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
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**
(An $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

**SKELETON 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**
(An $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**
(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

**CAPITAL ONE ACADEMIC ALL-DISTRICT III SELECTIONS**
(To be eligible for consideration, 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)
Women
Kaylea Arnett, volleyball
Caroline Buscaglia, volleyball
INDOOR TRACK AND FIELD
Men
Darren Barlow, track and field
Neil Gourley, track and field
Torben Laidig, track and field
James Steck, track and field
Chris Uhle, track and field

Women
Johnna Dominick, women’s track and field
Hanna Green, women’s track and field
Paige Kvartunas, women’s track and field

WRESTLING
Men
Devon Carter, wrestling
Erik Payne, wrestling

Supporting Tech Athletics Since 1949
The Donor File

Tom & Joyce Noell

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL: Golden Hokie
CURRENTLY RESIDES: Roanoke County, Virginia
GRADUATION YEAR: 1961

FAMILY: Joyce (wife); Stuart (son, UI+M, Class of '92), Dana (daughter, VT, Class of '93); Dave (son, VPI+M, Class of '92); Dawn (daughter, VT, Class of '93); 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 football player is …
A: Football and men’s and women’s basketball.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.
A: A perfect day would be to drive up to 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: What caused you to become a fan of Virginia Tech?
A: A fan of Virginia Tech?

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news & notes by Jimmy Robertson

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. Ryan 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 breakthrough season came in 1994-95 when a group led by Shawn Smith, Sean Good, Damon Foster, and the Jackson brothers turned it around in its third season, going 18-10 in 1993-94.

The popular tiered ticket pricing returns this season for men’s basketball, with all season tickets remaining the same price as in 2014-15. Season ticket renewal applications for the Tech men’s and women’s basketball programs are available online at http://www.hokietickets.com/purl/.

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Carter, Payne named Academic All-Americans

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We’ve got the Hokies covered.

Did you know Virginia Farm Bureau Insurance can cover just about anyone for just about anything? And with us, you get more than great insurance coverage—you help support Virginia’s agriculture as a member of the Farm Bureau family. Our members also get special benefits and discounts at local and national businesses.

Great coverage plus great benefits and a great purpose—get in touch with your Farm Bureau agent and experience a better kind of insurance.

Visit FarmBureauAdvantage.com to find your local Agent and learn more. Join the Farm Bureau Family today.

Virginia Farm Bureau Insurance is a proud sponsor of Virginia Tech Athletics!

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 months 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 fixed 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 “true” 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 whores 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 June, Brill’s wife, who taught one of his classes at William Fleming High School in Roanoke in the 1980s. Smith paid his dues, quietly and professionally telling 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 1971 and came to work here in 1977, 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 see some barbecues 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 add it in a Cover’s Light. Then I’ll ask his forgiveness.

It’ll cost me about $12. And you know what? It’ll be worth every cent.
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 full 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 McCluskey (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 13th national title. Kaylee 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 16-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, 90 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 softtball 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 $400,000 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 these and meet all our goals.

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

Go Hokies!

George H.munford III
Director of Athletics, Virginia Tech

Please Join Us

Date: August 30th, 2015
Location: Pete Dye River Course
Time: 10:00 a.m. shotgun
Format: Captain’s Choice
Cost: $150 individual • $600 team
Includes:
• Breakfast Buffet, Participant Gifts, Beverage Cart, Post Play Meal by Bull and Bones and many, many prizes!

About the Program

Come help support the inaugural women’s golf team before they tee it up in their first ever event. These ladies are ready to make Virginia Tech proud and get the history books started for the program.

Not only is participation important but fundraising through sponsorships will be a integral part of the future for success. See the available opportunities below.

-BIRDIE SPONSOR: $500
Includes foursome, signage, additional gift and more
-HOLE SPONSOR: $100
(Includes signage on a particular hole)

If interested in a sponsorship please contact Carol Robinson or call 540-555-6439

What follows is the director of golf's address for the men's team making a donation to the championship at Rector Field House in late February.

Director of Athletics, Virginia Tech
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 archiving 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.”
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 Příbram, 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 Hanna Green hosted 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 to 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 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 Cunelli, Tech’s director of cross country and track and field. “What’s happened with the young lady from Texas Tech, and what’s 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, as 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,” said Cunelli. “That’s special in itself right there.”

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

Hanna Green earned her second All-America honors this season after finishing third in the 800-meter run at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

Green was fifth in the same event at the NCAA’s indoor meet in mid-March.

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Behind Sediva and middle distance runner Hanna Green, the Tech women’s team finished tied for 15th in the team standings with 23 points. That marked the best finish by the Tech women’s team since 2000 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. Green’s other two points came from 23rd place in the 1,500.

“I thought Hanna was outstanding,” Cunelli 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 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 27th position with seven points, getting points from two athletes.

Thomas Kruzliak finished fourth in the hammer throw on the first day of the competition, earning first-team All-America honors.

Kruzliak’s second throw in the preliminaries, the junior from Nitra, Slovakia, hoarded the hammer a distance of 224 feet, 8 inches (68.48 meters), which placed him in the top nine and get 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.

“Thomas has had an up-and-down year, but he’s thrown his best at the NCAs,” Cunelli 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 Thomas 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 Los Angeles, Virginia. Curtin, who placed second in the ACC title in the hammer throw, led much of the race at the NCAA Championships, but he fell 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-meter steeplechase, the 3,000-meter run and the 5,000 meters this season.

“He’s come so far, and he’s just starting to realize his talent,” Cunelli said of Curtin. “He has 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 Kopflin finished 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 4:30.52. On the men’s side, Stuart Robertson was 17th in the 3,000-meter steeplechase, Marek Bartu finished 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 2016-17 season, thus creating high expectations.

“I’m optimistic about our future,” Cunelli 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.”

Thomas Curtin earned three All-America honors this season after finishing fourth in the hammer throw at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships.
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:

**Football**

 compiled by the magazine staff, with help from several in the athletics communications office: by Jimmy Robertson

**Top 10**

**10. Ohio State in Columbus**

Football team stunned No. 8 Ohio State in Columbus with a 24-21 victory over the Buckeyes in front of 107,517 fans at Ohio Stadium.

**9. NCAA championship**

Sediva wins NCAA title after a run and the third by two runs.

**8. ACC indoor track crown**

Tech men win ACC indoor track crown

**7. Wrestling**

Wrestlers win ACC dual meet title

**6. Baseball**

Vincent sets course record

**5. Volleyball**

Women’s tennis with NCAA win

**4. Men’s tennis**

Texas Tech men win ACC indoor title

**3. Tennis**

Women’s tennis sweeps No. 2 Duke

**2. Wrestling**

Texas Tech wins ACC dual-meet title

**1. Football**

Insiders take note: 11 things to know about the Hokies’ return to the ACC

**Ohio State in Columbus**

The Hokies won the opener 2-1 when Brendan Haydon drew a bases-loaded walk in the ninth inning. In the second game, Tech relief pitcher Luke Scherrler 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 home run in the bottom of the eighth inning, and the Hokies swept their in-state rival in a regular-season game for the first time since 2009 when the series was two games long. The first time the Hokies won three regular-season games over the Cavaliers was in 1987.

The Hokies won the double-play to grab a 1-0 lead over the 49ers, and then Francesca Fusinato clinched the match with a 6-3, 7-6 (5) win over Julie Girard. Tech finished 15-10 overall and 7-7 in ACC action this past season.

**Virginia Tech WRESTLING 2014-2015 ACC DUAL MEET CHAMPIONS**

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 spectacular come-from-behind 19-12 win over Georgia Tech, giving the school its 9th ACC team title at the time (since joining the conference). The Hokies went 2-1 against ACC competition during the regular season.

The Hokies then recorded a 4-2 win over University of Southern California’s campus.

The keys to the Hokies’ success included a strong pitching staff, an aggressive defense and a strong offense.

The win marked the second NCAA tournament win in program history and the first one on the road.

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**Wrestlers win ACC dual meet title**

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**Against the Blue Devils in the final home match of the season, Tech junior recorded a match-clinching fall at 255 pounds and Zach Lipton added one at 174 pounds to finish the dual. 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 junior Scott Vincent’s course ended at an NCAA regional in Noblesville, Indiana, but before he had something special.

In the second round, Vincent shot a 2-under-par 68, 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 1-under-par 69 on the final day and finished in fourth place overall in the 114-duo competition.”

**Inside Hokie Sports inside.hokiesports.com”**
Dave Smith

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 Mile Stadium. For those unfamiliar with the venue, Mile 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 treasures, 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 two-sport standout John Rivers grabbing a rebound.

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 Monsey, 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 know 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 wavered from that plan.

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

Continued on page 22
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.”

McCluskey retired 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-seed 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.

McCluskey 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 McCluskey an assistant AD in 1992 and promoted her in 1999 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 McCluskey 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,” McCluskey 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.”

McCluskey 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 she twice beat non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, the last coming two years ago. She underwent a stem-cell transplant in early 2013, and while

“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. ‘Hadn’t it been 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 like the way I think we’ve left the Athletic Fund in better position 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 as 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 offices.

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 if I had 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, each contribution 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, Scotti Media Center, football locker room facility, and the recently renovated 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 so many things. You’re in the middle of so many 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 well. We were able to lift us 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.

Continued from page 21

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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.
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, Saydon Julian, Hesley Lomniczky, Danielle Hamilton, Kevin Jones, Bryant Matthews, Lea Suggs, Ande Davis, Corey Moore, Okonick, Jim Druckenmiller and Cornel 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.

She finished her season 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.

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She 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 finished her season 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. "**"
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-high 22 multi-hit games and reached in a career-best 32 consecutive 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.

Perez was one of four Hokies chosen in the 2015 MLB draft. He

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 .32 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.
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 woman'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).
**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 20:49.5, 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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**STUART ROBERTSON**

JR. • HUDDESTON, 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, where 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 20 finishers and announces them as All-ACC, so Robertson missed the honor by one spot.
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.

DADI L’HOMME
NICOLAS
RJR • DELRAY BEACH, FLORIDA

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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.

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.
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-Freshman 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-Freshman team since James Zhupp 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. *80*

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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.

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, 17.72 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 season events.

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 100 backstroke. His time of 1:42.67 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 306.60 points to earn All-America recognition.
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 6-1, 6-3 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.

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 won 5-0 in three-set matches.

Fusinato recorded three wins over ranked opponents this past season. She knocked off then-No. 61 Esther 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 Tech’s 6-1 win 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.
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 capped 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 31 of those garnered bonus points. His 19 NCAA Championship wins are a season record, while his 121 wins are the fifth-most in school history, and his 38 career pins rank as the second-most pins in school history.

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, 31.36 seconds, and the 5,000 in 13:33.78.

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 7:25.50, and his win enabled the Tech men’s team to capture the team championships. 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 13:33.38. He went on to win the 5,000 again, this time at the NCAA East Regionals held in Jacksonville, Florida. He ran that race in a time of 13:32.05.

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.
Tom Gabbard said 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 Beamer, who started all 31 matches, led the Hokies to a 17-14 record. She earned first-team All-ACC honors after making 400 kills on the season.

In addition, Owens was strong on defense, with 312 digs and 15 blocks. She finished with double-doubles in 14 matches. The outside hitter recorded a stretch of five matches with 20 or more and a career-high of 26 at Louisville. She finished with 75 blocks. She reached double digits in digs 15 times and 14 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.

Arguably, her best match came against one of the league’s 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.

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