

inside

HOKIESPORTS

Vol. 7 No. 11, June 2015 • \$4

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

ATHLETE *of the* YEAR

Irena Sediva

is Inside Hokie Sports' 2014-15 Athlete of the Year following a spring in which she won both the ACC and the NCAA championships in the javelin and broke the school record on four occasions

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Three longtime Tech athletics employees call it a career



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HOKIES' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2014-15

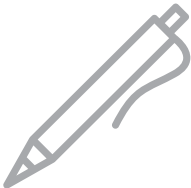
Virginia Tech's success on the field, on the courts, on the mats, in the pool and on the track have been well documented over the years, but the school's student-athletes are getting it done in the classroom as well. These two pages have been dedicated to the Hokies' great work academically for 2014-15, which can be

attributed to their hard work, to the dedication of the coaching staffs and the Student-Athlete Academic Support Services office, and to the contributions of donors, who give the athletics department the resources needed to help these student-athletes be successful in all phases of life.
(Disclaimer: most academic honors for spring sports have not been announced yet.)

NCAA POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

(A \$7,500 award that goes to student-athletes who excel academically and athletically and who are at least in their final year of intercollegiate athletics competition)

Devin Carter, wrestling



SKELTON AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN ATHLETICS

(A \$5,000 scholarship given to a chosen Virginia Tech rising junior, senior or fifth-year male and female student-athlete who has participated in intercollegiate athletics for at least two seasons at Tech and holds an overall grade-point average of 3.40 or better)

Kelsey Mericka, softball
Jon Woodcock, baseball



WEAVER-JAMES-CORRIGAN AWARD

(A \$5,000 postgraduate scholarship from the ACC to those who intend to pursue a graduate degree following completion of their undergraduate requirements)

Christian Beyer, men's basketball
Devin Carter, wrestling
Morgan Latimer, men's swimming and diving

ALL-ACC ACADEMIC TEAMS

(A student-athlete must have earned a 3.00 grade-point average for the previous semester and maintained a 3.00 cumulative average during his/her academic career to be eligible for selection. Spring sports haven't been announced yet)

CROSS COUNTRY Women

Hanna Green
Hilary Krein
Paige Kvartunas

Men

Darren Barlow
Andrew Gaiser
Neil Gourley
Daniel Jaskowak

BASKETBALL Women

Rachel Camp
Vanessa Panousis

Men

Christian Beyer
Will Johnston
Devin Wilson

FOOTBALL

Chuck Clark
David Wang

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Jordan Coburn
Candace Cephers
Shannon Mayrose
Ashley Meier
Murielle Tiernan
Katie Yensen

SOFTBALL

Kelsey Mericka
Michelle Prong

SWIMMING AND DIVING Men

Kyle Butts
Brandon Fiala
Morgan Latimer
Logan Stevens

Women

Kaylea Arnett
Caroline Buscaglia

INDOOR TRACK AND FIELD Men

Darren Barlow
Neil Gourley
Torben Laidig
James Steck
Chris Uhle

Women

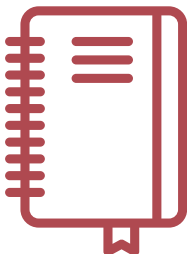
Johnna Dominick
Hanna Green
Paige Kvartunas

VOLLEYBALL

Megan Beckwith
Kathryn Caine
Jordan Fish
Lindsey Owens

WRESTLING

Devin Carter
Jared Haught



CAPITAL ONE ACADEMIC ALL-DISTRICT III SELECTIONS

(An award that recognizes the nation's top student-athletes for their combined performances athletically and in the classroom)

Devin Carter, wrestling
Torben Laidig, track and field
Erik Payne, baseball
Shannon Mayrose, women's soccer
Kelsey Mericka, softball
Michelle Prong, softball
Katie Yensen, women's soccer



NCAA PUBLIC RECOGNITION AWARDS

(An award that goes annually to the sports programs with an Academic Progress Rate in the top 10 percent nationally of that particular sport)

Women's soccer
Golf



CAPITAL ONE ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS

(To be eligible for consideration, a student-athlete must be a varsity starter or key reserve, maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.30, have reached sophomore athletic and academic standings at his/her current institution and be nominated by his/her sports information director)

Devin Carter, wrestling
Erik Payne, baseball





The Donor File

Tom & Joyce Noell

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL:

Golden Hokie

CURRENTLY RESIDES:

Roanoke County, Virginia

GRADUATION YEAR:

1961

FAMILY:

Joyce (wife); Stuart (son, W&M, Class of '92), Dana (daughter, VT, Class of '94) and Amy (daughter, VT, Class of '95). Seven grandchildren (potential future Hokies) – Anna, Katy, Will, Zach, Ben, Abby and Alex.



Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...

A: Anyone who loves and supports Virginia Tech.

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

A: There are many – the 1995 UVa game with the great comeback, the Ohio State game (we went for the trip and came home with a WIN) and last year's VT-UVa game with two of our children and six of our grandchildren. We were cold, but we made it to the winning end!

Q: What caused you to become a fan of Virginia Tech?

A: My dad took me to Victory Stadium in Roanoke for the VPI-VMI Thanksgiving game when I was about 12 years old.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.

A: A perfect day would be to drive up from Roanoke with the fall colors of orange and maroon, tailgate with family and friends, watch the best pregame in America with the Corps, two bands, the team running onto the field to "Enter Sandman" carrying the flags, and then, of course ... a Tech win!

Q: I'm a Hokie Club member because ...

A: If we want to continue our winning traditions, we need to be a part of the winning formula.

Q: My favorite Virginia Tech sports are ...

A: Football and men's and women's basketball.

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

A: We don't have an all-time favorite, but our current favorite is Marshawn Williams because of his interaction with our 7-year-old grandson, Alex, who broke his leg skiing last winter.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech student-athletes from other sports are ...

A: Allan Bristow (men's basketball) and Kelsey Conyers (women's basketball).

Letter from Lu

To the Hokie Nation:

As many of you now know, I will be retiring on June 30, and that date is fast approaching. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your support of the athletics programs and for our student-athletes.

During the past 21 years, we have all watched our facilities grow, the academic and athletic quality of our student-athletes improve and the respect for Virginia Tech athletics nationwide enhanced. You have given generously and consistently to this athletics program and thus have provided outstanding facilities for our teams to train in and compete.

Nowhere is there a more loyal and passionate fan base. Game days in Lane Stadium are memorable, and being there for "Enter Sandman" still raises the hairs on the back of my neck! I cannot tell you how many times I have received compliments from our visiting team's fans about their experience in Lane Stadium. Each time, my pride swells as I hear how well they were treated and what an atmosphere Hokie Nation has created.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with former Athletics Directors David Braine and Jim Weaver and the support they provided to the Hokie Club. Whit Babcock has brought a new management style to Virginia Tech, and I am impressed with his vision and his energy. As most of you know, our office reports to the vice president for development and university relations, with a dotted line to athletics. I am grateful to former President Dr. Charles Steger and to Dr. Elizabeth Flanagan [vice president for development and university relations] for their support of our efforts. New incoming Vice President Charles Phlegar brings a wealth of fundraising experience to his alma mater, and I look for great things from him beginning July 1.

Tomorrow, next week and next month will bring change, as the world of intercollegiate athletics seems to be in constant motion to find the right formula in which to govern and operate. We have the right leadership in place at the university, beginning with President Dr. Tim Sands, to manage change and to position ourselves to meet the challenges that lie ahead. President Sands, Charles Phlegar and Whit Babcock will need your continued support, both financially and in person at games, as this athletics program steps forward to take its rightful place among the nation's best.

In closing, I want to thank my staff, as they have daily displayed their passion, sincerity, commitment and loyalty to Virginia Tech. During my 21 years, they have made Hokie athletics their own personal mission to grow it and to serve our donors with integrity. John Moody and Sharon Linkous served you for 40 and 43 years, respectively. They lived the transition from the Student Aid Association to the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund. The current team today is an outstanding group of people totally committed to serving you and the athletics department. I will be eternally grateful to each one of them for their individual and collective contributions to our team.

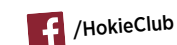
My wife, Brynda, and I plan to stay in Blacksburg, and we look forward to seeing you when you come to campus.

Sincerely,

Lu Merritt

Lu Merritt

Senior Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics



Shuman to help with football’s strength and conditioning

Dr. Mike Gentry, Tech’s associate AD for athletic performance, has juggled his staff, moving former football player Ryan Shuman to help with the strength and conditioning efforts of the football program and hiring Brian Jardine to work with Olympic sports.

The moves were necessitated when Keith Short decided to get out of athletics, taking a job in the private sector. Shuman takes the place of Short and will team with Gentry and Jarrett Ferguson to handle the football squad’s strength and conditioning needs.

“While I hated to see Keith Short leave, his departure created an opportunity for a most deserving and accomplished strength and conditioning coach,” Gentry said of Shuman. “Like Keith, Ryan is a former Hokie center.

Popular former hoops coach passes away

Former Virginia Tech basketball coach Bill Foster, a popular figure for rebuilding the Tech men’s basketball program and taking it to the NIT title in 1995 and the NCAA Tournament in 1996, passed away in late May.

Foster, who was 79, came aboard in 1991 when then-AD Dave Braine hired him to replace Frankie Allen. He went 10-18 in his first two seasons but turned it around in his third season, going 18-10 in 1993-94.

The breakout season came in 1994-95 when a group led by Shawn Smith, Sean Good, Damon

Men’s and women’s hoops tickets on sale

Season ticket renewal applications for the Tech men’s and women’s basketball programs went out on June 8. To ensure priority seat selection, season tickets must be purchased by July 20.

The popular tiered ticket pricing returns this season for men’s basketball, with all season tickets remaining the same price as in 2014-15.

I don’t underestimate the qualities of the position – commitment, physical toughness and intelligence. Having known Ryan as a player and later as a graduate assistant strength and conditioning coach, I have no doubts about him. He has and can still walk it like he talks it, and he has the innate ability not to get rattled.”

Shuman, a three-year starter for the Hokies (2006-08), graduated from Tech in 2008 with a degree in apparel, housing and resource management. He got his master’s in curriculum and instruction in 2012.

Jardine will help with the implementation of strength and conditioning programs for Tech’s Olympic sports, primarily focusing on men’s and women’s track and field, lacrosse, men’s and women’s golf, men’s soccer and men’s tennis.

Carter, Payne named Academic All-Americans

Tech wrestler Devin Carter and baseball standout Erik Payne both received Academic All-America honors as chosen by the College Sports Information Directors of America.

Carter, a three-time All-American on the mat, begins work this fall on his doctoral degree after being accepted in the industrial/organizational psychology program at Tech. The first-team selection on the Division I men’s at-large squad earned his master’s in education with a focus on curriculum and instruction in May.

Carter, a native of Christiansburg, Virginia, is the second academic All-American in Tech wrestling history, and the first to earn the honor twice. Heavyweight Mike Faust was a third-team selection in 2006.

Payne, from Richmond, Virginia, earned second-team honors on the baseball team. He graduated with a degree in finance in May and became just the sixth Tech baseball player to earn academic All-American honors and the first since 2004 when Tom Blaszak was a first teamer. Wayne Jarvis (1970, first team) was the first Hokie, followed by Tony Varbonceour (1975, first), Steve Render (1991, third and 1992, first) and Spencer Harris (2003, second).

Payne led the Hokies with a .343 average and 53 RBIs.

available for \$90 for an adult reserved seat (\$80 for faculty/staff), \$30 for a youth reserved seat, \$70 for an adult general admission season pass and \$25 for a youth general admission season pass.

To renew season tickets for men’s and women’s basketball, please go to: <http://www.hokietickets.com/purl/.VT>



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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

After 40 years, Smith retires as “quiet” legend – but his impact speaks loudly

June 1 marked the end of an era in Virginia Tech athletics, as a leader in the world of athletics communications decided to call it a career. Much like the man, the day slipped away quietly.

On this day, Dave Smith softly flipped his light switch, gently shut his office door, and slowly walked to his car for the final time, retiring after a 40-year career here in the athletics department.

Smith is not a household name among Hokie Nation, though he should be. He was the associate AD for athletics communications, which is just a fancy title for media helper, interview scheduler and record keeper, among other tasks.

He spent the final month of his career fielding calls from colleagues in the profession, former Tech student-athletes and media members whom he's assisted over the years – all of whom admire his longevity and respect his character. He has received many tributes from the athletics department and other career-related organizations over the past few months for his service.

This one is mine.

He will not like this because he never wants the story to be about him. He'll rightly point out that Sharon McCloskey and Lu Merritt, two fine individuals, also are retiring and deserve recognition, and he'd get no argument from me. But those two didn't gamble their sterling reputations on a 24-year-old knucklehead to oversee this department's publication at a time when Tech athletics was launching itself into the national spotlight.

Smith encouraged Jack Williams, then the sports information director, to hire me in 1996. Yes, he knew my dad from their days when both served in the Army reserves, but Smith never would allow friendships to cloud his professional judgment. One learns that quickly when working for him.

His professionalism was matched only by his knowledge of Tech athletics. He knows more about the history of Tech athletics than anyone. Heck, he *lived* a lot of it.

He saw it all – the good, the bad and the ugly. He saw the rise of women's sports here, the days when the Hokies struggled to beat anyone in any sport, the first night game, the NCAA issues of the late 80s, the hiring of Frank Beamer, the shuttling from various conference homes, and ultimately, the rise to prominence.

Not a week went by that Smith didn't relay some story, usually at my coercion. Practically all of the historical-based stories in this publication found their genesis in those stories from Smith.

He spent a career impacting people, not an office. More than 20 individuals began their careers in athletics communications or worked as an intern under him – and today, still remain in the profession. His “tree” extends to places like Alabama, Auburn, West Virginia, Duke, Georgia Tech, Utah and others.

Those under him liked him, and so, too, did Tech's coaches and the media hounds who cover the Hokies. They liked his calm demeanor and his thoughtful, pragmatic approach. He treated all the same, rarely saying a cross word toward or about anyone.


He even struggled to criticize Bill Brill, a former Roanoke Times columnist and longtime Hokie antagonist who passed away in 2011. That's because he thought highly of Jane, Brill's wife, who taught one of his classes at William Fleming High School in Roanoke in the 1960s.

Smith paid his dues, quietly and professionally toiling daily. He worked as an assistant for 23 years before landing the position as the leader of the office. That rarely happens. Athletics is a transient business – people come and go all the time – but he was as solid as a chunk of Hokie stone.

He graduated from here in 1970 and came to work here in 1975, and he never once contemplated leaving. In fact, he said that if they fired him, then he'd get another job – on campus. He embodied the lunch-pail mentality of this department before the lunch pail became, well, the lunch pail.

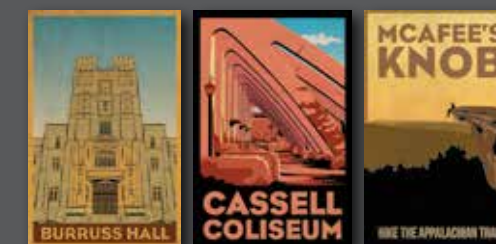
We loved and hated seeing him retire. He and wife Debbie will still remain in Blacksburg. But Hilton Head beckons. Charleston calls. And he told me that they may even do a tour of old Metro Conference stops – Louisville, Memphis, Hattiesburg, New Orleans and others – to visit with some folks and eat some barbecue or ribs. It's the greatest idea ever, one only Smith could imagine.

All this lavish praise of my colleague, mentor and friend will cost me. But I write it anyway. We'll go to lunch, and I'll order him a burger and fries at a local establishment, make sure the waiter/waitress holds the cheese, and adds in a Coors Light. Then I'll ask his forgiveness.

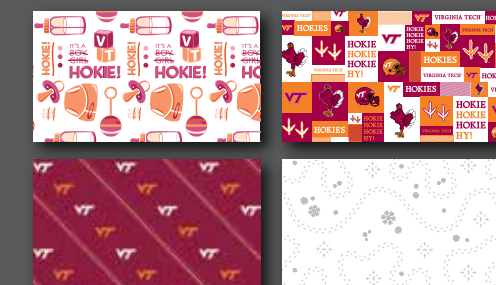
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LETTER *from* WHIT

Greetings Hokie Nation,

I hope that this letter finds each of you doing well and enjoying the summer. We wrapped up competition with our track and field teams at the NCAA Championships in mid-June and will take a month off before our fall sports start practicing in early August.

Before I look back at the 2014-15 academic year, I want to take a minute and thank some very deserving people for their contributions to our athletics department, both recently and over the years. As many of you know, Bill Roth left his position as the “Voice of the Hokies” for the past 27 years to take the same job at UCLA. Also, Dave Smith (associate AD for athletics communications), Sharon McCloskey (senior associate AD and senior woman administrator) and Lu Merritt (senior director of development for intercollegiate athletics) have retired or will be retiring – and all three have worked at least two decades, with Dave retiring after 40 years. These are among the very best in their professions and also among the very best as people, and while we will miss them, we certainly wish them the best in their future endeavors.

I’m very proud of how many of our sports programs performed this past year. Our football team won three of its final four games, including a season-ending victory over Cincinnati in the Military Bowl, and our men’s track and field team and wrestling squad captured ACC titles, giving us 20 since we joined the league.

Also, seven of our teams advanced to NCAA competition, a group that included teams from women’s cross country, men’s golf, women’s soccer, softball, men’s tennis, women’s tennis and wrestling. The women’s soccer team went to the Sweet 16 for the second straight year, and the wrestling squad finished in the top 10 nationally for the third straight season. In addition, several of our swimmers and divers and track and field athletes earned All-America honors at their respective NCAA events.

Individually, Irena Sediva won the national title in the javelin throw, giving the track program its 15th national title. Kaylea Arnett was the ACC Championships’ Most Valuable Diver for the fourth straight year, and after the season, the ACC Diver of the Year for the third time in her career. Devin Carter finished third in his weight class at the NCAA Wrestling Championships, and Trevor Cone was a tri-champion at the ACC Golf Championships. Dave Cianelli and Kevin Dresser were ACC coaches of the year in their sports of track and field and wrestling, respectively. Good stuff by them and many others.

As proud as I am of what our teams accomplished on the fields, courts, mats and tracks, I’m equally as proud of what our student-athletes accomplished in the classroom. Carter won two postgraduate scholarships – one from the ACC and one from the NCAA – and Christian Beyer and Morgan Latimer also won postgraduate scholarships from the ACC. Kelsey Mericka and Jon Woodcock won our Skelton Award for Academic Excellence in Athletics, which is the top honor handed out by our department.

Overall, 50 percent of our student-athletes maintain a cumulative grade-point average of 3.0. Exactly 140 student-athletes made the Dean’s List following the spring semester. Our average cumulative team GPA is 3.06, and 13 of our programs maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better. That’s a testament to the work of our student-athletes, our coaches and our folks working in the Student-Athlete Academic Support Services office. I love that we’re getting it done both in the playing venues and in the classroom. That’s a sign of a healthy, vibrant athletics department.

In looking toward the future, we’re excited about the plans we have on the facilities front. As most of you know by now, our new indoor practice facility is nearly finished and is stunning. This will benefit so many programs, as they will use the building to train during the winter and early part of spring, and it certainly gives us another edge in recruiting, as we attempt to stay ahead of our league counterparts.

We also want to renovate Rector Field House, which would allow us to keep our indoor track up for the entire year, and we want to add a softball hitting facility. In addition, we’d like to make improvements at English Field, the home of our baseball team, and the Burrows-Burleson Tennis Center, the home of our tennis squads. We will need your continued financial support to help some of these plans come to fruition.

On that note, I’d like to thank all of you who have participated in our 110% HOKIE Campaign, a campaign we launched in April to raise money to cover the cost-of-attendance “gap.” Many of you know this by now, but NCAA legislation now allows schools to provide dollars for our student-athletes’ miscellaneous expenses as part of their scholarships. This has created a need to raise an additional \$950,000 each year.



Let me assure you that we – including you – are investing in our student-athletes like never before. In addition to covering the cost-of-attendance gap, we’re providing the best for our student-athletes in nutrition, strength and conditioning, medical care, academic support and leadership development. Our reputation for providing a great student-athlete experience will only help us in recruiting, and thus in competition, down the road. We are preparing “champions for life.”

Let me also assure you that we’re doing everything possible for you – our supporters and fans. Our external team has done a wonderful job of finding ways to make your experiences at our games the best they can possibly be, and I’m excited about their ideas for the 2015-16 year.


You’re going to be hearing more in the coming weeks about our “Twenty4You” initiative. This is a 24-point plan designed to improve the gameday experience at Lane Stadium based on fan feedback following last season. We’re looking at everything from ticketing to parking to concessions and music and much, much more.

In closing, I’m really excited about the direction in which we’re headed. We’ve got good people working here and a strong foundation in place to continue our momentum into the future. We’re doing it the right way, winning with integrity while fully complying with NCAA rules and regulations. Yes, we have challenges, but by being strong together, we can overcome those and meet all our goals.

Our volleyball team and soccer teams start competition in late August, and then our football team opens its season in Lane Stadium on Labor Day night against defending national champion Ohio State. It will be here before you know it – and I look forward to seeing you all there.

Go Hokies!

Whit Babcock

Director of Athletics, Virginia Tech 



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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, Senior Associate AD for Compliance & Governance:

Q: I had a question regarding the NCAA's transfer rules. It used to be that you could transfer to a Division I-AA school without having to sit out a year. Is that still the case? Thank you, Dennis in Blacksburg.

TP: "According to NCAA bylaws, football players who transfer down to the FCS level (former Division I-AA) do not have to sit out a season provided – and this is the key – they have at least two seasons of eligibility left. The NCAA has eliminated the allowing of players to transfer from the FBS to the FCS level to play for just one season. For those who do not know those acronyms, FBS stands for Football Bowl Subdivision, of which Virginia Tech is a part of, while FCS stands for Football Championship Subdivision. Furman, a team that is on the Hokies' schedule this fall, is an example of an FCS team.

"Also, keep in mind there are stipulations. The student-athlete must not have previously transferred from another four-year school, and he or she would have to have been academically eligible at the previous school."

Q: I've been meaning to check in and ask you about the situation with the Baylor player who was homeless, and the NCAA ruled him permanently ineligible for accepting housing. That seems a little harsh. Was there no leeway in this situation? Thanks, Chris in Radford.

TP: "This is a reference to Silas Nacita, a former walk-on running back at Baylor who was ruled permanently ineligible by the university for accepting benefits from an acquaintance.

"It's important to note that the NCAA wasn't involved in this case. Baylor ruled the young man ineligible probably because the NCAA bylaw (Bylaw 16.02.3) on accepting benefits is pretty specific – a student-athlete cannot accept a benefit that is not generally available to other students or their relatives or friends and/or to a particular segment of the student body. When Nacita received free housing – and also payment for food – he violated this bylaw.

"Nacita also misled Baylor's compliance office – which had warned him of its concerns when hearing about the situation. He told the compliance office that his family had close ties with the family helping him, but he was only close with one member of the family. The other family members were just acquaintances who were helping foot the bill.


"It was a tough lesson for him to learn, but a good one for all current and future student-athletes. Please check with your school's compliance office before accepting anything – and then listen to what is being told to you."

Q: If one of our football players wanted to buy insurance to protect himself and his future earnings, could the athletics department pay for it? I think I've heard

of other schools doing this. Thank you, Heather in Blacksburg.

TP: "The stories you've probably been hearing are centered on the NCAA's Student Assistance Fund. This fund has existed for nearly 20 years, and is one way that NCAA revenue is sent back out to its member-schools through the conference offices. The fund was created to directly assist student-athletes in meeting financial needs that arise in conjunction with being a college student and/or participating in collegiate athletics, with priority given to those student-athletes with demonstrated financial need. For example, if there is a death in the family, a school can pay for a student-athlete's flight to return home for the funeral out of this fund.

"There is a short list of prohibited uses for the money (e.g. student-athlete scholarships during the fall and spring, salaries and benefits for athletics department staff, capital improvements, stipends), but a great deal of discretion is given to the conferences – and by extension, the schools – to determine how this money is used.

"More recently, some schools have chosen to use this fund to pay insurance premiums for student-athletes, as in your example. Florida State, in fact, bought loss-of-value insurance for Jameis Winston out of this fund." 



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SEDIVA SAVES *Best for Last*

Tech sophomore sets school and ACC record on final throw to win the national championship in the javelin

by Jimmy Robertson

Irena Sediva had dominated the competition all season in the javelin throw, but the favorite to win the national championship found herself on the brink of getting beaten with one opportunity left in her season.

Sediva, though, saved her best for last, as she uncorked a school- and ACC-record toss to win the event at the 2015 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships held at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon, on June 10-13.

With one throw remaining, Sediva, a sophomore from Pribram, Czech Republic, found herself in second place. Her first throw of 188 feet, 3 inches (57.39 meters) in the preliminary rounds was her best one, and Texas Tech’s Hannah Carson bested that mark on her third attempt with a mark of 189 feet, 4 inches (57.72 meters).

Sediva trailed going into her sixth and final attempt.

“I didn’t say much,” said Greg Jack, Tech’s associate head coach and throws coach. “I just

told her to relax. She had a fantastic series, and it was just a matter of when the big one was going come, and it came. I wasn’t really worried.”

On her final toss, she heaved it 192 feet, 9 inches, breaking her school and ACC record of 192 feet, 5 inches that she set at the 2015 ACC Outdoor Championships held in Tallahassee, Florida. Carson had one throw remaining, but she came up short, thus giving Sediva the national title.

“At this meet, people come here and have a career day,” said Dave Cianelli, Tech’s director of cross country and track and field. “That’s what happened with the young lady from Texas Tech, and that’s what you expect. Irena had to come through on that last throw, and she did that.

“It was a great performance. To win it was really special for her because the competition is so good now. People competing at this meet are going to be Olympians, so everything has to go perfectly to win.”

The championship marked Tech’s 15th

individual crown as a school – all in track and field. Sediva became the seventh Hokie to win a national title and just the third female. Queen Harrison won three (one indoor, two outdoor) in 2010, and Dorotea Habazin won the hammer throw crown in 2011.

Twelve of those 15 championships have come under the coaching of Jack.

“It’s the first time one of my athletes won the javelin,” Jack said. “That’s special in itself right there.”

VIRGINIA TECH'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONS		
Athlete	Event	Year
Spyridon Jullien	weight throw	2005
Spyridon Jullien	hammer throw	2005
Spyridon Jullien	weight throw	2006
Spyridon Jullien	hammer throw	2006
Marcel Lomnický	hammer throw	2009
Queen Harrison	60-meter hurdles	2010
Queen Harrison	400-meter hurdles	2010
Queen Harrison	100-meter hurdles	2010
Alexander Ziegler	hammer throw	2011
Dorotea Habazin	hammer throw	2011
Marcel Lomnický	weight throw	2012
Alexander Ziegler	hammer throw	2012
Alexander Ziegler	weight throw	2013
Tomas Kruzliak	hammer throw	2013
Irena Sediva	javelin	2015

Behind Sediva and middle distance runner Hanna Green, the Tech women’s team finished tied for 15th in the team standings with 16 points. That marked the best finish by the Tech women’s team since 2010 when the women finished fifth.

Green, a sophomore from Latrobe, Pennsylvania, finished in third place in her specialty – the 800-meter run. She finished the race in a school-record time of 2 minutes, 1.17 seconds, and earned six points toward the team total.

Green stayed with the lead pack throughout her race. Despite a big kick, she was unable to overtake Oregon’s Raevyn Rogers or Claudia Saunders of Stanford. Rogers, a freshman, won the event with a time of 1:59.71. Saunders was less than a second behind her.

“I thought Hanna was outstanding,” Cianelli said. “She controlled her heat in the preliminaries and really ran like a pro. In the finals, the girl from Clemson [Natoya Goule, the indoor national champion] took it out really fast, but Hanna stayed in good position. She was in position to win.

“Hanna has the ingredients to potentially vie for an Olympic spot. She’s just coming into her own, and she’s serious about it. She does all the little things. That’s what you want as a coach.”

On the men’s side, the Tech men’s team finished tied for the 37th position with seven points, getting points from two athletes.

Tomas Kruzliak finished in fourth place in the hammer throw on the first day of the competition, earning first-team All-America honors. On Kruzliak’s second throw in the preliminaries, the junior from Nitra, Slovakia, heaved the hammer a distance of 224 feet, 8 inches (68.48 meters), which placed him in the top nine and got him three more throws in the finals.

After some shifting following the first two throws of the final round, Kruzliak found himself in fifth place with one final throw. It was the final one that was the best, as Kruzliak hit a mark of 226 feet, 8 inches (69.10 meters) to regain fourth place.

Kruzliak has now earned All-America honors six times in his career – at every NCAA indoor and outdoor championship event in which he has competed. He was the 2013 national champion in the hammer throw.

“Tomas has had an up-and-down year, but he threw his best at the NCAAs,” Cianelli said. “We’re very happy with his performance. That event has gotten a lot better. What he threw as a freshman, when he won the national title, is now fourth or fifth. But Tomas has another year, and I’m optimistic he can move up the ranks.”

The other point scorer for Tech was Thomas Curtin, a junior from Leesburg, Virginia. Curtin, who won the ACC title in the 5,000-meter run, led much of the race at the NCAA Championships, but he faded with a few laps remaining. Still, he used his powerful kick to come in seventh place with a time of 13:52.11 and earn first-team All-America honors. Edward Cheserek of Oregon won the event with a time of 13:48.67.

The All-America effort marked Curtin’s third of the year. He earned All-America honors in the 3,000 and the 5,000 during the indoor season.

“He’s come so far, and he’s just starting to realize his talent,” Cianelli said of Curtin. “He has



Thomas Curtin earned three All-America honors this year, including one after finishing in seventh in the 5,000-meter run at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships. His other two - in the 3,000 and 5,000 - came at the NCAA’s indoor meet this past March.


the goods to be at the next level. He’s humble, and he works hard. You can’t ask for more than that. That’s what you’re looking for when you’re recruiting.”

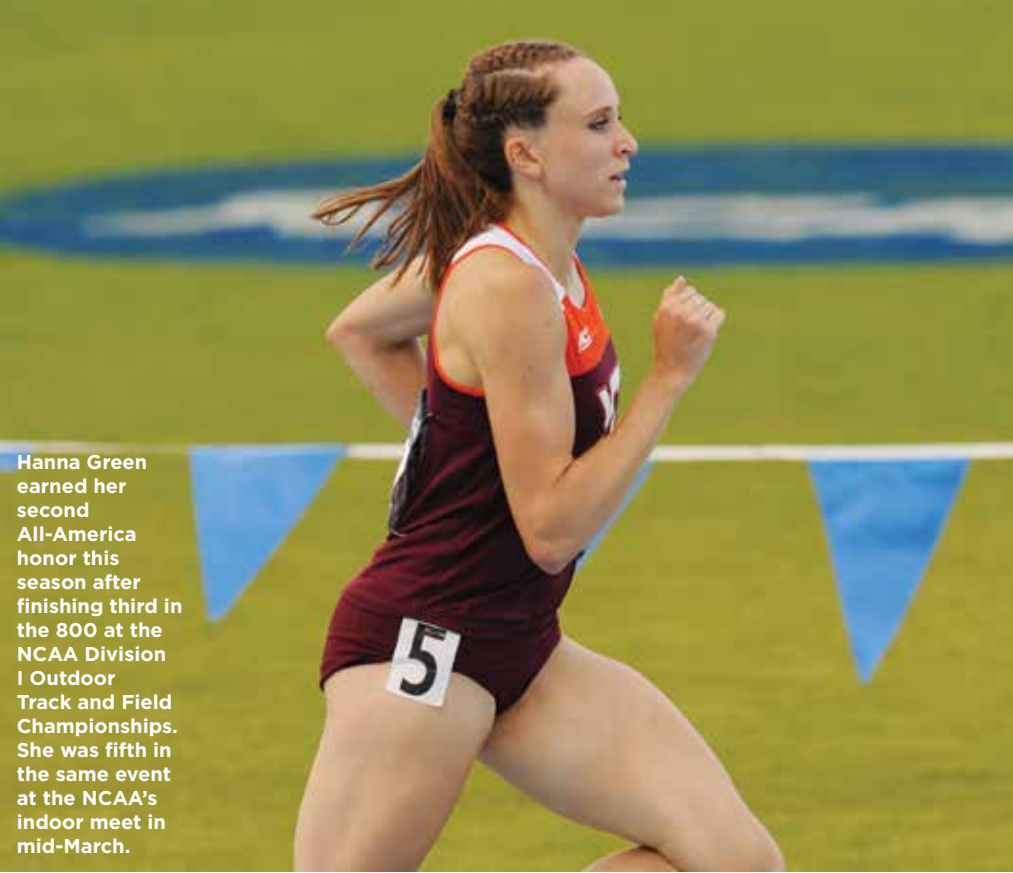
Tech sent five other student-athletes to the NCAA Championships. On the women’s side, Sabine Kopplin finished in 15th place in the javelin with a throw of 155 feet, 3 inches (47.32 meters), and Amanda Smith failed to qualify for the finals in the 1,500, finishing in 18th overall with a time of 4:20.52. On the men’s side, Stuart Robertson was 17th in the 3,000-meter steeplechase, Marek Barta fouled on all three throws in the discus and Brad Johnson did not

make the opening height in the pole vault.

Oregon swept the team titles at the meet. The Ducks won the women’s national title with 59 points – nine clear of Kentucky. Their men’s team scored 85 points, easily outdistancing Florida (56).

As for the Hokies, they return a lot for the 2015-16 season, thus creating high expectations.

“I’m optimistic about our future,” Cianelli said. “Except for Amanda Smith, everyone who made the nationals is coming back, and we’ve signed the highest quality recruiting class, on paper, that we’ve ever signed. It could be a banner year for us next year. We’re looking forward to it.” 



Hanna Green earned her second All-America honor this season after finishing third in the 800 at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships. She was fifth in the same event at the NCAA’s indoor meet in mid-March.

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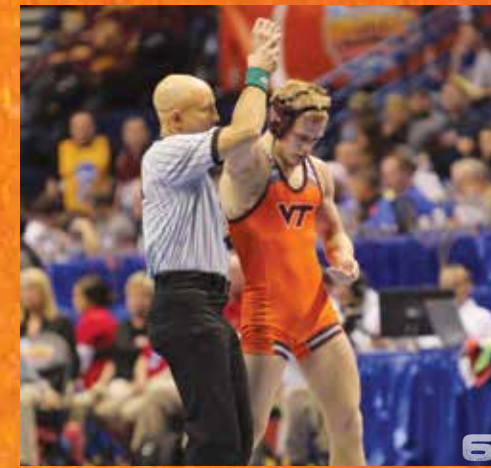
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TECH'S TOP 10 OF 2014-15

Here are the top 10 moments of the 2014-15 academic year as compiled by the magazine staff, with help from several in the athletics communications office:

by Jimmy Robertson



Football team stuns No. 8 Ohio State in Columbus

Michael Brewer threw two touchdown passes, Tech's defense recorded seven sacks and three interceptions, and Donovan Riley returned an interception 63 yards for a touchdown with 46 seconds left to lift the Hokies to a 35-21 victory over the Buckeyes in front of 107,517 fans at Ohio Stadium.

At No. 8, Ohio State marked the highest-ranked opponent that the Hokies had beaten on the road. Tech's win snapped Ohio State's 64-game home winning streak against non-conference competition.

Sediva wins NCAA championship

Irena Sediva trailed going into her last attempt in the javelin at the 2015 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships, but the sophomore from the Czech Republic made her last throw her best one, tossing the javelin a school- and ACC-record 192 feet, 9 inches. Texas Tech's Hannah Carson, the leader entering the sixth round, could not top that on her final throw, thus enabling Sediva to win the national championship.

The title marked the 15th individual national title won by the Tech track and field programs. She became the seventh Tech student-athlete to win a national title and just the third female.

Largely because of her title, the Tech women's team finished tied for 15th at the meet.

Tech men win ACC indoor track crown

The Tech men's track and field team won four gold medals on the final day of the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships and claimed the league's crown, edging Florida State by 15 points.

With the team race tightening on the final day, the Hokies needed strong performances from Thomas Curtin and Darren Barlow, and both came through in a big way. Curtin passed Syracuse's Martin Hehir on the final lap of the 3,000-meter run and went on to win with an ACC meet record time of 7 minutes, 52.92 seconds. Barlow finished the race in fourth place, and the 15 points all but clinched the team title for the Hokies.

The championship marked the third ACC indoor title for the program and gave the university its 20th overall since Tech joined the league.

Baseball squad sweeps No. 1 UVA

The Hokies opened ACC home play in thrilling fashion, sweeping then-No. 1 Virginia in a three-game series at English Field. Tech won two games by a run and the third by two runs.

The Hokies won the opener 2-1 when Brendon Hayden drew a bases-loaded walk in the ninth inning. In the second game, Tech relief pitcher Luke Scherzer struck out a Virginia batter with the bases loaded in the top of the ninth to seal a 3-1 victory.

In the final game, Alex Perez hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the eighth inning, and the Hokies swept their in-state rival in the regular season for the first time since 1999 when the series was two games. The last time the Hokies won three regular-season games over the Cavaliers was in 1987.

Men's tennis shocks No. 2 Duke

In arguably the biggest win in Virginia Tech men's tennis history, the Hokies accomplished the improbable without their best player.

Tech lost the doubles point, and in doing so, Amerigo Contini – the team's No. 1 player – hurt himself, leaving the Hokies short-handed heading into the singles matches. They rallied, though, with Florian Nicoud and Aaron Gomez recording easy victories and Andreas Bjerrehus stunning the No. 8 player in the nation, Nicolas Alvarez.

Tech's Edoardo Tessaro beat Bruno Semenzato to clinch the match for the Hokies, who also got wins from Hunter Koontz and Joao Monteiro.

The singles sweep gave them a 6-1 victory and sparked them on their way to one of the best seasons in school history. They made their ninth straight NCAA trip and finished the season with a 20-5 record (10-2 in the ACC).

Carter closes career with strong finish

Devin Carter, maybe the greatest wrestler in the history of Tech's program, was beaten in a quarterfinal match at the NCAA Wrestling Championships, but rallied to win four straight matches in the consolation round to earn All-America honors and finish in third place at 141 pounds. The finish was tied for the second-best finish in program history – Carter claimed second place a year ago and Brandon Glover came in third place at 130 pounds in 1959.

Carter ended up being a three-time All-American and a four-time ACC champion in his career.

Women's tennis with NCAA win

The Virginia Tech women's tennis team, which enjoyed one of its best seasons ever, earned an at-large berth to the NCAA Division I Women's Tennis Championships – its first NCAA appearance in 15 years.

The Hokies then recorded a 4-2 win over an 18-6 Long Beach State squad in a first-

round match played at Marks Stadium on the University of Southern California's campus. The win marked the second NCAA tournament win in program history and the first one on the road.

The Hokies won the doubles point to grab a 1-0 lead over the 49ers, and then Francesca Fusinato and Illinca Stoica won in singles to put the team within a point of victory. Elena Cerezo-Codina clinched the match with a 6-3, 7-6 (5) win over Julie Gerard.

Tech finished 17-10 overall and 7-7 in ACC action this past season.

Volleyball with upset of No. 12 Illinois

The Virginia Tech volleyball team was just 3-6 at the time it took on then-No. 12 Illinois in an early September tournament in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and the Hokies dropped the first two sets and trailed 13-8 in the third set.

But Tech responded in improbable fashion, coming back to win the third set 25-22 and then winning the fourth set 25-19. In the final set, Tech led 14-13 before LaTasha Samson-Akpan recorded a kill that gave the Hokies the point they needed for the win.

The Hokies finished the season with a 17-14 overall record.


Wrestlers win ACC dual meet title

The ACC presents two team championships in the sport of wrestling – the dual-meet crown and then the title at the ACC Championships. The Hokies claimed the dual-meet championship on Valentine's Day with a 22-15 win over Duke at Cassell Coliseum, giving the school its 19th ACC team title (at the time) since joining the league. The Hokies went 5-0 against ACC competition during the regular season.

Against the Blue Devils in the final home match of the season, Joey Dance recorded a technical fall at 125 pounds and Zach Epperly had one at 174 pounds to lead the way. Devin Carter, Nick Brascetta, Chad Strube and Ty Walz also won to help the program to its third ACC title.

Vincent sets course record at NCAA regional

Tech golfer Scott Vincent's career ended at an NCAA regional in Noblesville, Indiana, but not before he did something special.

In the second round, Vincent shot a 6-under-par 66, tying the course record and setting a new record for a competitive round at Sagamore Golf Club, the site of the regional. He followed his 6-under score with a 4-under-par 68 on the final day and finished in fourth place overall in the individual competition. 



Dave
Smith

Retirement CALLS FOR TRIO

of Athletics
Department
Employees

Dave Smith, Sharon McCloskey
and Lu Merritt have combined to
work nearly 100 years at Tech

by Jimmy Robertson

He held the yellowed sheet of paper delicately in his hands, knowing full well that this was a treasured relic.

It was the original contract that called for the construction of Miles Stadium. For those unfamiliar with the venue, Miles Stadium served as the home of the Virginia Tech football team beginning in the late 1920s. It was razed in the 1960s following the construction of Lane Stadium.

Dave Smith found similar treasurers, as he cleaned his office for the final time. There was the 1972 sports information office budget, Bruce Smith’s 1983 All-America certificate and several magazines with Michael Vick on the cover. There were photos, including a spectacular one of former two-sport standout John Rivers grabbing a rebound and a black-and-white gem of former ticket office manager Tom McNeer, a beloved figure who passed away suddenly in 2000.

Smith carefully placed these things in proper places, his final tasks after having worked nearly 40 years in the Tech athletics department.

Officially, his title was associate athletics director for athletics communications, but he wore many hats and perhaps became best known as the “historian” of Tech athletics.

Smith is not the only longtime departmental employee calling it a career this month. Two other popular icons – Sharon McCloskey and Lu Merritt – also have made decisions to retire. McCloskey’s last day was June 5; Merritt’s is June 30.

These three treasures take with them nearly 100 years of combined experience in working in Tech athletics. Replacing them will not be easy.

Smith never wanted to work anywhere else. But it took him a few years after he graduated from Tech to find his way back to Blacksburg.

A 1970 graduate, he had no idea what he wanted to do when he received his diploma. The Roanoke, Virginia, native just knew he wanted to work at Virginia Tech and possessed an interest in sports.

“Someone recommended that I go to the State Employment bureau and talk to someone down there,” Smith said. “I talked to this lady, and she asked me a few questions. She asked me, ‘What do you like?’ and I said, ‘Sports.’ I told her I was

an English major and that I liked to write.

“She told me there was an intern position at the Roanoke World News working for Bob McClelland. It was part time, and you worked on weekends. She set me up with an interview.”

Smith got the job, working as an intern for a year. He covered high school sports and also the programs at Ferrum and VMI. A public relations specialist at Ferrum pitched to him the idea of starting a sports information office there, and he wound up becoming the school’s first sports information director – while also living in one of the dorms and serving as a dorm advisor.

He stayed in that role for a year before getting back into the newspaper business. He took a job working for the Franklin County News Post, covering mostly Ferrum and the local high schools.

During his time both at Ferrum and with the newspaper, he never missed an opportunity to come to Tech. He got to know Wendy Weisend, Virginia Tech’s sports information director, and after a member of his staff, Wayne Block, left to take a job at Christopher Newport, Weisend hired Smith in August of 1975.

“I think Bob McClelland set the seed, and Wendy kept in touch with me,” Smith said. “I went with the Ferrum teams whenever they played in Blacksburg. I guess I made enough of an impression. I think he knew I was a Tech guy and really wanted to work there.”

That started a nearly 40-year career in athletics communications in which he kept statistics, produced game programs, compiled game notes, wrote media guides and game recaps, set up interviews of players and coaches for the media and served as a liaison with Tech’s Hall of Fame committee, along with many other duties. He worked as an assistant for 23 years before being promoted to top spot after Jack Williams retired in 1998. He oversaw the office for the final 17 years of his career.

To put the longevity of his career in perspective, Smith started during a time period in which Tech did not have women’s sports. He worked for six athletics directors (Frank Moseley, Bill Dooley, Dutch Baughman, Dave Braine, Jim Weaver and Whit Babcock). He worked during a time in which Tech participated in seven different conferences – Metro, Colonial Athletic Association (wrestling only), BIG EAST (football only), Atlantic 10, BIG EAST (all sports except for wrestling), Eastern Wrestling League (wrestling only) and the ACC.

“I don’t know that I ever thought about it in that timeframe,” Smith said of his nearly 40 years. “I didn’t look that far ahead, but I knew that this was where I wanted to be. I never once thought I’d leave. I thought if I couldn’t make this work, I’d find something else, but this is where I’d like to stay.”

Smith retires as one of the most respected individuals in the profession. The College Sports

Information Directors of America honored Smith with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual convention in Orlando, Florida, on June 15. The Virginia Sports Information Directors presented him with a Distinguished Service Award in 2013.

Smith and his wife, Debbie, a math instructor at Tech, plan on remaining in Blacksburg for the foreseeable future, while mixing in vacations to Charleston, South Carolina, and Hilton Head, South Carolina, and trips to concerts to watch their favorite bands.

“I’ll miss seeing the people every day,” he said. “And just being a part of everything that went on, from the first women’s programs, the beginning of night games, the beginning of us being on TV, all the controversy with Bruce Smith and the investigation and Coach [Bill] Dooley being fired, and getting into a conference and then a football conference ... there have been so many things.

“It’s been a very eventful 40 years. I couldn’t ask for more. I was blessed to be here and be a part of it. And to do it at the place I wanted to be and love, that makes it extra special.”

McCloskey believes in making a plan and sticking to it.

A few years ago, she told then-AD Weaver that she planned to retire in 2015. She never waived from that plan.

“I’ve been telling people that for years,” McCloskey said, laughing. “I’ve always prepared

Continued on page 22



Sharon
McCloskey



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IHS extra | Retirement Calls for Trio *Continued from page 21*

in my line of thinking that I wanted to retire early. I didn't want to be here when I'm 70 years old and still doing the same thing."

McCloskey retires as one of the school's greatest success stories ever. The Falls Church, Virginia, native worked on the grounds crew as an undergraduate at Tech (1975-79) – helping to re-sod the turf at Lane Stadium at one point – and went on to become the No. 2 person in the athletics department, receiving special recognition in 2012 when the department inducted her into the school's Hall of Fame.

McCloskey got a full-time job in the department in 1984 when she was hired as the football office receptionist. From there, she rose up the ranks to recruiting secretary and then senior woman administrator. In 1988, she became the first woman in college athletics to hold the position of recruiting coordinator at the Division I level.

As the recruiting coordinator, she proved to be an innovator, changing schedules for official recruiting visits to make academics the focal point of the visit. She arranged for prospects to meet with professors, department heads and key figures during their trips to campus.

Then-AD Dave Braine named McCloskey an assistant AD in 1992 and promoted her in 1995 to senior associate AD. She served as the interim AD when Braine left for the AD position in Georgia Tech in 1997.

She tried to get the job on a permanent basis, but then-president Dr. Paul Torgersen and a search committee decided to hire Weaver. Under normal circumstances, that would have made for an awkward situation for her and Torgersen, but McCloskey refused to let it be awkward.

"I remember standing in the tunnel at a basketball game, and it was like he [Torgersen] wanted to talk to me, but he didn't," McCloskey said. "I went over to him and said, 'You know, we're still friends. Just because I didn't get the job doesn't mean I'm not going to be your friend.' He gave me the biggest hug.

"Ever since then, we were great friends. He was such a good guy to everyone."

McCloskey became a hero to her fellow employees and Tech's student-athletes when she twice beat non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, the last coming two years ago. She underwent a stem-cell transplant in early 2013, and while her left leg gives her trouble, making it hard to get around sometimes, she otherwise feels great.

Even though she retired, McCloskey won't be far from Virginia Tech. She oversaw the renovation of a home she purchased at Claytor Lake, a roughly 30-minute drive from campus, and will enjoy some down time there. She also will be helping with the Hokies' Monogram Club, a perfect role for her considering her popularity with Tech's former student-athletes.

"It's not like I'll never be back," she said. "When I come back and work for the Monogram Club, it's going to be fun. I enjoy those people and want to do a good job for them.

"I'm excited about sitting back and seeing what happens. I'll always be a Hokie ... I'll always support the Hokies. I just don't feel like I have to be in the thick of it now."

More than two years ago, Merritt and Weaver were having an offline conversation, and at that point, Merritt told Weaver that he planned on retiring in 2015 – the same year that Weaver planned on retiring. Weaver's health forced him to retire early, but Merritt stayed aboard and stuck with his plan.

At the age of 70 now, Merritt has other things he wants to do with his life.

"I had it in my mind to retire at 70 and my wife retired last year," he said. "I wanted to do some things, so I just decided I was going to stick with that time period.

"I think, too, that this is a young man's business. You've got to have a lot of energy, and you have to work a lot of hours. I don't think I've ever worked a 40-hour week here, but I accepted that, and I like it. I've loved every minute of my 21 years. But age 70, I want to do some other things with my life. I'd like to think we've left the Athletic Fund in better position than when we started with it. It just made a lot of sense to me to go ahead and stick with my plan."

Merritt, a Roanoke, Virginia, native, played tennis at Tech and graduated in 1968. He served a 14-month tour in Vietnam after graduation before returning to Southwest Virginia and landing a job with a Roanoke bank. He came back to Blacksburg in 1984 to oversee that bank's New River Valley region.

In 1994, he decided to apply for the position as the leader of the athletics development office. That position became vacant when Mike Carroll left to take another job on campus.

"I had been a Hokie Rep, and I thought, 'I can do that,'" Merritt said. "So I applied for the job. Fortunately, I got an interview, and I was hired. I had 23 years there [with the bank], and it'll be 21 years here this month. I've had two different careers, but two very enjoyable careers."

Merritt's ability to build relationships, honed from years of working at the bank and being a Hokie Rep, served him well. Being a graduate and a former student-athlete also helped.

Over the course of Merritt's career at Tech, the scope of athletics fundraising has grown by more than 600 percent. Contributions to the Hokie Club averaged a little more than \$3.3 million between fiscal years 1990 and 1994. By comparison, such contributions averaged nearly \$23.7 million between fiscal years 2010 and 2014.

Major projects on which Merritt played a key fundraising role included expansions to Lane


Stadium and construction of the Hahn-Hurst Basketball Practice Center, Schott Media Center, football locker room facility, and the recently constructed indoor practice facility.

"I'm going to miss the donors," Merritt said. "I'm going to miss the student-athletes. I'm going to miss my staff. I'm going to miss being around things. You're in the middle of things. You're in the planning stages of things and the messaging and developing. But honestly, I know it's time to step away. You have to do it at some point in time. I'm comfortable with that."

Merritt and wife Brynda plan on staying in Blacksburg. He wants to keep working on his golf game, take in a few summer concerts and continue attending Tech sporting events.

"I've enjoyed the fun part of those things and all the wonderful people," he said. "On the professional side, we did it right. We tried to lift what we do up a little higher, and we enjoyed the games and things that came with it.

"I'd like to think we added a little bit to the equation."

All three of these individuals have. Their contributions will not be forgotten. More importantly, the character and professionalism in which they performed their jobs will not be either. 

*Lu
Merritt*




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ATHLETE —of the— YEAR

IRENA SEDIVA

SO. • PRIBRAM, CZECH REPUBLIC

Irena Sediva simply dominated the competition this season in her specialty, the javelin throw. So it's hard to believe that Dave Cianelli, Tech's director of track and field and cross country, and Greg Jack, the Hokies' throws coach, weren't quite sure what they were getting when they convinced Sediva to come to Blacksburg out of the Czech Republic in 2013.

"Greg first saw her at the European Under-23 Championships, and she wasn't throwing very well," Cianelli said. "But Greg saw potential in her, and he talked to her about coming to the States and competing. She decided to take a chance. It's worked out well."

Indeed.

Competing for Tech for the first time, Sediva set the school record in her first collegiate meet this spring and then broke it on three other occasions, the final time coming on a throw that helped her win the national championship at the 2015 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships held June 10-13 in Eugene, Oregon.

As a result of her outstanding season, the sophomore from Pribram, Czech Republic, is Inside Hokie Sports' Athlete of the Year.

Track and field athletes have received the magazine's Athlete of the Year honor nine times since the publication started naming an athlete of the year in 1995. Sediva becomes just the fifth female to be named, joining Katie Ollendick, Queen Harrison, Dorotea Habazin and Angela Tincher.

Previous winners include Devin Carter, Erick Green, Alexander Ziegler, Tincher, Spyridon Jullien, Marcel Lomnický, Habazin, Harrison, Kevin Jones, Bryant Matthews, Lee Suggs, André Davis, Corey Moore, Ollendick, Jim Druckenmiller and Cornell Brown, who was the inaugural recipient.

Sediva's career started with a bang, as she set the school record in the javelin in her first collegiate meet. Competing in the Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays in Austin, Texas, on March 27, she threw the javelin 188 feet, 2 inches, besting teammate Eva Vivod's previous mark (186 feet, 4 inches).

A week later, Sediva not only broke her own record, but set an ACC record when she threw the javelin 190 feet, 4 inches, at the Florida Relays held in Gainesville, Florida. She beat the previous ACC record of 188 feet, 3 inches, set by Virginia's Ann Crouse in 1998.


Sediva won the event at the Florida Relays and followed it with a win at the Tennessee Challenge before competing in the ACC Championships held in Tallahassee, Florida. At that meet, she broke her own school and ACC record, while also breaking the ACC Championships record and the facility record with a throw of 192 feet, 5 inches.

Sediva continued her dominance at the NCAA East Regional, posting a winning mark of 185 feet, 8 inches. That set up her run to the national title in Eugene.

She trailed at the NCAA Championships going into her sixth and final attempt, but she responded with yet another record toss. This one went 192 feet, 9 inches and ultimately gave her the title.

"We knew coming out of the Florida Relays that she was good, and that she would continue to get better," Cianelli said. "She's going to continue to improve. We're going to have her for two more seasons, and I think she can be a collegiate record holder. She's just so consistent. That just shows how solid her technique is."

Sediva isn't far from a collegiate record. Former Indiana standout Irina Kharun threw the javelin 202 feet, 10 inches in 2003.

Sediva has two more years at Tech. Who knows? A little more strength and a little more fine tuning, and maybe she could challenge that mark. For sure, barring injury, she'll be in the hunt for future national titles. 

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Virginia Tech baseball's "Ironman" saved his best for last, as his final season with the Hokies was the best of his four-year career. He left Blacksburg with seven school records and led the team in six offensive categories during the 2015 season, helping the team back to the ACC postseason tournament.

Entering the year, **Alex Perez** was a career .239 hitter, but he exploded at the plate in 2015, posting a .322 average and leading the team in runs scored (56), triples (7) and walks (40), while also setting career highs in practically every other offensive category. He had a team-long 18-game hitting streak and reached in a career-best 32 straight games, which only ended because the season was over.

His 224 consecutive starts is tied for the most in the baseball program's history, while he became the first baseball player to start in every game of his career, and he joined former softball player Charisse Mariconda (249) as the only Tech athletes to start and play in every game of their careers (minimum 200 games).

His defining moment may have been when he hit a two-run home run in the bottom of the eighth frame on Sunday against then-No. 1 Virginia that turned a one-run deficit into a 6-5 victory and finished off a sweep of the Cavaliers.

In June, Perez was one of four Hokies chosen in the 2015 MLB draft. 

ATHLETE
of the
YEAR
BASEBALL

ALEX
PEREZ

SR. • MIAMI, FLORIDA

ATHLETE
of the
YEAR
SOFTBALL

KYLIE
MCGOLDRICK


SR. • STRATFORD, NEW JERSEY

Kylie McGoldrick has been a model of consistency – and greatness – since arriving at Tech in 2011, and this past season was simply a microcosm of her first three seasons.

McGoldrick started all 57 games for the Hokies this season – the only Tech player to do so – and she played a huge role in helping the team to its fourth straight NCAA appearance. She finished the year ranked tied for the team lead in doubles (12) and RBIs (44), and she led the team with a .463 on-base percentage. Her 52 hits ranked tied for second on the team, and she was second on the team in both slugging percentage (.556) and stolen bases (11). In the field, she committed just seven errors while playing mostly at second base.

In six games this season, she drove in three runs or more. Her best game came early in the season in the Hokies' 18-0 rout of Seton Hall when she drove in four. Her best ACC game came in the series opener against Louisville in which she drove in three in the Hokies' 4-2 win. She had 14 multi-RBI games this season, a team best. Her six game-winning hits were also a team best.

Tech was the No. 7 seed at the ACC Championship, but nearly pulled the upset of No. 2 seed North Carolina. McGoldrick's two-run double in the fifth inning tied the game at 2, but the Tar Heels scored in the bottom of the sixth to win 3-2.

McGoldrick earned second-team All-ACC honors following the regular season – the third time she made the All-ACC team. She also made the Mid-Atlantic All-Region team as selected by the NFCA. That selection marked the third time she has made that team as well. 

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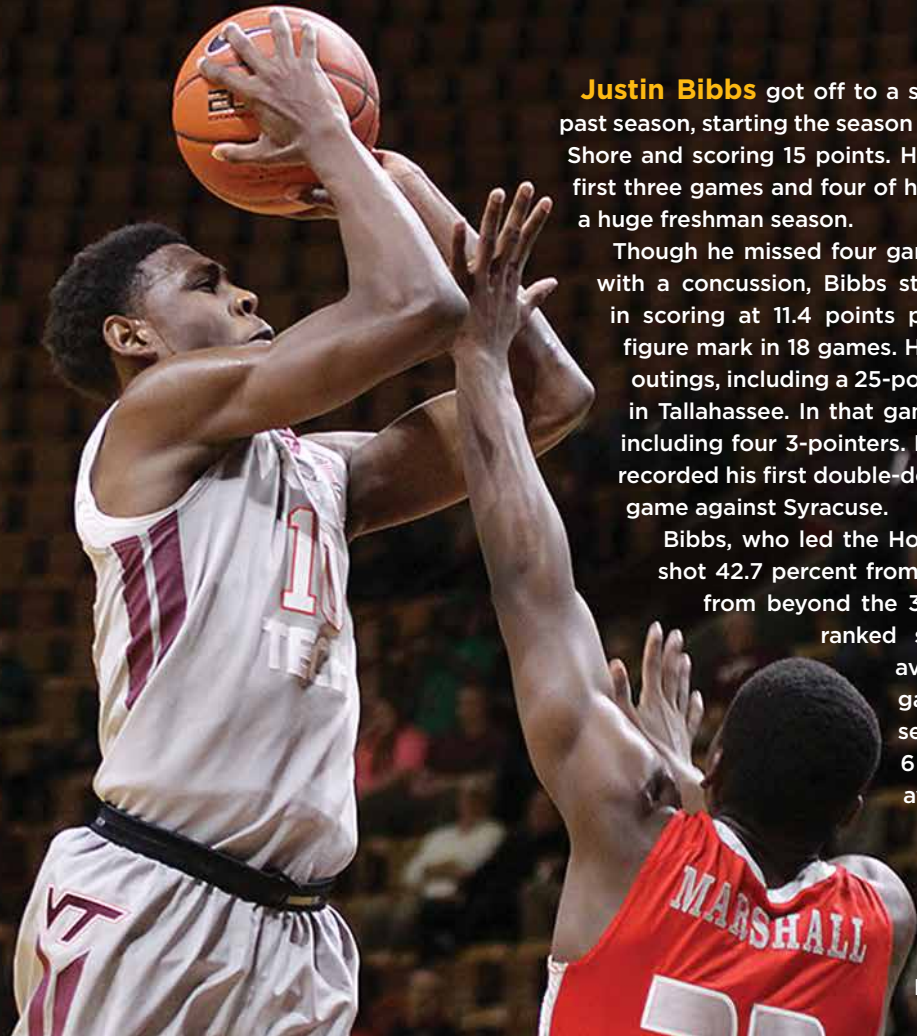
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Justin Bibbs got off to a sizzling debut for the Hokies this past season, starting the season opener against Maryland-Eastern Shore and scoring 15 points. He scored in double figures in his first three games and four of his first five, and went on to enjoy a huge freshman season.

Though he missed four games midway through the season with a concussion, Bibbs still finished second on the team in scoring at 11.4 points per game, reaching the double-figure mark in 18 games. He scored 19 points or more in six outings, including a 25-point outburst against Florida State in Tallahassee. In that game, he hit 8 of 17 from the floor, including four 3-pointers. In the game prior to that one, he recorded his first double-double with a 22-point, 11-rebound game against Syracuse.

Bibbs, who led the Hokies in scoring on six occasions, shot 42.7 percent from the floor, including 41.3 percent from beyond the 3-point arc. His 3-point shooting ranked second on the team. He also averaged three rebounds per game, and his 52 assists ranked second on the team. The 6-foot-6 forward started 20 games and averaged 29.8 minutes per game, a number that was second on the team.

Following the season, Bibbs was named the state's Rookie of the Year by the Virginia Sports Information Directors (VaSID).

In a year of firsts for the Virginia Tech women's basketball team, it should be no surprise that the Hokies' floor general, **Vanessa Panousis** – the squad's leader in both points and assists – is named the sport's Athlete of the Year by this magazine.

She led the Hokies to their first win in the ACC Tournament since 2008 with their buzzer-beating victory over NC State, as she scored 19 points and handed out eight assists in the win. She then turned in a 20-point effort, as Tech upset Pittsburgh the next day to make it two conference tournament wins in the same season for the first time since the 2003 BIG EAST Championship.

The sophomore became the first Hokie women's player to be named to the ACC All-Tournament Team, garnering a second-team nod that accompanied her All-ACC Academic Team award.

During the 2014-15 season, Panousis led the team in scoring 15 times in her 31 games played and scored at least 10 points in 27 games, highlighted by three straight 20-plus point games in December. She matched her career high with 24 points against Western Carolina. She also led the team in assists 14 times, hitting the eight-assist plateau three times during the season.

In addition, she excelled from behind the 3-point line, knocking down at least one 3-pointer in all but two games this season and that included a streak of 17 straight games, which set a school record. All the makes also helped her set the school record for 3-pointers made in a single season at 77 – besting the previous mark set by Lindsay Biggs (74 in 2008-09).

Panousis started in every game she played, missing one, but still led the team in minutes played (1,082), field goals made (142), free-throw percentage (.889), assists (99) and points (417).



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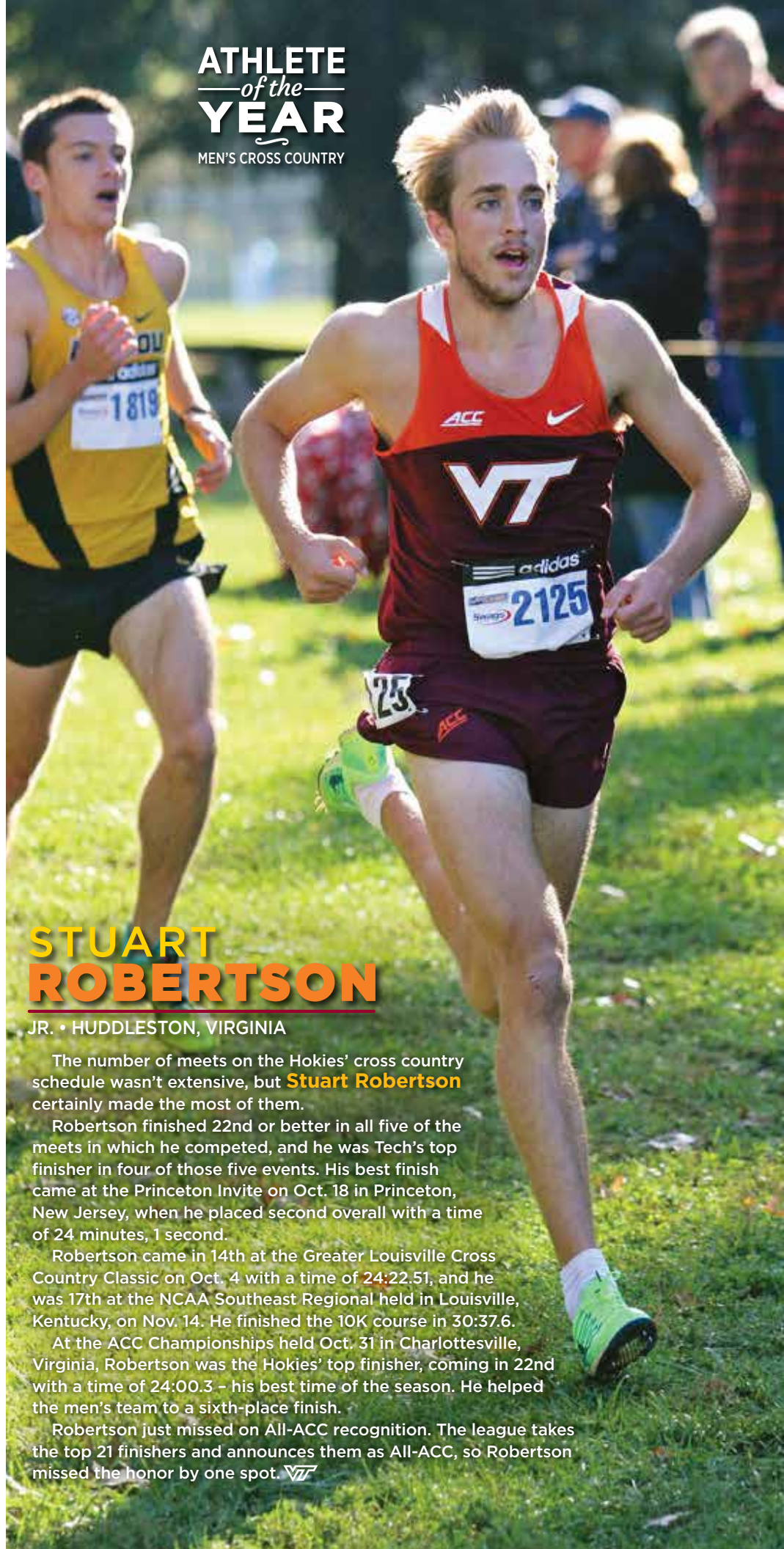
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ATHLETE
—of the—
YEAR
MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY



**STUART
ROBERTSON**

JR. • HUDDLESTON, VIRGINIA

The number of meets on the Hokies' cross country schedule wasn't extensive, but **Stuart Robertson** certainly made the most of them.

Robertson finished 22nd or better in all five of the meets in which he competed, and he was Tech's top finisher in four of those five events. His best finish came at the Princeton Invite on Oct. 18 in Princeton, New Jersey, when he placed second overall with a time of 24 minutes, 1 second.

Robertson came in 14th at the Greater Louisville Cross Country Classic on Oct. 4 with a time of 24:22.51, and he was 17th at the NCAA Southeast Regional held in Louisville, Kentucky, on Nov. 14. He finished the 10K course in 30:37.6.

At the ACC Championships held Oct. 31 in Charlottesville, Virginia, Robertson was the Hokies' top finisher, coming in 22nd with a time of 24:00.3 – his best time of the season. He helped the men's team to a sixth-place finish.

Robertson just missed on All-ACC recognition. The league takes the top 21 finishers and announces them as All-ACC, so Robertson missed the honor by one spot.

ATHLETE
—of the—
YEAR
WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

**PAIGE
KVARTUNAS**

R-SR. • SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA



**Paige
Kvartunas**

made the most of her final season as a Hokie, earning all-region recognition for the second time in her career and leading the Hokies to a top-25 finish as a team at the NCAA Championships in Terre Haute, Indiana, on Nov. 22.

Kvartunas led all Tech runners at the NCAA meet, finishing 88th out of 255 runners. She ran the course in a time of 21 minutes, 8.1 seconds, just missing an All-America nod by 24 seconds.

That performance came on the heels of a seventh-place finish at the NCAA Southeast Regional held in Louisville, Kentucky, on Nov. 14. She ran the course in a time of 20:28.4, earning herself a spot in the national meet before the Hokies received an at-large berth as a team. She, along with Sarah Rapp, earned all-region honors.

Leading up to the regionals, Kvartunas finished in eighth place at the ACC Championships held Oct. 31 outside of Charlottesville, Virginia. She ran the course in a time of 20:18.0, as she and Rapp led the Hokies to a sixth-place finish in the team competition.

Kvartunas' best finish came at the Princeton Invite held Oct. 18 in Princeton, New Jersey. She finished fourth there, running the course in 21:23.

Kvartunas finished seventh and 15th at the Greater Louisville Cross Country Classic and the VT Alumni Invite, respectively. Her time of 17:09.92 in Louisville marked her best time of the season.

As a result of an eighth-place finish at the ACC meet, Kvartunas earned All-ACC honors – the first of her career.

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ATHLETE
—of the—
YEAR
FOOTBALL

DADI L'HOMME NICOLAS


R-JR. • DELRAY BEACH, FLORIDA

Dadi L'homme Nicolas quietly enjoyed a breakout season this past year. Few people on a regional and national scale seemed to notice, though, as Nicolas earned second-team All-ACC honors (both from the coaches and the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association), but did not receive any mention on any of the All-America teams.

His numbers certainly were worthy of All-America status. He tied for fourth on the team with 72 tackles (33 solo) and he led the team in tackles for a loss (18.5) and finished second on the team with nine sacks. His 35 hurries also led the squad, and he blocked two kicks to lead the team.

Nicolas played his best in some of Tech's bigger games, too. He recorded five hurries and two sacks in the Hokies' stunning win at then-No. 8 Ohio State. Following the game, he received the 247Sports national Defensive Player of the Week honor and the ACC Defensive Lineman of the Week award. He also recorded nine tackles and 2.5 sacks in the Hokies' clutch win at Duke, one that really propelled them down the stretch. He also received the ACC's Defensive Lineman of the Week honor after that game.

Nicolas' final two games of this past season may have been his best overall. He finished with nine tackles, a sack and five hurries in Tech's win over UVa to help the Hokies become bowl eligible, and he finished with nine tackles, including one for a loss, in the Hokies' Military Bowl win over Cincinnati.

In addition to being named to the All-ACC team following the season, Nicolas was named to the Football University Division All-State team, as comprised by the Virginia Sports Information Directors (VaSID). He received first-team recognition. 

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TREVOR CONE


SR. • CONCORD, NORTH CAROLINA

Scott Vincent easily could have been the magazine's Athlete of the Year in men's golf, but **Trevor Cone** gets the nod primarily because of his stunning victory at the ACC Championship.

Cone finished in a three-way tie for first place at the league's annual event held at the Old North State Club in Badin Lake, North Carolina. He fired rounds of 68, 66 and 71 to finish 11-under-par for the tournament and claim his third collegiate win.

Cone had eight top-10 finishes in 12 events this season. He finished third in three tournaments - the VCU Shootout, the UNCG Bridgestone Intercollegiate and the Mission Inn Spring Spectacular. He also recorded sixth-, seventh-, eighth- and ninth-place finishes in various events throughout the academic year.

Cone played 35 rounds this season and led the team with 23 rounds under par. His average of 71.2 ranked second on the team, and his 65 at the Yale Spring Invitational was the lowest round by a Tech golfer this season.

Cone's career ended with a 25th-place finish at the NCAA Noblesville Regional held in Noblesville, Indiana, on May 14-16. Following his performance at the ACC Championship, Cone earned All-ACC honors for the second straight year. 


MEGAN WILL

SR. • BEL AIR, MARYLAND

The Virginia Tech lacrosse team finished the 2015 season with a 6-12 record, but **Megan Will** certainly did her part, as she earned first-team All-ACC honors following a season in which she led the Hokies in scoring and in total points.

Will - who is the magazine's lacrosse Athlete of the Year for the third straight year - also earned all-region honors from the Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches' Association (IWLCA), marking the fifth time in which a Hokie has been named to the All-South Region squad. She finished the year with 57 goals and 71 points. She scored in every game of her final season and in 22 straight games dating back to her junior year.

Will started all 18 games this season and started the final 60 games of her career. She scored at least three goals in 13 games, with her best performance being a five-goal output in the Hokies' 17-10 loss to then-No. 5 Virginia in Charlottesville on April 17. She scored at least four goals in seven other games.

Will leaves Tech as the all-time leader in career points (227), while ranking second on the scoring list (177 goals) and fifth on the assists list (50). She is one of just two players in Tech history to rank on all three career lists. 



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RICARDO JOHN

FR. • TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



Ricardo John certainly made the most of his inaugural season on the Tech campus. He quickly worked his way into the starting lineup and became arguably the Hokies' top player.

John started 13 of the 17 games in which he played this season. He finished tied for the team lead in points with 11, scoring five goals and recording an assist. He also scored two game-winning goals, and his lone assist came on what turned out to be a game-winning goal against NC State.

John's first career goal came in the Hokies' 4-1 win over Longwood on Sept. 9. He also scored goals in Tech wins over Wake Forest, George Washington and NC State. He scored the lone goal in the Hokies' 3-1 loss to then-No. 1 Notre Dame on Oct. 25.

Following the season, John earned a nod to the ACC's All-Freshmen Team and a spot on the All-ACC second team – the lone Hokie to make the squad. He was one of only three freshmen to make the All-ACC team this past season. He became the first Tech player to make an All-ACC team or an All-Freshmen team since James Shupp made the rookie team in 2007.

John also made the National Soccer Coaches Athletic Association All-South Region team. He was a third-team choice for this squad.

MURIELLE TIERNAN

SO. • ASHBURN, VIRGINIA



The Virginia Tech women's soccer team made it to the Sweet 16 for a second straight season, and **Murielle Tiernan** played a huge role in making that happen.

Tiernan started all 22 games for the Hokies this season and led the team in goals on her way to being named a first-team All-ACC selection. She finished the season with 14 goals and six assists, with her six assists tying for the team lead. Her 14 goals were the third-most in a single season at Tech, and her 34 points marked the second-highest total in program history.

Tiernan scored at least two goals in five games this season. She arguably played her best in the NCAA Championship, as she scored two goals and dished out an assist in Tech's 4-0 win over Dayton and then scored a goal and had two assists in the Hokies' 4-3 overtime victory over Georgetown.

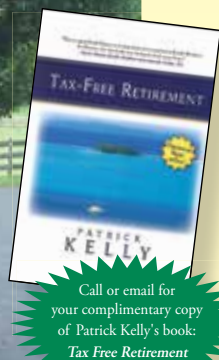
In addition to being an All-ACC choice, Tiernan was named to the National Soccer Coaches Association of America All-Southeast Region squad. She received first-team recognition to this squad, and she also received first-team all-state honors from the Virginia Sports Information Directors (VaSID) for the second straight season.

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ROBERT OWEN

SO. • BRIDGEWATER, MASSACHUSETTS

As a freshman, **Robert Owen's** best finish at the ACC Championships was a sixth-place performance in the 400 individual medley. A year later, he was a two-time honorable mention All-American.


Owen really burst onto the scene this season, his second in Blacksburg. Showing diversity by being able to compete in different strokes at different distances, he rapidly became one of the team's most versatile and valuable performers.

Owen won the 200 backstroke in a meet against North Carolina and he won the 400 IM in a meet against Notre Dame and Pittsburgh. He finished second in the 200 backstroke and the 100 backstroke against then-No. 21 Virginia.

At the ACC Men's Swimming and Diving Championships, Owen earned 70 individual points for the Hokies. He won the 400 IM in

a time of 3 minutes, 41.79 seconds – a school record – and he took fourth in the 200 backstroke and 15th in the 100 backstroke. His gold medal was one of just two gold medals for the Hokies at the ACC's annual event.

At the NCAA Division I Men's Swimming and Diving Championships, he led the team in points by earning honorable mention All-America honors in both the 400 IM and the 200 backstroke. His time of 3:42.67 in the 400 IM was good enough for 10th place, while his time of 1:41.10 in the 200 back was good enough for 14th. That time also broke a school record.

Behind Owen, the Hokies finished 31st in the team competition at the NCAA Championships with 17 points. 

KAYLEA ARNETT

SR. • SPRING, TEXAS




Kaylea Arnett may not necessarily be well known among Hokie Nation, but her career accomplishments make her arguably one of the greatest female athletes ever at Tech. This past season, her final one as a Hokie, was her best yet.

Arnett practically won a diving event every time the Hokies competed in the pool. In fact, before the ACC Women's Swimming and Diving Championships – the top event on every league team's schedule – she won the 1-meter event on seven occasions and the 3-meter event twice. She also won the platform event once.

At the ACC championship meet, she dominated the competition again. She won both the 3-meter and the platform events and finished third in the 1-meter. Individually, she scored 91 team points and helped the Tech women's team to a third-place finish. For her efforts, she was named the ACC Championships Most Valuable Diver for the fourth straight year, and after the season, the ACC Diver of the Year for the third time in her career.

At the NCAA Division I Women's Swimming and Diving Championships, Arnett captured sixth place in the 3-meter event with 360.60 points to earn All-America recognition.

She also finished ninth in the platform event, earning honorable mention All-America status. She scored 22 of the team's points at the NCAA meet.

Arnett's six career gold medals at the ACC Championships are the most by a swimmer or diver in program history and tied for the most by any diver in ACC history. She is a two-time All-American and a six-time honorable mention All-American. 

HUNTER KOONTZ


SR. • RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

There were several worthy candidates for the men's tennis athlete of the year honor, as the Hokies enjoyed one of the best seasons in program history. But the nod goes to senior **Hunter Koontz**, who displayed uncanny consistency throughout the season.

Playing mostly in the No. 3 and No. 4 spots in the lineup, Koontz went 20-3 overall, posting a team-best 19-2 record in dual meet action and a 9-2 record against ACC competition. His matches went to three sets on seven occasions this season, and he won five of them.

Koontz's best win probably came in the Hokies' upset of then-No. 2 Duke on March 8. He knocked off Raphael Hemmeler 7-6 (7-5), 4-6, 6-3 to help the Hokies to a 6-1 upset of the Blue Devils. Hemmeler had been ranked among the top 100 players nationally heading into the match.

Koontz scored the lone point in the Hokies' loss to rival Virginia when he beat 112th-ranked Mac Styslinger 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, and he also knocked off No. 72 Austin Powell 6-3, 6-2 in Tech's win over NC State. Koontz reached as high as No. 103 in the national rankings as a result of those wins.

Following the regular season, Koontz earned third-team All-ACC honors – the first time he made the squad. He also received the Most Improved Player of the Year honor in the Atlantic Region, as handed out by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association. 

FRANCESCA FUSINATO


SO. • FELTRE, BELLUNO, ITALY

The Virginia Tech women's tennis team made the NCAA Championships for the first time in 15 years and **Francesca Fusinato** played a rather large role in making that happen.

Fusinato, who played mostly in the No. 2 spot this season, went 14-8, and she always got better as the match went along. She went 5-0 in three-set matches.

Fusinato recorded three wins over ranked opponents this past season. She knocked off then-No. 51 Ester Goldfeld of Duke in the Hokies' 5-2 loss to the Blue Devils in late February, and she rolled over then-No. 73 Kerrie Cartwright of Florida State by scores of 6-1, 6-0 in lifting Tech over the Seminoles. Her biggest upset came in Tech's 4-3 upset of then-No. 16 Miami in which she beat the then-No. 6 player in the nation in Stephanie Wagner by scores of 6-3, 5-7, 6-3.

She also recorded a 6-4, 6-2 win over Ebba Unden to help the Hokies beat Long Beach State in the first round of the NCAA Championship. The team win marked only the program's second at the NCAA event.

Fusinato earned second-team All-ACC recognition for her work on the court this season. She was also the only Hokie selected to play at the NCAA Singles Championship and just the second in the program's history. 

THOMAS CURTIN

SR. • LEESBURG, VIRGINIA

Without question, **Thomas Curtin** established himself as a superstar this season in the sport of track and field. He won everything but a national championship during both the indoor and outdoor seasons in what turned out to be one of the greatest seasons ever by a Tech distance runner.


During the indoor season, Curtin twice earned All-America honors, finishing in eighth place in both the 3,000-meter and 5,000-meter runs at the 2015 NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Championships held in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in mid-March. He ran the 3,000 in 8 minutes, 3.56 seconds, and the 5,000 in 13:57.87.

Prior to the NCAA Championships, he claimed a gold medal in the 3,000 at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships held at Rector Field House on Tech's campus. He set the school record with a time of 7:52.92, and his win enabled the Tech men's team to capture the team championship. He did not run in the 5,000 because the Tech coaching staff elected to run him as a member of the distance medley relay team, and that quartet finished in third.

In addition to setting the school record in the 3,000 during the indoor season, Curtin also set the school record in the 5,000. That time came at the Iowa State Classic when he completed the race in a time of 13:38.56.

He continued his excellence on the track during the outdoor season. He won the 5,000 at the ACC Outdoor Track and Field Championships held in Tallahassee, Florida, in May, finishing in a time of 13:59.33. He went on to win the 5,000 again, this time at the NCAA East Regional held in Jacksonville, Florida. He ran that race in a time of 13:52.05.

At the 2015 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships held in Eugene, Oregon, in mid-June, he used his powerful kick to come in seventh place with a time of 13:52.11 and earn first-team All-America honors.

Curtin's three All-America honors this season were the most by a Tech athlete this year and the first of his career. 




Only a handful of athletes have enjoyed a better career at Tech than **Devin Carter**. The local product arrived at Tech in 2010 and went on to accomplish things that no other wrestler in the history of the program had ever accomplished.

This season, Carter closed his career by finishing third at the NCAA Championships in the 141-pound weight class, thus securing All-America honors for the third time. He lost in the quarterfinals, but rallied in the consolation rounds, winning four matches to finish in third. He became Tech's first three-time All-American in wrestling.

Carter also became the program's first four-time ACC champion. He won the conference title at 141 pounds rather easily, as both of his victories in the league's tournament came by major decision. He became just the

ninth four-time ACC champion and just the third to win conference titles in two different weight classes (133 and 141).

Following the season, Carter was named the state's Wrestler of the Year by the Virginia Sports Information Directors (VaSID). He finished his final season with a 32-3 record. He ended his career with 121 wins and 91 of those garnered bonus points. His 19 NCAA Championship wins are a school record, while his 121 wins are the fifth-most wins in school history, and his 38 career pins rank as the second-most pins in school history. 

R-SR. • CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA

DEVIN CARTER



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LINDSEY OWENS

SO. • ORLANDO, FLORIDA


ATHLETE
of the
YEAR
VOLLEYBALL

Though only a sophomore, **Lindsey Owens** emerged as the leader of a Tech volleyball squad that finished with a 17-14 record. She earned first-team All-ACC honors after making the league's all-freshman team a year ago.

Owens, who started all 31 matches, led the Hokies throughout the season, averaging 3.42 kills per set to rank 10th in the ACC. She tallied double digits in kills on 23 occasions during the season, including four matches with 20 or more and a career-high of 26 at Louisville. She finished with 400 kills on the season.

In addition, Owens was strong on defense, with 312 digs and 75 blocks. She reached double digits in digs 15 times and recorded double-doubles in 14 matches. The outside hitter recorded a stretch of five matches with double-doubles during the season.

Arguably, her best match came against one of the Hokies' toughest opponents, if not the toughest. Against then-No. 12 Illinois, Owens has 14 kills and 15 digs in Tech's 3-2 upset of the Illini.

In addition to being named first-team All-ACC, Owens received first-team all-state recognition by the Virginia Sports Information Directors (VaSID) – the only Hokie to receive that honor. 

MASSIVE NEW INDOOR PRACTICE FACILITY — a Gem —

by Jimmy Robertson

Tom Gabbard will no longer have to chase Tech's football players out of the new indoor practice facility.

Gabbard, Tech's senior associate AD for facilities and operations, received the coveted certificate of occupancy the first week of June, which allows the athletics department to begin using the \$21.3 million facility.

Before, football players kept sneaking into the building to get a glimpse of it. No more, as it's fully operational, and on June 12-14, the football coaching staff conducted various camps in the new building, showing off the prize to potential recruits.

Essentially, all that remains to be done are the installation of a graphics package that includes photos of great players and great moments in Tech history from football and Olympic sports, and the installation of an audio/visual package, which will take place in July.

"We're also tearing up our bluegrass practice field and installing Bermuda grass," Gabbard

said. "Once we get that done, I can't wait to see it, with all the green grass up against that beautiful new building. I'm really excited about the way this has turned out."

Tech's new facility, built by W.M. Jordan Company – a company whose CEO is John Lawson, a 1975 graduate of Tech – is 210 feet wide and 400 feet long, with an artificial surface installed by Shaw Sports Turf. The top-of-the-line synthetic turf is fast, firm and dense, or in other words, a quality product from a proven entity. The company boasts the NFL's Baltimore Ravens as one of its clients, having installed the surface at M&T Bank Stadium, the Ravens' home.


The height from the playing surface to the bottom of the steel ceiling trusses is more than 86 feet at its apex, thus allowing plenty of room for punting and kicking, as head coach Frank Beamer has eluded to in the past. Its eight-foot padded walls, wide sidelines, full scoreboard and 40-second clocks on each end allow the football program to hold a full-contact scrimmage.

In addition, the facility features garage-type doors, which open quickly and allow the players to move rapidly from the outdoor practice field into the indoor facility in the event of inclement weather. Tech's staff, though, plans on using the facility more than just when the weather turns ugly. Beamer envisions using it daily, or close to it.

"I'm very excited about it," Beamer said. "In my opinion, W.M. Jordan has built us the best indoor practice facility in the country. It's an attractive building with the Hokie stone and Virginia Tech all over it. It answers all the needs in terms of usability, being able to kick and being able to scrimmage and just use it in any way we need."

"It's just a great addition to our program here. I think it's the best in the country, and I think it makes a statement about Virginia Tech football that we want to be the best in the country. That's our goal."

The number of teams and student-athletes who will benefit from the massive structure are almost as numerous as the many unique features of this one-of-a-kind addition to the Tech campus. The athletics department envisions men's and women's soccer, softball, baseball and lacrosse all using the building for training and conditioning purposes, particularly during inclement weather in late winter and early spring.

The completion of the facility allows the athletics department to move on to the next project, which includes renovating Rector Field House. Athletics department officials want to keep the indoor track up permanently at Rector (they take it down after the indoor track season ends in March), add halftime locker rooms for soccer and lacrosse matches and build a hitting area adjacent to Tech Softball Park for the softball team. A timetable for that project hasn't been established yet. 



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