 580-pound front squat.

At the two safety spots, the Hokies return starters Debbieone Bonner and Kyle Shuey, along with backups Der’Woun Greene and Drew Burns – are unproven entities. The 240-pound Motuapuaka earned Orange honors in the strength and conditioning program, recording a 395-pound bench press and a 580-pound front squat.

One player to watch is a member of the 2012 recruiting class who enrolled last January and took a redshirt year this past season – defensive end Seth Dooley. Dooley serves an example of how the “grayshirt” process (enrolling in January) works in a perfect world. He enrolled in January and took a redshirt year the following fall. So before he will have played a down at Tech, he will have spent 18 months in Tech’s strength and conditioning program, participated in two spring practices and worked on the scout team for a year. The benefits could be huge for him and the Hokies in the short term and down the road – as they, for example, were for former Tech standout center Jake Grove, who followed the same path.

Dooley, a 6-4, 247-pounder from Salem, Va., made numerous plays in presesason scrimmages, but found himself in the same situation as Teller. The Hokies’ staff played seven defensive ends this past season, leaving little opportunity for the true freshmen to play.

“It was rough because I really wanted to play, but there were a bunch of seniors in front of me,” Dooley said. “I thought of it [redshirting] as a learning period. So I learned from them and learned a bunch of the plays. In a way, I feel like it helped me. Next year, I’ll come in more prepared.”

Sitting out the season is tough on players used to playing every rep, and in many cases, playing every rep on both sides of the ball in high school. But the work done in the strength and conditioning program is invaluable, particularly for linemen, linebackers and tight ends. In general, a player needs more strength, bulk and maturity to play successfully at these ends. In general, a player needs more strength, bulk and maturity to play successfully at these ends. In general, a player needs more strength, bulk and maturity to play successfully at these ends.
“I was waiting to see the offer from them ... it just didn’t work out. I don’t want people thinking that I didn’t want to come back because that wasn’t the case at all. It just seemed that San Diego was a smart move for me and a good decision for me and my career.”

Unfortunately, last year was a disaster. Again, injuries took a toll, as he injured his groin again, and his mom became ill, forcing him to make several cross-country trips to check in on her. In his first season in San Diego, he played in just 10 games, catching 23 passes for 254 yards and a touchdown.

Team officials decided to fire Turner following the season, leaving Royal wondering about his role. But those same team officials decided to hire Mike McCoy, who just happened to be Royal’s offensive coordinator in Denver.

Royal couldn’t have been happier. “I know what to expect,” he said. “I know what type of coach he [McCoy] was. I know what he represented and what this team would be all about just based on the type of person he was and what he stood for. I know that there would be a good environment. We were going to have fun and win a lot of games and throw the ball a lot. Those were things I was excited about. Just knowing the type of coach he is, I know we’d have some success.”

Royal has enjoyed his best season since the 2010 season when he caught 29 passes for 412 yards.
EDDIE HELPS TECH SNAP TWO-GAME SKID
Eddie scored 17 points to lift the Hokies past Maryland-Eastern Shore 82-66 on Dec. 8. Eddie also grabbed nine rebounds, coming off a double-double of his own earlier in the season. He dished out three assists and grabbed two rebounds.

Johnson, who had not scored in double figures against a nonconference opponent, continued a dubious trend for Johnson, who has not been the same player since late November, as the backup point guard behind Wilson. But he did a great job of getting us going on the glass, Johnson said. “I was glad to be able to see him come out and give us some minutes and be healthy. He’s still not 100 percent, but he was able to come out and give us some energy, and hopefully, that will carry on down the stretch.”

Wilson matches career high
Against Maryland-Eastern Shore
Wilson scored 16 points in the Hokies’ victory over Maryland-Eastern Shore. That matched his season high. He also scored 16 in the Hokies’ 87-82 victory over West Virginia on Nov. 12.

Wilson, who had not scored in double figures in seven of the Hokies’ previous eight games, made 6 of 6 from the floor, including 3 of 3 from beyond the 3-point arc, and he also hit 8 of 8 from the free-throw line.

Heading into ACC play, Wilson had not dished out fewer than three assists in any game this season – a span of 13 games.

Allen returns to Cassell Coliseum
Maryland-Eastern Shore’s head coach is Frankie Allen, who served as an assistant coach at Tech under Charlie Moore and later as the head coach at Tech in the waning moments of the 2005-06 season.

Johnson said. “You think in your second year that winners,” he said. “They come from winning programs, and they want to win. They approach every game like they’re going to win it. They work hard in practice. They work hard outside of practice to try and get better and to try to put themselves in position to win. These guys want to win.”

As Virginia Tech entered the meat of the basketball season, starting with a Jan. 7 home game against Syracuse, it had more players visiting the training room than the locker room.

And the roster uncertainty left coach James Johnson exasperated.

“That’s been the most disappointing thing of the year so far,” Johnson said.

Three Tech players were listed as questionable for the Syracuse game – guard Adam Smith (calf), forward C.J. Barksdale (ankle, knee and flu) and forward Marshall Wood (flu). They unfortunately continued a dubious trend for Johnson, who never seemed to know who is going to be available from game to game.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.

Heading into that Syracuse game, Johnson had used nine different starting lineups in 13 games, and nine different players had started games. Only forward Jarell Eddie and point guard Devin Wilson had started every game this season.
UGOKA TIES 35-YEAR OLD RECORD
With her 22-point, 17-rebound effort in the Hokies’ 86-73 dismantling of Radford on Dec. 21, Ugoka registered her sixth consecutive double-double, her eighth of the season and the 13th of her Tech career.

With that performance, she became the first Tech player since Karen Garbis to have six straight games with a double-double, as Garbis accomplished the feat during the 1977-78 basketball season (Feb. 9-23).

“I’m just playing hard,” Ugoka said in response to her success this season. “I just keep playing like I’m used to playing. I don’t change things and just keep playing hard and the game will come. I just look for open shots and take it, or just take it to the rim. I’m just playing more aggressive, no matter how the defense plays me.”

The Lagos, Nigeria native’s six double-doubles came in home games against Richmond (27 points, 17 rebounds), Providence (12, 13), Michigan State (19, 10) and USC Upstate (27, 13), and in road games at Indiana (32, 11) and Radford.

Of her 14 games played this season, she’s failed after the break, but are 2-4 in those. Fast starts, though, will be the key as the Hokies head into the most of the ACC schedule.

PANOUSIS CONTINUES IN HER HELPING ROLE
Through the first month of the season (seven games), freshman Vanouss Panousis was leading the Hokies with a respectable 4.9 assists per game, but since has turned up her game, providing a pair of 10-assist games, and in her next seven games for Tech, she was handing out an average of 5.6 a contest.

She was three assists shy of tying the Tech freshman record for assists in a game set by Lisa LeWitch against VCU in February of 1992. The Sydney, Australia native posted her first career double-double with 15 points and 10 assists in the Robert Morris victory.

Then, at BC in her first Atlantic Coast Conference action, Panousis again had 10 assists, a Tech record by a freshman in an ACC game. She also matched Lauren Simmons’ for the second-most in a single ACC game (at Virginia, Feb. 8, 2009) with the effort and was one shy of Nikki Davis’ school record of 11 against North Carolina Jan. 14, 2010.

Just entering the halfway point of the season, and the ACC portion of the schedule, Panousis, with 68 assists, is on pace to set the freshman school record for assists in a single season currently held by Carrie Mason (2012-13, 108), and she could be the first player since Amy Weidt (1999-2000) to reach the 150 mark.

A delicious game-day tradition.

Before the game or after, Preston’s Restaurant is a delicious place for a new game-day tradition. Start with our breakfast or lunch buffet. Order lunch or dinner from our mouthwatering a la carte menu of foods, seasonal cuisine. Our signature ice cream is a tasty way to score victory— or smooth over defeat. And don’t forget the ‘Vikes’ look towards every Sunday at Preston’s, inside the Inn at Virginia Tech.

Make Preston’s Restaurant your game-day tradition.

540-315-0920
Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended.

www.newhokies.com
THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Tech women’s basketball player Uju Ugoka followed a winding path to Tech, but that hasn’t stopped her from becoming one of the ACC’s best players

by Marc Mullen

A person would be hard-pressed to find a more difficult road to playing Division I basketball than the one taken by current Virginia Tech women’s basketball player Uju Ugoka. In spite of that road, she is leading the Hokies this season in scoring and rebounding and is poised to post a double-double almost any game night.

Sure, there have been many successful stories of players from countries in Africa, ones who have come to college in the United States, participated in athletics and earned their degrees. In fact, two basketball players – Cheick Diallo and Nore Diawara, both from Mali – each played for the Hokies’ basketball teams (men’s and women’s, respectively) less than a decade ago.

However, neither of them can claim the same path that Ugoka, a Lagos, Nigeria native, took to get to Blacksburg. She not only crossed the Atlantic Ocean, but also covered most of the states of Texas AND Florida before settling in at Virginia Tech.

Oh, and add in this fact. Ugoka had never picked up a basketball until she was a teenager and she picked it up only because of her own curiosity. Hard work and determination have taken her the rest of the way.

“I was maybe 15 when I started playing basketball,” the now 20 year old said. “I saw some tall girls [in the community], and I thought ‘I’m kind of the same height as them. Let me see where they are going. They are playing basketball, and I said, ‘OK, let me go with them,’ and I saw them playing basketball. And, like, the next day, I switched from playing soccer to basketball. So that’s how I started playing basketball.

“I just saw them play. I just fell in love with the style, the way they dressed, and everything. I was like, ‘Hmmm, I think I’ll play this game.’ I thought I could play this game, and I just fell in love with the sport when I saw those girls.”

So I started playing basketball on my own. I had no coach. That was why it took me awhile to learn the fundamentals of the game because I started alone. I had nobody to teach me anything. So that’s why, when I got here, I was learning ball handling that you are supposed to learn when you are a little. That’s what I was learning when I got here.”

Ugoka, who was a pretty good soccer player and actually helped her secondary school to a team title and earned a scholarship for the effort, immediately switched from the national sport of Niagara to a lesser-known sport. But she had the support of her parents.

“My dad actually thought I would play soccer,” she said. “He wanted me to go to a soccer academy in Nigeria to brush up on my soccer skills because we won that gold medal. That was when my dad thought, ‘Oh, I think my daughter should play sport [sports],’ because before that, if I tried to play sport, they didn’t want me to play any sport.

“Since then, he gave me the green light to go ahead and play sport. When I told him I switched to basketball, he was like, ‘Why?’ But then I told him, and he was like, ‘You’re correct, OK, cool.’ So I started playing basketball, but I had to do everything on my own. I needed to be independent to pursue my dreams. None of them, my family members, have seen me play. They just know that their daughter played basketball.”

For a couple years, Ugoka, who is the fifth child of her parents [Paul and Kate] eight children, would practice, play and learn as much as she could of her new endeavor. She then took part in a Hope4Girls Africa basketball camp in Nigeria. The camp – according to its website – is an organization that is dedicated to the increased participation and empowerment of disadvantaged young African women in sports and education.

She was among about 50 other girls at the camp, but her performance there landed her an opportunity. She and one other girl, Jcema Uchendu, were able to bring their talents to the United States. Mobolaji Akiode, a former basketball player at Florida State University, is the founder of the organization and helped the pair relocate to Demins, Texas to play for Grayson College, a community college of about 5,000 students.

“The first day I picked up the ball, I knew that, even though I didn’t know what I was doing, I just had the feeling that this sport was going to take me so many places,” Ugoka said. “I just had the feeling because, for me to stop soccer immediately to switch to basketball, I knew it would take me so many places.”

“I was invited as one of, like, 50 girls that got to go to the camp and I was one of two girls that she [Akiode] picked to go to school here [in the U.S.]. She got us into the JUCO [junior college], and that’s how we got here to the States, with the help of her.

“And my parents, when I got a scholarship, they were so excited and were like, ‘Go ahead.’ They were like, ‘Just go, go, go.’ and I was like, ‘Cool.’ So they have been supporting me and making sure I’m playing well, even though they’ve not watched me play. They pray that I play well.”

Still in the infancy stage of her basketball progress, Ugoka played well enough to earn conference player of the year and National Junior College Athletic Association All-American honors after her freshman season with the Vikings. However, Grayson, which currently fields just two sports now (baseball and softball), decided after the 2011 season to disband the women’s basketball program.

Ugoka was not deterred, as she picked up where she left off once she transferred to Gulf Coast State in Panama City, Fla., for her sophomore season. Averaging almost a double-double for the Commodores, she was again named an All-American and was a top-three finalist for National JUCO Player of the Year.

With the success came a big decision for Ugoka, who would need to make her third move in as many years as she wanted to continue her playing career. Suitors like Tennessee and Florida State were in contact with her, but she eventually chose Tech.

“I’ve been to schools and I know what I want and I know where I can play and I know the environment, if I’m needed or if I am not,” she said about her commitment to Tech. “So I visited, like, four schools, but when I got here, the coaching staff was nice, and I felt at home.

“I’m so far away from home, so I needed a place that I could call my home. So this school, I thought I could play here, I didn’t care if they were highly ranked or not. I just wanted to be confident where I am playing because, when you
first of all, start with that. Then my mom will want you to always work hard because hard work pays. That’s what he always says. My dad will ask, but he’ll tell me the Bible verse to read, and he just said. “So first of all, do you pray all the time, and if I don’t, oh he’s going to be mad at me,” she said. “So first of all, do you pray all the time, and he’ll tell me the Bible verse to read, and he just tells me ‘Every day, work hard. I don’t care. I just want you to always work hard because hard work pays.’ That’s what he always says.

Then my mom will ask me how I’m doing. That’s how moms are. My dad will ask, but he’ll want you to always work hard because hard work pays. That’s what he always says.

After doing more than 30,000 joint replacement surgeries, you’d think they would be no big deal. But to us, every surgery is as important as the very first one.

If you’re considering joint replacement surgery, ask your physician for a referral to one of our orthopedic surgeons. Each of our hospitals offers highly specialized care, so you can find the treatment you need where it’s most convenient.

MEET OUR ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS
Levinsdale Medical Center
- Allen Durham, M.D.
- Jamie Lattimer, V.O.
- Matt Hagg, M.D.
- Will Thompson, M.D.
- Steven Roper, M.D.
- Mark Carney, M.D.
- Ryan Terry, M.D.
- Peter O’Keeffe, M.D.

Levinsdale Hospital Allegheny
- James McF, M.D.
- Joe Park, D.O.
- Chris Wunder, M.D.

Levinsdale Hospital Montgomery
- Stuart Garland, M.D.
- Dallas Jaygel, V.O.
- Marc Sargent, M.D.

Levinsdale Hospital Pulaski
- James Inove, M.D.

GETTING TO KNOW UJU UGOKA
Q: What do you do in your free time?
UU: “I like to watch movies, and I sleep. I love both. But 86 percent of the time, I watch movies. I love cartoon movies and also Nigerian movies. I love them, even though you can tell what’s going to happen. I still love watching them. Then, I watch others, like the Disney movies, ‘Sleeping Beauty … I love all those movies.’

Q: How’s the Blacksburg weather compared to what you’re used to?
UU: “It’s cold! I don’t notice it as much as last year because last year was my first time experiencing the cold. Not the snow, because surprisingly it snowed in Texas, as last year because last year was my first time experiencing the cold. That’s been helping me, and I’m going to be graduating at an early age, so it’s kind of cool. I will have a longer career.”

That career she hopes will start with playing professional basketball somewhere, but the part after she says, “will take care of itself.”

And with the way she’s approached the past six years, wherever she ends up and whatever she puts her mind to, she has no doubt get her unconditional resolution.
Despite losing top-end talent, Hokies feel they are on Track

Dave Cianelli, Tech's director of track and field and cross country, thinks the men's track and field team could make another run at an ACC title this season and that back-to-back good recruiting classes have the women's team much improved.

Heading into the 2014 ACC indoor and outdoor track and field seasons, Virginia Tech has seen its men's and women's programs grow in several first-place team finishes, six runner-up finishes and three third-place finishes in the past seven conference championships meets.

On the heels of those accomplishments, and with the addition of three new schools into the field, Director of Track and Field and Cross Country Dave Cianelli likes where both teams currently stand and the direction those teams are going:

Before breaking down each programs' different events, Cianelli answered several key questions about the upcoming season:

Question 1: In regards to both the men's and women's sides, how does the expanded ACC affect Virginia Tech?

DC: “Well, the new schools coming in – Syracuse, Notre Dame and Pittsburgh – it’s going to make it tougher. Those are three very good programs. Two of which, Notre Dame and Syracuse, are more distance oriented, with Notre Dame being more like us in terms of a balanced program. Syracuse is very strong in distance events. Steel Pittsburgh is more sprints and hurdle heavy.

“What it’s going to do is make the conference much deeper across the board, and it’s going to be more difficult even to be in the top eight to score. I’m not sure how much that will affect the top end – the top three or four places – but it will definitely affect the places between five and 10, the spots that are fighting for a few points, and that’s really where the difference is in the team race. A lot of times, it’s not necessarily how many firsts you get, but how many of the kids you bring to the meet and how many of them can pick up a few points. That’s really where it makes a difference.”

Question 2: With the expanded field, will there be any changes to the scoring at the ACC meet?

DC: “I did hear that about swimming [that sport is scoring more places at the ACC meet], but that didn’t come up at our coaches’ meeting. We pretty much follow the NCAA format, scoring the top eight places. One thing that we did change, though, was expanding the All-ACC selections from the top three to the top eight, which is a really good move. We now recognize more students. Again, to score in our conference is going to take a very good effort, a good performance, so it’s worth it to recognize those athletes.”

“...But as far as [Having scoring, we will mirror what our NCAA meet does, and that’s the top eight. And that won’t change our strategy as far as how we approach an ACC meet. We’ll pretty much do what we’ve done. We will try to bring as much balance to the meet. We’ll be strong in our typical areas – sprints, throws, middle distance – so at a conference level, the more balanced you can be with quality, the better chance you have.”

Question 3: Over the past decade, six student-athletes have combined to win 14 national titles for Tech. Outdoor hammer throw national champion Thomas Kruzliak returns for the Hokies, but is there anyone else who can contend?

DC: “I think Martina Schultz [four-time All- American, three-time ACC champion] is in a good position. She was third at the indoor meet last year, and very consistent in the nation. She’s one of the top in the country in the women’s pole vault. She has a legitimate chance to win a national title. Depending on his health, Jaka Mihale, who is a javelin thrower and had offseason surgery on his heel, is talented enough, if he is 100 percent, to be in the mix for a title [during the outdoor season].

“Tomas, again, in the hammer will be right there. It’s obviously not a ‘ gimme.’ There’ll be other athletes right there with him. We also have a freshman javelin thrower, Eva Vrbova, who needed some more time to pick up and, with them, that could be our best three right there at the national level. So those four individuals could contend, as could others, if everything comes together for them at the right time.”

Question 4: The men's side lost so much top talent. How do you currently stand and what are your expectations for the Hokie men for the upcoming season?

DC: “We have a strong enough team on the men’s side to be in the mix for the ACC title, both during the indoor and outdoor seasons, basically everyone, except that we’re going to have a lot to do about it, and that’s the big key in our sport – keeping everyone healthy.

“We lost some outstanding seniors from last year – really all-time greats for us in Jeff Artis-Gray, Ronnie Black, Alexander Ziegler, Matthias Treff, Will Mulherin and Michael Hammond. Some of those guys were maybe the best we’ve ever had in their events. We really had a great senior class last year, but we have a lot of new faces in freshmen and transfers, and I think there’s a lot of talent. There’s just a matter of getting them adjusted to the level of training and the competition.

“Really excited about the freshmen. I think this is one of the best classes we ever had on both the men’s and women’s side since I’ve been here, and I expect them to make their mark their first year. And we will have to get that in order to challenge the top teams in the conference.”

Question 5: The women’s roster is loaded with underclassmen and seems poised to make some serious strides over the next few seasons. Is that an accurate assessment?

DC: “The last couple of years, especially with our last two recruiting classes with the women – the current freshman and sophomore classes – I’m very excited about collectively. We are pretty young still. We don’t have many seniors, and if we can continue to recruit more of our athletes we’ve gotten over the past couple of years, then there is no question that the women’s program, next year, is in a position to challenge for a conference title. And this year, I’d like to see them move back up into the top three or four as a precursor for the following year.

“The talent level we have in the younger classes on the women’s side is really the best we’ve had since the Queen Harrison, Kristi Castlin group when they came through. This group is as good, but we really don’t know what they can compete like. Queen’s class, overall, was the best class we ever had at one time if you look at what they were able to accomplish. This class has that kind of talent. Now it’s a matter of if they can move on and do some of those same things. That remains to be seen.”

“We are on our way. I think we’re going to take a big step from where we were last year in the conference and on the national level, and with another year and a really strong recruiting class, then I think we can be in that mix again. This team, collectively, we are going to be a much stronger conference team than we were a year ago. We’re definitely on an uptick.”

Top returners (2013 accomplishments):
Senior Darrell Wesh – Indoor: 60-meter first- team All-American;决赛 at the ACC meet and a school record holder; Outdoor: 100-meter NCAA qualifier and All-ACC (finished second), 600-meter ACC champion, 4x100 All-ACC (team finished second).
Senior Tihut Degfae – Indoor: DMR [distance medley relay] second team All-American, finalist at the ACC meet; Outdoor: 5,000-meter ACC champion, 4,000-meter ACC (team finished second).
Senior Leoule Degfae – Indoor: 3,000-meter ACC champion, set the school record; Outdoor: 800-meter ACC (team finished second), 1,500-meter ACC champion; Outdoor: 1,500-meter ACC champion, set the school record holder; Outdoor: 100-meter 5,000-meter All-ACC (チーム finished second).
Senior Darrell Wesh – Indoor: 60-meter first- team All-American; finalist at the ACC meet and a school record holder; Outdoor: 100-meter NCAA qualifier and All-ACC (finished second), 600-meter ACC champion, 4x100 All-ACC (team finished second).
Senior Tihut Degfae – Indoor: DMR [distance medley relay] second team All-American, finalist at the ACC meet; Outdoor: 5,000-meter ACC champion, 4,000-meter ACC (team finished second).
Senior Leoule Degfae – Indoor: 3,000-meter ACC champion, set the school record; Outdoor: 800-meter ACC (team finished second), 1,500-meter ACC champion; Outdoor: 100-meter 5,000-meter All-ACC (チーム finished second).
Senior Tihut Degfae – Indoor: DMR [distance medley relay] second team All-American, finalist at the ACC meet; Outdoor: 5,000-meter ACC champion, 4,000-meter ACC (team finished second).
Senior Leoule Degfae – Indoor: 3,000-meter ACC champion, set the school record; Outdoor: 800-meter ACC (team finished second), 1,500-meter ACC champion; Outdoor: 100-meter 5,000-meter All-ACC (チーム finished second).

Ciatti’s take: “We have some really good athletes and some outstanding freshmen who are no doubt part of the best class we’ve ever signed. Vincent Ciatti is a top miler out of Maryland, and Patrick Joseph is a top middle distance guy out of Virginia. Those guys are like 4:07 milers out of high school, and if they continue to develop, they are going to be at a level sooner than anywhere a guy like Michael Hammond was. But we’ll have to wait and see.

“Along with two other guys – Neil Gourley, whom we signed from Scotland, and Griffin Carmichael, another Virginia guy – collectively, this is the best quality we’ve ever signed. I’m really excited what they will add to our returners Tee and Lee Dogar, Grant Peltock and Tommy Curtin, who could be one of the best we’ve ever had here at Virginia Tech if he continues on the course he’s on.”

With the influx of those freshmen, and even with the loss of Will Mullahy, Jason Cusack and Mike Carmichael, I think this group can be as good or even better, all depending on how those freshmen develop. This group, when looking at last year’s indoor, the distance crew overachieved, at least in what I expected, but I think they were the ones who made the difference in winning that title.”

“Jared Allison and Brad Johnson are two returning athletes in that event, and we’ll look to them to back up Chris and Stephan, especially at the conference level. We’ve traditionally scored a lot of points in the event, and we’d like to continue to do that.

“In January, Torben Ladigj, who’s from Germany, will step in and be able to help us out right away. He’s got a personal best of 17 feet, 1 inch. So this crew will be very deep and can help us earn more points than in years past.”

Top returners (2013 accomplishments): Sophomore Tomas Kruzliak – Indoor: weight throw second-team All-American and All-ACC (finished second); Outdoor: hammer throw national champion and ACC champion.

Newcomer: Sophomore Jordan Roach.

Ciatti’s take: “We probably a little thinner here than we’ve been, particularly during the indoor season, because we’ll only have two in the weight throw. We might have one in the shot [put] in transfer Jordan Roach, who is primarily a discus thrower. But he has thrown the shot a little bit. Over the past few years, we’ve been able to sweep the weight throw at the ACC meet. So we’ll have to make that up in other areas this year.”


Ciatti’s take: “Our sprinters are very young, with Ciara Simms returning after redshirting last year. She’s a 6s, 100 performer and made the ACC finals in both of those events. So I expect the same out of her and Yeni Aromolaran, who had a really nice freshman year last year.

“Then we have a really nice freshman class in Christine London, a top hurdler from Maryland, Mena McKiver, another top hurdler from North Carolina, and Jasmine Mitchell, who is an all-around athlete and is going to be a 400-meter runner for us. She might surprise some people in that event.

“It’s a young group, but I think they are on their way to doing some really great things, and we are about a year away from having some depth in that area.”


Newcomers: Freshmen Hanna Green and Abigail Motley.

Ciatti’s take: “Our middle distance group is about as good as we’ve ever had. Shannon Morton, Amanda Smith and Katarina Smiljanic

MEN’S POLE VAULT


Newcomer: Senior Stephan Munz – Indoor: ACC champion.

Newcomer: Freshman Torben Ladigj.

Ciatti’s take: “Our vault group is going to be very deep, as it typically is, and will be led by Chris Uhle and Stephan Munz, and both should be battling in the ACC meets and nationally.

WOMEN’S SPRINTS/HURDLES/JUMPS

Top returner (2012 accomplishments): Redshirt sophomore Ciara Simms – Indoor: 60-meter finalist at the ACC meet; Outdoor: 400m NCCA qualifier and All-ACC (finished third), 100-meter finalist at the ACC meet.

Newcomers: Freshmen Christine London, Nena McKiver and Jasmine Mitchell.

Ciatti’s take: “Our sprinters are very young, with Ciara Simms returning after redshirting last year. She’s a 6s, 100 performer and made the ACC finals in both of those events. So I expect the same out of her and Yeni Aromolaran, who had a really nice freshman year last year.

“Then we have a really nice freshman class in Christine London, a top hurdler from Maryland, Mena McKiver, another top hurdler from North Carolina, and Jasmine Mitchell, who is an all-around athlete and is going to be a 400-meter runner for us. She might surprise some people in that event.

“It’s a young group, but I think they are on their way to doing some really great things, and we are about a year away from having some depth in that area.”


Newcomers: Freshmen Hanna Green and Abigail Motley.

Ciatti’s take: “Our middle distance group is about as good as we’ve ever had. Shannon Morton, Amanda Smith and Katarina Smiljanic

WOMEN’S SPRINTS/HURDLES/JUMPS

Top returner (2012 accomplishments): Redshirt sophomore Ciara Simms – Indoor: 60-meter finalist at the ACC meet; Outdoor: 400m NCCA qualifier and All-ACC (finished third), 100-meter finalist at the ACC meet.

Newcomers: Freshmen Christine London, Nena McKiver and Jasmine Mitchell.

Ciatti’s take: “Our sprinters are very young, with Ciara Simms returning after redshirting last year. She’s a 6s, 100 performer and made the ACC finals in both of those events. So I expect the same out of her and Yeni Aromolaran, who had a really nice freshman year last year.

“Then we have a really nice freshman class in Christine London, a top hurdler from Maryland, Mena McKiver, another top hurdler from North Carolina, and Jasmine Mitchell, who is an all-around athlete and is going to be a 400-meter runner for us. She might surprise some people in that event.

“It’s a young group, but I think they are on their way to doing some really great things, and we are about a year away from having some depth in that area.”

“Jared Allison and Brad Johnson are two returning athletes in that event, and we’ll look to them to back up Chris and Stephan, especially at the conference level. We’ve traditionally scored a lot of points in the event, and we’d like to continue to do that.

“In January, Torben Ladigj, who’s from Germany, will step in and be able to help us out right away. He’s got a personal best of 17 feet, 1 inch. So this crew will be very deep and can help us earn more points than in years past.”


Newcomer: Senior Stephan Munz – Indoor: ACC champion.

Newcomer: Freshman Torben Ladigj.

Ciatti’s take: “Our vault group is going to be very deep, as it typically is, and will be led by Chris Uhle and Stephan Munz, and both should be battling in the ACC meets and nationally.

WOMEN’S SPRINTS/HURDLES/JUMPS

Top returner (2012 accomplishments): Redshirt sophomore Ciara Simms – Indoor: 60-meter finalist at the ACC meet; Outdoor: 400m NCCA qualifier and All-ACC (finished third), 100-meter finalist at the ACC meet.


Ciatti’s take: “Our sprinters are very young, with Ciara Simms returning after redshirting last year. She’s a 6s, 100 performer and made the ACC finals in both of those events. So I expect the same out of her and Yeni Aromolaran, who had a really nice freshman year last year.

“Then we have a really nice freshman class in Christine London, a top hurdler from Maryland, Mena McKiver, another top hurdler from North Carolina, and Jasmine Mitchell, who is an all-around athlete and is going to be a 400-meter runner for us. She might surprise some people in that event.

“It’s a young group, but I think they are on their way to doing some really great things, and we are about a year away from having some depth in that area.”
all return, and all were finalists at last year’s ACC outdoor meet. Hanna Green will be a good 800-meter runner for us. I think that 800, 1500 group is going to be good. That is where our strength is going to be.

“At the longer distances, Courtney Dobbs and Sarah Rapp just finished outstanding cross country seasons, and that typically bodes well for track. Those two will be the leaders, but Francois Dowd, Madalyn Nuckols and freshman Abigail Motley will be in the mix.

“I really like this group, and if they can stay healthy, I think they can accomplish a lot. So I see them contributing more this year at the conference level.”

WOMEN’S THROWS

Top returner (2013 accomplishments):
Junior Annjulie Vester – Indoor: weight throw finalist at the ACC meet; Outdoor: hammer throw second-team All-American, ACC champion.

Junior Sarah Kadella – Outdoor: javelin finalist at the ACC meet.

Newcomers: Junior Sabine Kopplin and freshman Eva Vivod.

Cianelli’s take: “In the throws, Sabine Kopplin and Sarah Kadella will be strong for us in the javelin. Sabine redshirted last year, so this will be her first year here, but she’ll be one of the favorites, and Sarah was an ACC scorer in the event.

“Annjulie is back for her junior year, and she’s won the hammer at the conference meet two years in a row. So those are our centerpiece, and our top recruit is Eva Vivod, who also throws the javelin. Her and Sabine could be at the top of the NCAA level. Both of them have the tools and the credentials to be the tops in the country. They will give us a really deep crew in the javelin come the conference meet.”

WOMEN’S POLE VAULT

Top returner (2013 accomplishments):
Junior Martina Schultze – Indoor: first-team All-American (finished third), ACC champion; Outdoor: first-team All-American (finished eighth), ACC champion.

Newcomers: Freshmen Emma King and Kristen Lee.

Cianelli’s take: “Our group in the pole vault will certainly be very deep, again, as it has been, with Martina leading that group as a returning All-American. But she’s got a really good supporting crew. Senior Leigh Allin returns for her final year, and there are Lyndsey Saunders and Erin Schaal. I expect those individuals to be in a position to score at the ACC meets.

“Then Emma King and Kristen Lee, who are both multiple state champions, I can see those two contributing right away. This event, conference-wide, is the best it’s ever been. It’s deeper, and there is more quality, so it will take really good performances to score at the meet.”

Tech opened the indoor season at the Appalachian State Invitational on Dec. 5-6 in Boone, N.C. The ACC Championships will be held in Clemson, S.C., on Feb. 27-28, and the NCAA Championships will be held March 14-15 in Albuquerque, N.M. The ACC’s outdoor meet will be held in Chapel Hill, N.C., on April 27-29, and the NCAA’s outdoor meet will be held June 11-14 in Eugene, Ore.”
BRAND NEW 2, 3 & 4 bedroom apartments & townhomes

• Walk to campus — The Edge is directly across from VT®!
• Fully furnished apartments & townhomes
• Individual leases available & utilities included
• Private bathroom in each bedroom

• Study & collaboration rooms with video conferencing tools
• Internet Café & WiFi available throughout the Clubhouse
• Resident Lounge with pool tables, game room & tanning beds
• Club inspired Fitness & Yoga Centers

Leasing office: (540) 552-EDGE (3343)
651 Toms Creek Road • Blacksburg, VA
theedge@cmgleasing.com • www.cmgleasing.com

All drawings & renderings are for representational purposes only & are subject to change.