

inside

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# HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



## TECH'S TRAILBLAZERS

Fifty years ago, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 opened doors for minorities, including doors in sports, and people like Jerry Gaines (top right), John Dobbins (left), and Anne (bottom) and Lynne Jones (bottom right) broke barriers, helping shape the future of Tech athletics

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

Six former Tech athletes were inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame



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**HOKIESPORTS**

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## GEARING UP FOR NCAA ACTION

The Virginia Tech women's soccer team closed the regular season with a 14-5 overall record and a 5-5 mark in ACC play. The 14th-ranked Hokies (as of press time) won two of their final three matches, beating Syracuse 5-0 and Louisville 3-0, both on the road. Tech did not qualify for the four-team ACC tournament, but the Hokies received an NCAA Tournament bid for the seventh straight season and hope to make a repeat run to the College Cup.

## THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"I am incredibly thankful for the Hokie Club and its support. Because of them, I have had the amazing opportunity to attend Virginia Tech and be a student-athlete at one of the best universities in the country!"

Kelsey Loupee  
Senior | Women's Soccer

"I am so thankful to be here and to have received the Skelton Award scholarship. The generosity and thoughtfulness of the Hokie Nation never ceases to amaze me. This scholarship has made a huge, positive impact on my life, and it has allowed me to pursue all of my academic goals. Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible. I am incredibly appreciative!"

Katie Yensen  
Senior | Women's Soccer





# The Donor File

## Jason Blount

**HOKIE CLUB LEVEL:** Golden Hokie

**CURRENTLY RESIDES:** Arlington, Virginia

**WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE?**  
2005



## Q&A

**Q: A Hokie is ...**  
**A:** I've been asked this question several times. It's almost one of those things that you can only understand if you are part of it. To me, a Hokie is someone who is part of a special and unique family, a person who loves all things Virginia Tech and supports Hokie Nation in any way he/she can through thick and thin. A Hokie represents Tech with pride and confidence. Lastly, a Hokie is someone who's favorite uniform is all maroon.

**Q: What is your best memory of Virginia Tech athletics?**  
**A:** I can't pick just one memory of Virginia Tech athletics since I have so many. But my best memories are: upsetting No. 2 Miami [in 2003], the hurricane game against Texas A&M in 2003, beating Florida State and exacting our revenge on Boston College in 2007 and upsetting Duke in 2005 at Cassell Coliseum [in

basketball] - oh, and any time a Fuller has committed to playing Virginia Tech football. Thanks, Mr. and Mrs. Fuller!

**Q: What caused you to become a fan of Virginia Tech?**  
**A:** I became a fan of Virginia Tech the day I got my acceptance letter in the mail. I knew Tech was the right school for me 10 minutes into the campus tour before I applied. Instantly, it felt like I had to be a part of the Hokie family. I'm so glad I made the decision to go to Virginia Tech.

**Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.**  
**A:** Tailgating for a night game at Lane Stadium and seeing the Hokies in the all-maroon uniform - and, of course, winning the game.

**Q: I'm a Hokie Club member because ...**  
**A:** There is one reason why I joined the

Hokie Club, and that was the hiring of Whit Babcock. To me, it seems that Virginia Tech did an excellent job choosing the successor for Jim Weaver. I think we are in good hands with Whit and have confidence that he'll lead Virginia Tech athletics in the right direction. Also, when Whit hired Buzz Williams as the next basketball head coach, it showed me that he's willing to spend the money to bring talent to Blacksburg.

**Q: My favorite Virginia Tech sports are ...**  
**A:** My favorite Virginia Tech sports are football and basketball. I didn't realize how fortunate I was to be able to go to as many games as I wanted while being a student. I look forward to the day when we make our first appearance in the college football playoffs and when we return to the [NCAA] tournament and become part of March Madness again.

## LETTER FROM LU

Dear Hokie Club members:

The Hokie Club is preparing for end-of-the-year giving, and it is an important time for all of our donors. Our student-athletes have benefitted from your generous support during the past year, as your gifts have provided the needed funds for scholarships and facilities. I am asking that you continue your support for these 500 outstanding young people who represent us so well in the classroom, in the community and in their chosen sport.

I traditionally take this time to emphasize several key dates that affect your membership. **December 1** is the last day to set up or upgrade your membership using either "[HokieMatic](#)" or "Employee Payroll Deduction" to qualify for privileges to be awarded before the benefits deadline. To make any changes to your existing HokieMatic, including increasing your monthly deduction, please submit a new form indicating the updated information. HokieMatic forms can be found on the Forms page of our website, [www.hokieclub.com](http://www.hokieclub.com).

The benefits deadline of Dec. 31 is perhaps the most important deadline for Hokie Club members besides your anniversary month membership renewal. Now is the time to make your gift. Don't wait until December when there is always too much going on in our everyday lives. Make your gift today and position yourself for Hokie Club benefits for the 2015 season.

Our December office hours are affected by the university's holiday schedule and late December becomes very hectic in terms of a higher volume of phone calls and gift processing. Checks must be postmarked by Dec. 31 and online contributions must be made at [www.hokieclub.com](http://www.hokieclub.com) by midnight EST on Dec. 31.

Virginia Tech is like many other schools in the ACC and across the country that are being challenged to meet the rising costs of higher education. The budget for the 2014-15 academic year is set at \$12.3 million for tuition, room, board and institutional fees. You can help by increasing your gift by 10 percent and by referring friends and fellow Hokies to join. You can also earn extra Priority Points when a referral of yours joins the Hokie Club.

Your past support of the athletics program is very much appreciated. We currently have approximately 500 student-athletes on team rosters. For the spring semester, 55 percent of our student-athletes had a grade-point average of 3.0 or higher and 50 percent had a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher during their time at Tech.

Your annual support helps all 22 athletics teams by providing scholarship support. I see our student-athletes on a regular basis and continue to be impressed with their drive to be successful, their management of their time and their service to the community. We are very fortunate to have great young men and women here at Virginia Tech.

**Lu Merritt**  
 Senior Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics

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Tech cross country teams finish sixth at ACC Championships

The Virginia Tech men’s and women’s cross country teams finished sixth at the ACC Cross Country Championships at Panorama Farms in Earlysville, Virginia, on Oct. 31. Sarah Rapp and Paige Kvartunas were the only two Hokie competitors to finish with All-ACC honors after finishing in the top 10 of the women’s 6K race. Rapp was the Hokies’ top finisher, placing sixth with a time of 20

minutes, 13.10 seconds. Kvartunas posted an eighth-place finish with a time of 20:18.70. On the men’s side, Stuart Robertson barely missed out on All-ACC honors, coming in 22nd. Only the top 21 finishers earned All-ACC recognition. Robertson posted a time of 24:00.3 in the men’s 8K race. Darren Barlow was only a few spots behind Robertson in 27th place, finishing in a time of 24:13.1.

Notre Dame added to Tech’s football schedule

As part of the agreement to join the ACC for all sports except football, Notre Dame will play five football games each year against ACC teams, and on Oct. 21, the league office announced Notre Dame’s future opponents. Virginia Tech will take on Notre Dame four times between 2016 and 2021. The Hokies travel to Notre Dame for a Nov. 19, 2016, game in what will be the first meeting between the two schools. The Irish come to Blacksburg for an Oct. 13, 2018, game. Tech goes to Notre Dame for a Nov. 2, 2019 game, and the Irish come back to Blacksburg in 2021 (date to be

determined). Tech’s non-conference schedule is booked through 2021, though AD Whit Babcock plans to make changes to the 2019 schedule. That year, Tech is slated for just five home games, and Babcock wants the program to play at least six each year. The 2019 schedule currently includes road games at Wisconsin, at East Carolina, at Notre Dame, at Georgia Tech, at Miami, at BC and at Virginia. For a look at Tech’s future schedules, please click this link – <http://www.hokiesports.com/football/schedule/future/>.

Two from 1946 Tech team pass away


Inside Hokie Sports learned recently that two former Tech football players who played on the 1946 team that ultimately received an invitation to the 1947 Sun Bowl – the school’s first bowl game – passed away over the summer. Paul Zender, a New Kensington, Pennsylvania, native, passed away in Lawrence, Kansas, this past May at the age of 91. He played in the 1947 Sun Bowl as a back, and he graduated from the school with a degree in mechanical engineering in 1951. He worked as a project engineer for three

different companies, the last being the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant in Lawrence, Kansas. He retired in 1985. He leaves behind a wife of 59 years, Sandra Patricia Wickham, and a daughter, a sister, a son-in-law and four grandchildren. John Gerngross, a native of Laurel Springs, New Jersey, passed away in Santa Barbara, California, in late June at the age of 90. A center on the 1946 team, he graduated with a degree in electrical engineering. Gerngross later got his Ph.D. in electrical

Tech and West Virginia announce Black Diamond Challenge

Virginia Tech and West Virginia University have come to a mutual agreement in which the two schools will play each other in common varsity sports when schedules permit over the next several years. The series will be called the Black Diamond Challenge, a tribute to the region’s history in the coal industry. The two schools already have agreed to years in certain sports:

- The Hokies and the Mountaineers have agreed to extend the men’s basketball series through 2018. Tech will play the Mountaineers in Blacksburg on odd-numbered years, while traveling to Morgantown during even-numbered years.
- In baseball, the two schools have agreed to a home-and-home series for the next two seasons. West Virginia will come to Blacksburg next spring, with the Hokies returning the trip to Morgantown in the spring of 2016.
- In football, the scheduled games between the two schools will remain with no new additions.
- In wrestling, Tech and West Virginia have agreed to a four-year series (one match per year), beginning next season.

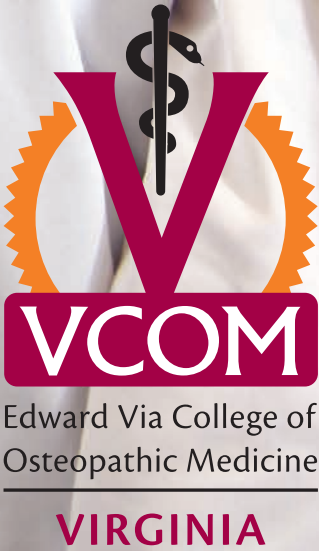
engineering and started his career at General Electric. He worked for several different companies over his career before retiring, and then he got back into engineering after his son, John, Jr., started Condor Engineering. He worked with his son until retiring a second time in 2003. Gerngross leaves behind his wife, a son, a daughter, four grandchildren and a step-grandson. Only four players who played in that Sun Bowl are still living. 

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SUBARU



editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

## Maddy makes tough decision, sets sights on next season

As he sat in his bed at night last month, Luther Maddy felt tormented. He hadn't faced this difficult of a decision since he chose Virginia Tech as the place to play football and get his college education on Feb. 1, 2011.

He tossed, he turned, and he prayed.

"I prayed about it every night, waiting for God to give me a sign," Maddy said. "Then that one day, I woke up and I had a feeling that was the direction I wanted to go."

Three days before the Hokies' game at Pittsburgh, Maddy decided to end his season and get a second surgery to repair cartilage in his troublesome right knee. He injured the knee in the Hokies' loss to East Carolina and had surgery to repair a torn meniscus on Sept. 23 shortly after the Georgia Tech game. He expected to miss a couple of games and then be back to finish his senior season on a positive note.

But the knee responded slowly to rehab, and as it turned out, he has cartilage damage. Since he played in just four games before the halfway point of the season, he decided to hang it up for 2014 and apply for a medical hardship waiver. And since he has never taken a redshirt season, he almost assuredly will receive the waiver from the ACC and be able to return as a fifth-year senior in 2015.

"I think I could have played, but I don't think I could have been my real self – explosive, making plays in the backfield, running sideline-to-sideline, things like that," he said. "If I was able to come back and play, I don't think I could have

made those plays.

"The first week, week and a half [after the surgery], I did some little things in the rehab room and then I started doing some running. I could run straight, but changing directions made it hurt. I thought, 'I can't play the way I want to play if I can't do those things.' And that's [changing directions] the main thing when you're playing the defensive line. It wasn't feeling better. I prayed about it a lot and then I woke up one morning and decided this was the best decision for me."

Maddy, Tech's most experienced and productive defensive lineman, becomes the latest in a list of all-conference caliber players sitting out this season. Guys like Calvin Cline, Brandon Facyson, Trey Edmunds and Shai McKenzie have missed all or most of the season. Marshawn Williams, Woody Baron and Chase Williams also have missed time. This alone partly explains why the Hokies have been shrouded in inconsistency.

But Maddy was the player whom the Hokies could least afford to lose. Tech possessed little depth at defensive tackle. Defensive line coach Charley Wiles had only five at the start of the season, and that included a true freshman (Ricky Walker).

In losing Maddy, the Hokies lost a third-team All-ACC player from last season, one who recorded 55 tackles, 6.5 sacks and 13.5 tackles for a loss. The loss of his presence showed in back-to-back Thursday night losses to Pittsburgh and Miami. The Panthers rushed for 210 yards and

the 'Canes rolled up 364 on the ground.

"Thursday night was the toughest because I knew if I was in the game, I could have done something to help the team," Maddy said a week after that Miami game. "That never happens to a Bud Foster defense, teams running for 300 yards. That's a rarity, especially in Lane Stadium. And Chase [Williams] wasn't playing either, so we didn't really have a leadership presence or experience that could direct the defense. In the middle of the defense, you can get vulnerable.

"If I was there, I think I could have helped. It was hard watching them run for 10 yards, 15 yards [a carry]. It was hard to watch, but they'll [the coaches and players] get it fixed."

For the Hokies, the silver lining in Maddy's situation is that he gives them a cornerstone player to build around for the 2015 season. He would anchor a defensive front seven that returns everyone but Williams.

For most in Maddy's situation, though, that would be a small consolation. He planned for a big senior season, and in turn, a hopefully bigger May (e.g. NFL Draft). Now he faces 4-6 months of rehab and additional months in waiting for next season.

"I like Blacksburg, though," he said. "Great people here."

That type of attitude certainly endears him to Tech fans, and it certainly serves him well. It beats the alternative.

For sure, it beats agonizing over the future. Maybe now he can get some rest.



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# Hall of Famers Grove and Suggs special on and off the field

Two of the brightest stars in Virginia Tech football history – center Jake Grove and tailback Lee Suggs – were inducted into Virginia Tech’s Sports Hall of Fame on Oct. 31 in Blacksburg.

Grove was a unanimous All-American and the 2003 winner of the Rimington Trophy, presented to the nation’s top collegiate center. Following the 2003 season, he was named a first-team All-American on all five of the major teams, becoming just the third unanimous All-American in school history.

Suggs rushed for 1,207 yards and led Division I-A in scoring during the 2000 season. His 27 rushing touchdowns and 28 total touchdowns that season are still all-time school single-season marks, as are his 168 total points that season. He was named the co-BIG EAST Offensive Player of the Year and was a unanimous pick for the All-BIG EAST first team.

During his Tech career, Suggs set the NCAA record by scoring at least one touchdown in 27 consecutive games. He still holds Tech’s record for total touchdowns (56), stands second in career points (336) and is sixth in career rushing (2,767).

I had the chance to visit with Grove and Suggs during their visit to Blacksburg for their induction.

**Bill: Guys, congratulations to both of you. What does this honor mean to you?**

**Jake:** “I’ve been given a lot of awards over the years, but this one is special because the people who worked with me and who helped make this happen are here. It means a lot. These people saw how I prepared and that I was passionate and



Lee Suggs (22) and Jake Grove (64) rank as two of the all-time greatest players - and people - in Virginia Tech history.

that I cared. And they cared about me.

“It’s kind of ironic that it rained here on Hall of Fame weekend for the BC game because, when I was a kid, I could only come to Tech games when my rec league game would be rained out. I was 8 years old for my first game at Lane Stadium. It was against Bowling Green, and it was raining. My dad and I were talking about that, that it was all wet, just like the first game he brought me to.”

**Lee:** “It’s been great to be back. I’ve gotten to see a lot of my teammates and people who I haven’t seen in years, so it’s a very special time. For me, to be from Roanoke and to go to school just up the street at Tech, it’s a very special

honor.”

**Bill: Jake, do you remember when you first arrived on campus here as a player? Did you think you’d ever be in the Tech Hall of Fame?**

**Jake:** “Ha, the first thing I thought about was did I belong? That Coach Beamer took a chance on me because, to be honest, I didn’t think I could play. I mean, I didn’t know if I could. I just wanted to show him that it was worth his time offering me a scholarship. Even if I couldn’t play, I was going to at least work hard.”

**Bill: You didn’t have very many offers coming out of high school, did you?**

**Jake:** “I had a partial offer to VMI and a full scholarship to Virginia Tech. That was it. Coach Beamer and Coach [Rickey] Bustle came to my high school to look at someone else. Then two weeks later, Coach Bustle called and said they were offering me a scholarship.”

**Bill: You turned out to be more than good – one of the best players in Virginia Tech history and one of the best centers in college football history. Was there a point during your career that the light went on?**

**Jake:** “Well, (pauses) I remember this: In 2000, we were playing at Miami, and it was really hot down there. I had to block two guys on one play – Damione Lewis the defensive tackle and Dan Morgan the middle linebacker. They were the best of the best, great college players who were both good NFL players, too. We had a third-and-5 and ran a zone play. I knocked down Lewis and then hit Morgan so hard that I about knocked myself out. We got the first down and I said to myself, ‘If I can block those two guys, I can block anyone.’”

**Bill: Lee, how about you? Do you remember your first big game?**

**Lee:** “Well, I was really excited for the Georgia Tech game in 2000, but then it got cancelled because of weather. We went down to East Carolina a couple weeks later, and I had a big night in my first real prime-time game. I remember getting a lot of confidence that night at East Carolina. But the real big game was Pitt. We were losing, and Mike [Vick] got knocked out of the game. Coach [Billy] Hite came into the locker room at halftime and challenged us. He told us that one of us had to step up because Mike was out for the game, and we were going to have to run the ball in the second half. I knew it would be me. I knew I would be the guy (he rushed for 164 yards and three touchdowns as the then-No. 2 Hokies rallied to beat Pittsburgh).”

**Bill: UConn.**

**Lee:** “Oh man. Every time I see UConn play in any sport, I think about that play.”

**Bill: That play occurred during the 2001 season opener. Early in the second half, you took the handoff, ran down the left sideline and then ... disaster.**

**Lee:** “It was a zone play. I got through the line and went left. I got to the second level and saw the safety. He had a bad angle on me, and he was going too fast. He was going to over-run the play. I was going to cut back, and if I got by him, I was going to score. No doubt, I was going to score. But I planted my leg and went down, and there was this sharp, burning,

shooting pain in my knee, most painful thing ever. I got up and walked off the field, and the trainers looked at my knee. They didn’t tell me anything, but I could tell by their faces that it wasn’t good.”

**Bill: You had torn your ACL. You were lost for the season after opening day in 2001.**

**Lee:** “It was hard. I didn’t want to watch football after that, wanted nothing to do with it any more. But Mike Goforth [associate AD for sports medicine] and Keith Doolan [senior director of sports medicine] worked with me. They kept me going every day at 8 a.m., rehabbing and coming back. I lost a little speed, but the knee was stronger than ever.”

**Bill: Lee, you scored at least one touchdown in every game when you came back – all 14 games and an NCAA-record 27 straight games overall – after the ACL injury. Yet in your Hall of Fame speech, you gave the credit to the doctors and trainers, and to Jake, André Davis and Jarrett Ferguson.**

**Lee:** “How could you not want to run behind Jake Grove? I mean, look at him! And André Davis would stretch the defense. And Jarrett just led the way into the end zone. Really, I just followed my fullback. Running the ball depends on so many things. I was just lucky to have a lot of great teammates.”

**Bill: You guys share this wonderful trait called humility that is special. You’re so very genuine as well, and that’s one reason why you were so popular as players here. Tell us what you’re doing now.**

**Jake:** “I’m coaching my high school football team with my old high school coach, and that keeps me busy. Plus, raising my two little girls. I live with my wife on our 260-acre farm in Forest.”

**Lee:** “I’m working for United Social Sports in Washington, D.C. We have 100,000 participants in adult leagues in the metro-D.C. area in sports from kickboxing to softball.”

Both Grove and Suggs spent much of the weekend talking about their families and their coaches and teammates. They were special players who earned their degrees, were named All-Americans, and had NFL careers. Now, they’re both parents of beautiful kids and raising families. These two guys were Hall of Fame players and Hall of Fame people even before they were elected into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame. They have worked so hard and certainly earned their well-deserved place in Tech immortality.

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student life | by Reyna Gilbert-Lowry

## Seniors ... what's next?



The Senior Transition Panel, comprised of (left to right) Lorenzo Williams, Courtney Liddle, Kevin Jones, Dr. Gary Bennett and Johanna Smith, are helping student-athletes as they transition out of college.

Research has shown that athletes who have a successful transition out of their sports are able to capitalize on transferable skills, but one of the main barriers to using these skills is that athletes may not be aware of them. The Senior Transition Seminar, sponsored by the Office of Student-Athlete Development, is combating that issue, focusing on assisting Virginia Tech student-athletes as they transition out of college athletics.

This program, which has been held for the past five years, allows seniors to define and identify transferable skills and to learn how to use them to achieve their postgraduate career goals. With the help of a panel of former Hokie student-athletes and also Clinical Psychologist Dr. Gary Bennett, and Johanna Smith, assistant director of career services, senior student-athletes were able to hear firsthand about what to expect during the transition out of athletics.

Athletics transition is an important aspect of being a college student-athlete. It is a topic that is often ignored because, for many student-athletes, contemplating life after college sports can be considered defeating or admitting to failure. Dr. Bennett shared that many student-athletes struggle with athletics transition when their sole identity is that of a student-athlete. The panel of former Hokie student-athletes played an integral role during the program by providing authentic information regarding their own personal experiences competing at the college level.

"I remember always being known as Courtney the softball player," former softball player Courtney Liddle (2010-13) said. "Once my senior year arrived, I realized that softball was not all I was and I had to start thinking about what else I was passionate about."

She shared that, once she got excited for what was next, her athletics performance improved and she was able to let go. Former football All-American Kevin Jones spent five years in the NFL with the Detroit Lions and Chicago Bears. He recently joined the Tech athletics staff in July as the special assistant to the director of athletics and shared with the seniors that determination and teamwork were two of the

most important skills attained through football that he uses in his current position.


"If you are determined enough to get what you want, you can do it," Jones said. "You can always take something that you may not be good at and make it better."

Passion seemed to be a consistent theme throughout the evening. Lorenzo "Zo" Williams began his career at Tech as a safety on the football team in 2008. After suffering several injuries and undergoing surgery during his junior year, Williams made the difficult decision to end his collegiate career early and admitted it took him a few years to determine what he was passionate about outside of football.

Williams went on to pursue his master's in higher education administration and post-secondary education at Arizona State University and returned to Blacksburg in September as a service center representative in human resources. He has dreams of continuing his education and earning his Ph.D.

Toward the conclusion of the evening, student-athletes were asked to share the top five skills they developed through athletics. Time management, competitiveness, teamwork and overcoming adversity were mentioned most often. They then had the opportunity to describe how these skills and others could be applicable to their professional development. Many of the students in attendance expressed anxiety about initiating the dialogue about life after college. Smith reminded them that it was not too late to begin thinking about how their transferable skills can play a role in assisting them in reaching their career goals.

"If you have never thought about them, then it's not too late," Smith said. "The first step is to start thinking about how your strengths can be transferable across the board."

The Senior Transition Seminar is a great way for seniors to begin the conversation about life after college athletics. It's never too early for Hokie student-athletes to begin thinking about the future and the Office of Student-Athlete Development staff will be there every step of the way to provide guidance during this challenging and exciting journey. 

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# JORDAN FISH

Volleyball | North Branch, Michigan

by Jimmy Robertson

*Jordan Fish ranks in the top five in career assists for the Tech volleyball program, and this past February, the senior made the All-ACC Academic Volleyball Team for the first time. She graduates next spring with a degree in human development, and she wants to become a college volleyball coach.*

**Q: You were originally in the human nutrition, foods and exercise program, but changed majors to human development. What prompted you to change majors?**

**JF:** “I started in HNFE because I thought I wanted to do physical therapy and stuff like that. But then I realized that I didn’t want to do that. I wanted to get into coaching, and I didn’t need to take HNFE classes if I wanted to go into coaching. Plus, I like human development. So that’s what I want to do when I graduate. I want to go into coaching.”

**Q: In high school, you played for a coach who obviously is very special to you. What was that like?**

**JF:** “My dad was my high school coach. It was awesome because I think he’s one of the greatest coaches. Our high school team always did really well. I’m from a small town where sports aren’t a big thing. He took the program from nothing to winning state championships, so I think he’s great. We won the state championship when I was there, and my little sister was on the team. So that was great.”

**Q: Given your parents’ professions, I’m guessing academics played a very important part of your life. Is that correct?**

**JF:** “My mom is a teacher, and my dad used to be a teacher, so academics are very important in our family. They both taught at my high school. There were some ups and downs to it. My dad used to be an English teacher, but at my high school, he was also the athletic director/assistant principal, and he was also my volleyball coach. Then my mom taught special ed [education] at my high school, so they were there – the whole time.”

**Q: You got a taste of coaching this summer when you went to the Dominican Republic with several other student-athletes as part of a leadership course. How difficult was it to teach children there**



**how to play volleyball? I would expect them to be more in tune with soccer.**

**JF:** “That’s what I thought, too, but then you introduce yourself and you tell them, ‘I’m so and so, and I play this sport.’ I told them that, ‘I’m Jordan and I play volleyball,’ and they just started cheering. They love volleyball. I had no idea. That surprised me.

“They had a concept of how to play. We didn’t have nets or anything. All we had were balls. We also didn’t speak Spanish, and they spoke Spanish. But when we did drills with them, simple drills, they were picking it up. A lot of them knew the basic concepts that we were teaching.


“You definitely had to coach. That was a challenge. You have kids from 8 to 18, and I can’t communicate with them. They’re running around, and you want to get them into a line, but they can’t understand what you’re saying. Athletes run camps all the time, but this was totally a different animal. It made me think, ‘Do I want to coach college, or are there any international opportunities out there that I could do because that was fun?’ I guess if that door opens, then it will open.”

**Q: What are your plans following graduation next spring?**

**JF:** “My plans after I graduate are to hopefully go to grad school and be a graduate assistant. I want to be around a volleyball team and learn how things are done and then get some experience. Then I’ll go from there.”

**Q: You have two sisters who are or have coached in college at some point. How do you go about becoming a college coach?**

**JF:** “My [older] sister [Sam Erger] is the director of operations at Baylor. She was the head coach at Hill College in Texas [a junior college]. My other sister [Kirstin] coached at Colorado Christian [in Lakewood, Colorado]. She teaches now.

“I’ve e-mailed coaches. That’s the route I’ve been told to go. A few had gotten back in touch with me. One was in Pennsylvania, and they told me there was a position open. I don’t know if I want to go to Pennsylvania. I’d like to go somewhere where my family is at because I’d like to live with them for free. I’m just keeping my options open.” 

# WILL JOHNSTON

Men’s Basketball | Midlothian, Virginia

by Jimmy Robertson

*This past spring, Will Johnston, a member of the Tech men’s basketball team, made the All-ACC Academic Team for men’s basketball for the first time. Johnston will graduate next spring with a degree in human nutrition, foods and exercise, and though he hasn’t decided completely, he is thinking about going to medical school and becoming a doctor after his undergrad days are complete.*

**Q: Why did you decide to major in human nutrition, foods and exercise?**

**WJ:** “I came in undecided and I was taking some environmental classes. Then I took an HNFE class, and I thought it was really interesting. It was about metabolism and nutrients, and I thought it was really cool. So I decided to major in that.”

**Q: That is the same major as your teammate, Christian Beyer. Do you guys have a lot of the same classes?**

**WJ:** “We’ve only been in one class together at the same time, but we’ve been able to confer about classes. He was in HNFE originally, so he’s taken most of the classes before me. He’s been able to help me more as far as which class to get in and what professor to take. I gave him some advice about physics, but that’s it. He’s definitely helped me more.”

**Q: What do you plan to do after graduation next May?**

**WJ:** “I’ve been planning on going to medical school, but recently I’ve begun to reconsider and think more about what I want to do. I’m going to take a year off. I took the MCATs [Medical College Admission Test] this year, and I didn’t get a good score, so I’m going to take them again. It was just too hard to study on my own during basketball season, with practices and games and taking classes. I’m going to take a year off and decide if I really want to go to medical school. It’s normal to take a year off. Some people take two or three years off before going to medical school.”

**Q: When will you decide if you want to go to medical school?**

**WJ:** “I would decide by the time I graduated or shortly thereafter. Usually you take MCATs the year before matriculation. So, say I wanted to go to medical school right after I graduate in the spring,




you would usually take the MCAT the spring of your junior year or the beginning of the summer. You can take the MCATs all the way up to that fall. I could study all summer and take it at the end of the summer or the beginning of the fall. Then I could enroll in med school the following fall.”

**Q: What originally led to you wanting to pursue a degree in the medical profession?**

**WJ:** “I like helping others, and that was probably the main thing. That, and knowing that it was hard work, and I like to work hard. It’s a position of prestige and power, and I want to work toward something like that. The only reason I’ve been reconsidering it is because of the MCATs and hearing from doctors I’ve been shadowing about what they would do if they could do it over. A lot of them wouldn’t go through it because of the debt and lower and lower pay due to the insurance

situation. So I want to take a step back before I dive into the four years of going down that path. I haven’t ruled it out, but I need to take in every option.”

**Q: You did a field study this past summer at a local hospital. How did that go, and what did you learn?**

**WJ:** “I did a field study with LewisGale Hospital Montgomery with Dr. [David] Stoeckle [a general surgeon] and Dr. [Daniel] Osimani [a cardiologist]. At the beginning of the summer, I did an internship where I shadowed an oral surgeon. Dr. Stoeckle is the one I did about 80 hours with. I got to see tons of surgeries. I was all over the hospital seeing stuff, so that was really cool. I got to learn what it was like to be in the actual field and not just in a class. It was cool to be in front of it and see it first hand if you were in the profession.” 





Jerry Gaines (left), Anne Jones and Lynne Jones were recognized at the Tech-BC game for their roles in shaping Tech athletics. Also, Dora Dobbins, the wife of former Tech football player John Dobbins, was recognized. John Dobbins, who passed away in 2003, was the school's first African-American football player.

# CIVIL RIGHTS ACT HELPS BREAK SPORTS BOUNDARIES

Fifty years ago, a landmark piece of legislation opened doors for minorities and women, and people like Jerry Gaines, John Dobbins and Anne and Lynne Jones became pioneers at Tech, showing the way for those coming behind them

by Jimmy Robertson

In a lot of ways, Jerry Gaines is the typical Virginia Tech alum. He owns a house in Portsmouth, Virginia, not terribly far from where he was raised. He spent nearly 40 years doing something that he loved and once was named the best in his area at his profession. He got married and raised three children – all of whom went to Tech – and they all love Tech football.

“I can’t stay in the same room as them and watch a game,” Gaines quietly chuckled. “My daughters had never watched a game until they went to Tech. Now they’re calling defenses. I can’t stay in the same room.”

Gaines said this affectionately. He loves his family, loves his life, loves where his career took him and where it continues to take him, and he loves Virginia Tech. After a conversation with this gentle man and gentleman, one can safely make those assumptions.

But he is not the typical Tech alum. He never, ever will be, no matter how much maroon and orange adorns his wardrobe or how vociferously he cheers during a game.

Jerry Gaines is the pioneer that he never set out to be. In the fall of 1967, exactly 47 years ago, he became the first African-American student-athlete in the history of Virginia Tech.

“I did not go there to be a pioneer,” Gaines said. “It just happened that way.”

**CIVIL RIGHTS ACT AND ATHLETICS**

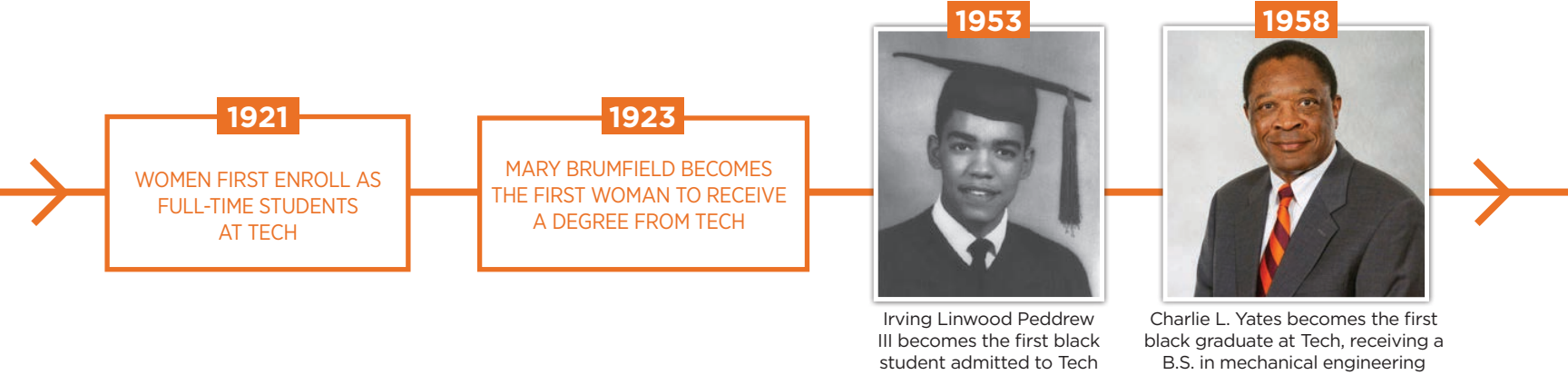
To understand the challenges Gaines faced as the first African-American student-athlete at Tech, one must first understand the tumultuous decades of the 1950s and 1960s. The United States was coming out of World War II, and the civil rights movement had kicked off. A series of ugly incidents, mostly related to race, headlined

a roughly 20-year span.

America, though, began the process of overcoming itself in 1964. This past July 2 marked the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Signed by then-President Lyndon B. Johnson, this historic piece of legislation outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It ended segregation in schools, at the workplace and by facilities that served the general public.

To its credit, Virginia Tech started integrating well before 1964. The school started admitting women in 1921, and in 1923, Mary Brumfield became the first woman to receive a degree.

In 1953, the school started admitting African-Americans, with Irving Peddrew III becoming the first African-American admitted to the school. With Peddrew’s admission, the university moved ahead of court orders and became the first



historically white, four-year public institution among the 11 states in the former Confederacy to admit a black undergraduate.

Peddrew ended up leaving after his junior year. Charlie Yates became the first African-American to receive a degree from Tech, graduating in 1958 with a degree in mechanical engineering.

The school’s athletics department, though, was a little slower to embrace change. It took 14 years to pass from the time the university started admitting African-Americans before the athletics department welcomed its first African-American with Gaines’ enrollment in 1967.

It came about, really, because of the bravery of a man named Marty Pushkin, Tech’s track and field coach at the time. Pushkin took over the program in 1964, and he became aware of Gaines’ track exploits by reading the newspapers. He ultimately called Gaines and invited him to campus for a visit, with the intention of giving him a scholarship.

But first, he had to sell then-AD Frank Moseley on the idea.

“He had reservations,” said Pushkin, who lives in Morgantown, West Virginia, after retiring as the West Virginia University track and field coach in 2001, though he still helps with the team as a volunteer coach. “He had concerns about where he [Gaines] was going to live, where he was going to eat, things like that. That seems ridiculous now, but those were the concerns back then.

“But he went along with it. He allowed me to pursue him – and I did.”

Gaines, who had left Crestwood High in Chesapeake, Virginia, to attend integrated Churchland High School in Portsmouth, Virginia, for his final year because it offered him more of an opportunity to showcase his athletics ability, came to Blacksburg for his visit. He knew there were no African-American athletes at

Tech at the time, but that didn’t stop him from deciding to come to school at Tech.

“Was it a worry? No,” Gaines said. “My parents had raised us [he and his four siblings] the right way. We were taught to do the right things and to respect others. I never had an issue getting along with people. That was never going to be an issue for me.

“I didn’t go to Virginia Tech to be a pioneer. That was not my motivation. I went there because Tech showed more interest in me than anyone else. They were willing to put their money where their mouth was.”

**OVERCOMING LONELINESS**

Gaines presents an interesting portrayal of his days at Tech. By any account, his was an overwhelming success story. He broke records, he served honorably in the Corps of Cadets and he graduated.

But he referred to his time at Tech as lonely, a sad reflection of those times. His teammates treated him fairly, but they rarely invited him out on weekends free from practice or competition. The implication was clear: it was OK to practice together, but not be seen in public with a black guy.

“It was never said, but it was demonstrated,” he said. “Everybody went out and socialized. I spent a lot of time practicing and studying.”

There were a smattering of black students on campus at the time, but Gaines rarely associated with them. Actually, he rarely saw them.

Gaines lived in Miles Hall with the school’s other athletes. Track practices, classes, schoolwork and his Corps responsibilities ate up most of his time. He immersed himself in that rather than seek out company.

“As an athlete, I was isolated,” he said. “The other students hardly ever saw me. Socializing was way down on my list of priorities. With track, my whole year was taken up [between

indoor and outdoor seasons]. I don’t know if the other black students understood that.”

Gaines was quick to say that he never experienced overt racism during his time at Tech. But hidden racism certainly existed, at the least in small doses.

Once, while he walked past Lee Hall, which resides on what is now known as Washington Street, a young man dropped an egg from an upper-story window. The egg missed Gaines, meeting its demise on the sidewalk, and the remnants splattered on Gaines’ pants. Gaines saw who threw the egg and marched up to the young man’s room to confront him.

To this day, he regrets doing that.

“That was not a good response,” Gaines said. “I’m ashamed that got to me. You see signs and signals [of racism] and it builds, and sometimes, someone does something to push you over the top. I did confront him, and he got an earful from me, but I didn’t feel proud afterward.

“I should have walked away. I needed to get even with my performance on the track. That was my opportunity. I could draw satisfaction from that. It was legal, and it would bring honor to my existence.”

Gaines certainly made a name for himself on the track – though sometimes in spite of the university’s athletics department. Gaines wore glasses, which can be cumbersome during competition, so Pushkin advocated for the purchase of contact lenses. The athletics department said no.

Pushkin also requested a new sweat suit for Gaines after he qualified for the NCAA Championships as a freshman. The athletics department again said no, giving him instead basketball sweats. Gaines refused to wear them.

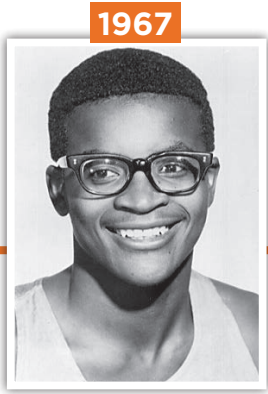
“I appreciated Marty’s efforts,” Gaines said. “He was very warm and welcoming to me. He pushed to help me. The university did not help.”

Incidents like these, though, were few. In fact,

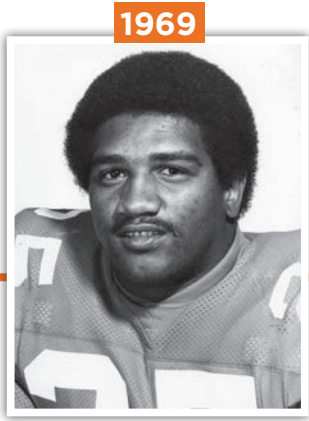


1966

LINDA ADAMS, JACQUELYN BUTLER, LINDA EDMONDS, FREDDIE HAIRSTON, MARGUERITE HARPER AND CHIQUITA HUDSON BECOME THE FIRST BLACK FEMALES TO ENROLL AT TECH



Jerry Gaines becomes the first black athlete to participate for Tech, earning a full scholarship in track and field



John Dobbins becomes the first black athlete to play football at Tech, though he didn't play as a freshman (as per NCAA rules in that era)

1969

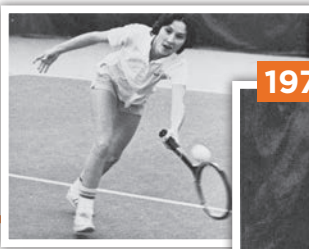
CHARLIE LIPSCOMB BECOMES THE FIRST BLACK STARTER ON THE BASKETBALL TEAM AT TECH

1970

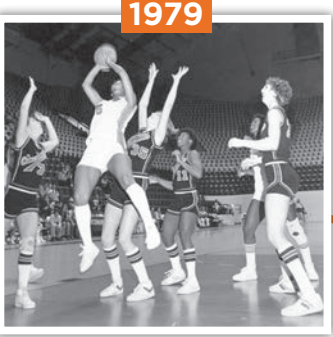
FIRST FEMALE INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS TEAM AT TECH IS ORGANIZED (WOMEN'S BASKETBALL)

1974

TED MANLEY BECOMES THE FIRST BLACK HEAD COACH AT TECH (MEN'S SWIMMING)



Anne (top) and Lynne (right) Jones, twin sisters, become the first women to receive scholarships at Tech, joining the women's tennis team



Sandy Berry Copeland becomes the first black female to receive a scholarship at Tech, joining the women's basketball team

Gaines refuses to dwell on them and instead remembers the ones who reached out at the risk of offending society’s perceptions at that time.

“For every negative, there were five or six positives,” Gaines said. “That’s what kept me going. Often, people I didn’t know would come along and do something nice at the stigma of being seen with me, and I found that to be very encouraging, especially considering the times and the geographic location, with Virginia Tech being in Southwest Virginia.”

Gaines was a curiosity to some of his teammates, many of whom had never been in contact with an African-American. Most came to respect and admire Gaines, though often as time passed. In fact, one of his former teammates sent Gaines a congratulatory letter after President Barack Obama became the first African-American president in U.S. history.

“I still have that letter,” Gaines said. “Those are the types of things that make you maroon and orange. It’s like an eternal virus. You’ll

always have it.”

As an athlete, Gaines broke the school record in the long jump – a record that had been in place for 40 years. He left Tech with three school records. He still shares the school’s indoor mark in the 120-yard hurdles, and he ranks second in the outdoor long jump and fourth in the indoor long jump. His outdoor mark was just broken by Jeff Artis-Gray last year.

Following his graduation with a degree in Spanish, Gaines served a stint in the Army. Then he became a Spanish teacher at Western Branch High School in Chesapeake, Virginia, where he also coached track. In 1987, he received the High School Coach of the Year honor by the Portsmouth Sports Club, and in 1990, the city of Chesapeake named him the Teacher of the Year. He worked at Western Branch for 29 years and then spent 10 years at Great Bridge High School as an assistant principal before retiring in 2011.

Gaines also was the first African-American inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of

Fame (1990). Interestingly, many of his students never knew of his role in Tech history until after they graduated from high school.

“I never shared that information,” he said. “Very often, my former students will come up to me and say, ‘You never told me,’ and I’ll say, ‘That’s right. I didn’t.’”

“They didn’t need to know. I didn’t want that to change the way they looked at me. All I wanted them to know was that there was somebody in their lives who cared deeply about them and their successes.”

Today, Gaines gives motivational speeches, and he’s also written a book entitled “40 Stories High” in which he recounts stories about students whom he taught and mentored. He still comes to Blacksburg regularly, as a father of three Tech graduates and a fan of Virginia Tech. He’s also a proud alum, and in his eyes, more so than a pioneer.

“Very much so,” he said when asked if he was a fan of Virginia Tech despite what he went

through during his career. “You can’t graduate from that place and not be.”

**DOBBINS ANOTHER PIONEER**

Former Tech football player John Dobbins passed away in 2003, but to get an indication of how much he loved Virginia Tech, consider the outfit that his longtime wife, Dora, had him dressed in before laying him to rest.

“When he passed, I told my children that I was going to have to put him in a Hokie shirt,” Dora

Dobbins said. “When we had the services, I put him in a Hokie sweatshirt, and his casket had the Hokie flag in the background. He was truly a fan. He loved the Hokies.”

Dobbins, though, was more than a fan or a player. He, like Gaines, was a pioneer. He was the first African-American scholarship football player at Tech.

Few people knew this when he passed away of a heart attack while walking into the Volvo plant in nearby Dublin, Virginia, his place of work for

nearly 30 years. The truth is, like Gaines before him, he never saw himself as a pioneer, so he rarely talked about his role in Tech history.

“He was a very quiet man,” Dora Dobbins said. “He didn’t talk a lot about it. He really didn’t. In fact, there were a lot of people who didn’t know it. When he passed away and they [media members] started doing the articles about him and had his picture on TV, people were saying, ‘I didn’t realize that.’ It just wasn’t something he talked about.”

John Dobbins arrived at Tech in the fall of



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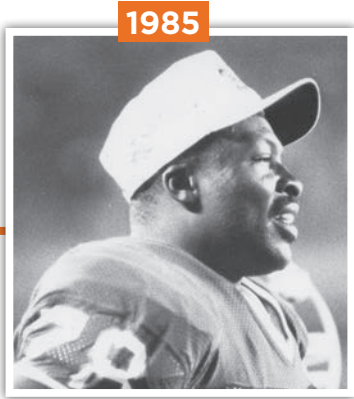


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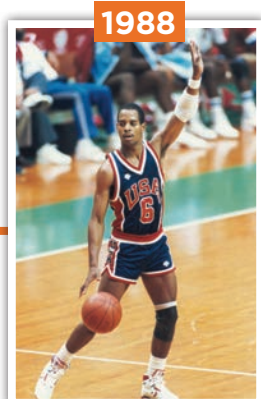
1985  
Bruce Smith becomes the school's first overall top selection in an NFL Draft, going to the Buffalo Bills



1987  
Renee Dennis becomes the first female athlete to have her jersey retired after becoming the all-time leading scorer in women's basketball



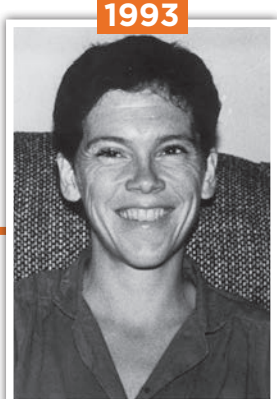
1988  
Frankie Allen becomes the first black head men's coach at Tech



1988  
Bimbo Coles, who would become the school's all-time leading scorer, becomes the university's first Olympian



1990  
Jerry Gaines became the first black athlete to be inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame



1993  
Lucy Hawks Banks (track and field) becomes the first female athlete inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame



1997  
Renee Dennis becomes the first female black athlete to be inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame

1969 after being recruited as a running back out of nearby Radford High School by then-head coach Jerry Claiborne. In fact, Dobbins and his high school teammate, Tommy Edwards, a white running back and defensive back, signed to play for the Gobblers live on Claiborne's coaches' show.

This came two years after Gaines broke the color barrier. Dobbins, though, enjoyed a somewhat different experience than Gaines, partly because he arrived two years later and times were changing rapidly in those days. Also, unlike Gaines, Dobbins understood Southwest Virginia in the late 1960s, and he understood Virginia Tech. After all, he lived just 15 minutes from campus.

Dobbins grew up as a Virginia Tech fan, even though the team had no black players and the school had few black students. He knew all about the Gobblers. His high school coaches often brought him to games.

His knowledge of the players and program enabled him to adapt socially a little easier than Gaines. He and his teammates would hang out together, even after he and Dora got married during his junior season. Like Gaines, though, he never really encountered overt acts of racism.

"He had a pretty good experience at Tech," Dora Dobbins said. "The things that happened were more in high school, things like the name-calling, and when they stopped to eat, they wouldn't allow blacks to come in. He went through that in high school. I don't think he went through those experiences at Tech.

"He and [former Tech quarterback] Don Strock were roommates. Dave Strock was a good friend and Bobby Dabbs was, too. They would all come over to our apartment after games, and I would cook. We got along really good. We really did."

After sitting out his freshman season as required by NCAA rules, Dobbins played the next three

years, and he rushed for 705 yards and scored three touchdowns in his career. He amassed 1,261 all-purpose yards.

He wore No. 25 during his playing days at Tech. In a recent conversation with former Tech tailback Kevin Jones, Dora Dobbins and her daughter told Jones that John thought highly of Jones, and it seemed like fate intervened when Jones changed from No. 7 to No. 25 shortly after Dobbins' passing.

"We were telling Kevin the story, and he got kind of emotional," Dora said. "He said, 'You just never know why things happen in life. Now I know why I changed my number to 25.'"

Following his playing days, John Dobbins taught at a pre-vocational school in Roanoke for two years. Then he landed the job at Volvo, where he worked his way into a supervisor's position.

Dobbins and his wife have bought football season tickets since the 1970s. They took their two children to games back then and let them run around on the bleachers because, as Dora laughed, "There was nobody hardly there."

She kept the season tickets even after Dobbins' passing. It seemed to be the perfect tribute to a quiet man who loved her and Virginia Tech, one who kept his role as a pioneer to himself.

"Some people go on and on about things, but he just wasn't like that," Dora said. "John did so much in the community, but he did not want any recognition. He didn't want people to know that he had bought this child shoes or things like that. If he had any problems at Tech, he didn't tell me about them. He seemed to get along fine with the guys. He had a good experience.

"He liked Tech. He was a big fan."

**WOMEN'S RISE TO PROMINENCE IN TECH ATHLETICS**

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 not only prohibited

racial discrimination, but also discrimination based on sex. This was designed to ensure that women would have a way to fight discrimination in the workplace, just as minorities would be able to fight racial discrimination.

Eight years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed, another law entitled Title IX was passed. This law requires gender equity for boys and girls in every educational program that receives federal funding. Most people view Title IX through the prism of college athletics, but this law addresses many other areas, too (access to higher education, career education, education for pregnant and parenting students, employment, etc.).

Virginia Tech began introducing women's sports not long after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed. In 1967, the school hired its first full-time female health and physical education instructor, Shirley Ann Mell, who organized a women's intramural program. In 1970, the school sanctioned its first varsity sport – swimming.

In 1976, the university initiated a search for its first director of women's intercollegiate athletics and hired Jo Kafer, who was expected to direct the women's intercollegiate program, coach, and lead the development of women's sports. She oversaw basketball, swimming, tennis, and track and field, and she later oversaw volleyball and field hockey after the university added those two sports in 1977.

Many today consider her the pioneer of Tech's women's sports.

"She was the one who really got women's sports going," Anne Jones said.

Jones and her twin sister, Lynne, were the first female athletes at Tech to receive scholarship aid. The War, West Virginia, natives came to Tech largely because the aid they received – and Kafer, who also coached field hockey, was the one

who recruited them and offered them the partial scholarships even though she wasn't the tennis coach.

"That's the only school we really wanted to come to," Anne Jones said. "We also looked at Marshall and the University of Kentucky. My father went to Marshall, so we had to look at Marshall.

"Our first goal was to keep playing tennis

because we just loved tennis, but I wouldn't say the scholarship was the goal. It was definitely something we wanted. It helped us come out of state. We probably wouldn't have come to Virginia Tech otherwise. So in that respect, we really wanted the scholarship from Tech. We had been down a couple of times for football games with our father, and we loved the school."

Anne Jones went on to become a terrific tennis

player at Tech, winning nearly 65 percent of her matches during her career. She enjoyed her time at Tech, though the school had only modest tennis facilities, and both the men's team and women's team practiced at night because the university rented the courts during the day and wanted to keep that revenue stream. There was also little in the way of locker room amenities.

"We didn't have a locker room," Jones said.

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“The women’s training room was down on the second floor [of the Jamerson Athletics Center], and it was small, and there was a locker room off the end of that. All the women’s sports shared that except for women’s basketball. We shared the locker room and the training room.”

Jones graduated in 1981 with a degree in health and physical education. In 1984, she got her master’s degree from Tech in exercise physiology.

Not long after she got her master’s, she got a call from Kafer. She was working a tennis camp, and Kafer wanted to know if Jones would be interested in the women’s tennis coaching position at Tech.

In September of 1984, Jones became a pioneer for the second time – she was the first full-time women’s tennis coach in Tech history.

“Some of the other coaches had been teaching or working in other areas,” Jones said. “I was the first full-time women’s tennis coach – no teaching or anything like that. I made \$7,000 a year.”

Jones coached at Tech for 16 years, winning 260 matches and losing just 159 – she’s the winningest women’s tennis coach in Tech history. She also led the Hokies to the Atlantic 10 Conference title five times and earned Coach of the Year honors five times. She retired following the 2000 season.

Her playing career and coaching tenure coincided with some of the biggest changes in regards to women’s sports at Tech. The athletics department started putting more resources into its women’s programs – and the subsequent results were championships, as Jones can attest.

“We ended up with better facilities and more funding,” she said. “We were able to travel more, and we got an assistant coach. We were able to give the full compliment of scholarships.”

Tech’s moves into the BIG EAST and later the ACC for athletics resulted in increases in financial payouts from those conferences. That money has been used to help women’s sports, and the athletics department is one of a small group of schools in compliance with Title IX standards. Last year, then-AD Jim Weaver added women’s golf to the slate.

“I think Tech has done a good job,” Jones said. “I really do. I imagine there are some people who would disagree with that, but I think, as far as coming along and the quality of the Olympic sports, I think they’ve done a good job.”

WATCHING THE NEXT GENERATION

Fifty years ago, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 changed America forever, and gradually, played a role in changing the landscape of college athletics. It opened doors, not just ones that had

been shut, but also locked.

On Nov. 1, at halftime of Tech’s football game against Boston College, athletics department officials took the time to recognize Gaines, the Dobbins family and the Jones twins for their roles in shaping the history of Tech athletics. Michael Vick, Bruce Smith and Kevin Jones came to prominence because of people like Gaines and Dobbins. Amy Wetzel, Angela Tincher and Queen Harrison received scholarships as female superstar athletes because the Jones twins broke that barrier.

If nothing else, the recognition during the BC game served to educate Tech fans, alums and students, many of whom know nothing, or very little, about these trailblazers.

Of course, that doesn’t really bother them. They don’t view themselves in that light anyway.

“I never think of it that way, but we probably were,” Anne Jones said.

“That’s just the way it turned out,” Gaines said. “I did not wish to make it a big deal. I wanted to be known as someone who came along and added something without leaving dirty footprints.”

None of these individuals left dirty footprints. On the contrary, in fact.

But they certainly left large ones, ones that can never be filled. And hopefully, the coming generations appreciate that.

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# SIX MORE INDUCTED INTO THE VIRGINIA TECH SPORTS HALL OF FAME

by Jimmy Robertson

On Oct. 31, the Virginia Tech athletics department inducted six new members into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame at a banquet on the Tech campus. The new inductees bring the total number enshrined to 175. The Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame was established in 1982. Here’s a closer look at each new inductee:



Brendon de Jonge



Ashlee Dobbe



Jake Grove



Ieva Kublina



Lee Suggs



Dawn Will

**BRENDON DE JONGE (1999-2003)**

Brendon de Jonge doesn’t have a lot of free time these days. As a professional on golf’s PGA Tour, he finds himself traveling all over the world playing golf, especially now that the PGA Tour has implemented a wraparound schedule that essentially eliminates any sort of offseason – the tour schedule starts in October and ends the following September.

De Jonge’s career thus led him to Malaysia during Virginia Tech’s Hall of Fame weekend, and much like former teammate Johnson Wagner did a year ago, he sacrificed coming to the banquet that honored him and five others for induction to the Hall. That sort of cemented de Jonge’s thoughts on the PGA Tour’s wraparound schedule.

“Honestly, I’m not a big fan of it,” he said. De Jonge hated missing the festivities, and he also missed coming to Blacksburg. He and his family come to town for one or two football games each fall. A native Zimbabwean, he’s become quite the fan of football, particularly Virginia Tech style.

The attraction started during his playing days at Tech, where he enjoyed an All-America career. He burst onto the scene as a freshman when he was named the team’s co-MVP and finished third at the 2000 Atlantic 10 Golf Championship. It marked quite the inaugural debut for someone who grew up more than 8,000 miles from Blacksburg.



“Now, that first winter was tough. I had never seen snow before, and that caught me off guard.

“I had a very easy transition,” de Jonge said of coming from Zimbabwe in eastern Africa to Blacksburg. “I fit in quickly. We were such a close-knit team, and we all got along. Everyone enjoyed each other’s company.

But other than that, everything went smoothly.”

During the fall of 2000, de Jonge became the first Hokie ever to win two tournaments in one season when he notched back-to-back titles at the NCAA East Regional Preview and the ODU/ SeaScape. His stroke average that fall (72.1) was the lowest ever for a Tech golfer. Over the course of the 2000-01 season, de Jonge helped Tech win a nation’s-best six tournaments, including the BIG EAST Championship. He then finished 22nd at the NCAA Championship, pacing the Hokies to eighth place as a team.

Entering the spring of his junior season, de Jonge was ranked seventh nationally. He helped Tech to its second consecutive BIG EAST team title before fracturing a rib. He bounced back and toughed out a ninth-place finish at the NCAA Central Regional. De Jonge earned second-team All-America honors during the season and was named the Player of the Year in the state of Virginia. He also played in the East-West Matches, winning his match.

As a senior, de Jonge won the BIG EAST Conference individual title on the way to second-team All-America honors. He finished his Tech career as the Hokies’ all-time leader in stroke average at 72.60 per round.

On the PGA Tour this past season, de Jonge played in 31 events and made the cut 24 times,

earning more than \$1.1 million. He recorded two top-10 finishes and four top-25 finishes.

He currently lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife, Mary, and their family. Many of his former teammates live in Charlotte, along with many Hokie fans.

But then de Jonge is never far from Hokie fans. “It’s unbelievable,” he said. “I was playing in the British Open, and this guy yells, ‘Go Hokies!’ It’s a proud sporting institution, with a lot of proud alumni. I’m proud to be one of them.”

**ASHLEE DOBBE (1998-2002)**

Former Tech softball player Ashlee Dobbe is currently wrapping up her residency on her path toward becoming an orthopaedic surgeon. That certainly appears to be the perfect career choice for her. After all, she operated rather efficiently in the softball circle during her playing days in Blacksburg.



Dobbe became the third softball player to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, joining Michelle Meadows (2010) and Clarissa Crowell (2013). Until Angela Tincher came around, the Canadian held just about every school record for pitching, which is amazing considering she never expected to play at Tech.

“To be honest, I never thought I was going anywhere,” she said. “I was going to stay in British Columbia and go to Simon Fraser University. I was playing softball and maybe was going to consider volleyball, and that was it.”

The success of her former Canadian summer team teammates – former Tech teammates Kara Krumhardt and Michelle Johnson – swayed her, and she got off to a fast start with the Tech softball

team in 1999 on her way to a record-setting career as a pitcher. She accounted for 29 wins in the circle as a freshman, sparking the Hokies to a program-record 54 victories. She threw 34 complete games, 17 shutouts, and posted a 0.92 earned run average, gathering Atlantic 10 Conference Rookie of the Year honors and a spot on the all-conference team.

As a sophomore, Dobbe tossed three no-hitters, including the school’s first perfect game. She also broke her own school record for strikeouts in a game when she fanned 18 batters against Youngstown State, including 17 in a row at one point. She repeated as an All-Atlantic 10 selection and also earned second-team All-Northeast Region honors.

The perfect game ranked as one of Dobbe’s most memorable moments.

“That was pretty exciting to do it, and for us, as a team to do it,” she said. “But a lot of my memories are more of the silly things we did in practice or in conditioning. Also, breaking into the top 25 [poll] ... I don’t think any of us as a team would have expected to do that. It’s really hard to pinpoint one memory.”

Tech moved to the BIG EAST Conference in 2001, and despite undergoing shoulder surgery during the summer, Dobbe posted 15 wins and a team-low 1.20 ERA that was fifth best in the league. She doubled those wins during her senior campaign, posting 30 wins during a 42-18 season that saw Tech fall just short of an NCAA Regional bid. Dobbe threw a no-hitter against Tennessee that season and broke her own season record for strikeouts with 290.

Dobbe still ranks second in career wins (93), ERA (1.36), strikeouts (926), shutouts (47) and complete games (111), and is third all-time in winning percentage (.694).

Dobbe graduated from Tech in 2002 with a degree in human nutrition, foods and exercise (she also had a minor in chemistry). She played overseas in Holland and New Zealand before deciding to go to medical school in Vancouver and become a doctor.

“It [becoming a doctor] was in the back of my mind when I chose my degree,” she said. “I made sure it would meet any requirements. I shadowed some of the doctors there [at Tech], just thinking about it. It was always in the back of my mind, but I never knew for sure.”

Dobbe finished medical school in 2010 and is wrapping up a five-year residency in orthopaedic surgery training in Edmonton, Alberta. Provided she passes her exams in May, she will be an orthopaedic surgeon, and then she plans on doing a pediatric orthopaedic fellowship, specializing in kids with orthopaedic injuries.

**JAKE GROVE (2000-04)**

Tech fans probably would be surprised to hear Jake Grove tell of his most memorable moment as a Hokie. It came moments before he took the Lane Stadium field for the first time as a Tech player.

“I’d say it was when we were getting ready to play Georgia Tech in the Black Coaches Association game [in 2000],” he said. “That would have been my first game. I was about to have a heart attack in the locker room before the game. I was so nervous. I was terrified to go step out on the field and play college football in front that many people. I was praying that the game would get cancelled and then it actually did get cancelled. That was a pretty memorable way to start my career.”



Suffice it to say, Grove overcame his early-career uneasiness. He played every game as a redshirt freshman in 2000 and then worked his way into the starting lineup the next season, ultimately becoming a rare three-year starter on the offensive line.

Grove won over the hearts of Tech fans because of his toughness. As a redshirt sophomore, he played the last eight games with a broken hand – and still led the team with 48 knockdowns.

Grove became a dominant center his final two seasons at Tech. He graded at better than 90 percent as a redshirt junior, and at the end of his senior season, he earned first-team All-America honors on five different teams, becoming the third unanimous All-American in Tech history. He also won the Dave Rimington Trophy, which goes annually to the nation’s top center.

It was a meteoric rise for a young man who was lightly recruited coming out of Jefferson Forest High School near Lynchburg, Virginia.

“Things really fell into place for me,” Grove said. “I worked very hard while I was at Tech. I couldn’t



have done it without my teammates and my coaches, as well as the professors who helped me get my degree. It's such a great place to go to school and play football. I would never change a thing."

Following his senior season, Grove was a second-round National Football League draft pick of the Oakland Raiders. He played six full seasons in the league – five with Oakland and one with the Miami Dolphins. Despite nagging knee and shoulder injuries, he started 56 of his 66 games in the NFL.

After retiring from the NFL, Grove ultimately found his way back home. He bought a farm near the one where he grew up – and which his parents still run – and lives there with his wife and two daughters.

This past summer, Grove's high school coach, Bob Christmas, returned to Forest, Virginia, to take over the reins of Jefferson Forest's football program again. He asked Grove to join his coaching staff. Grove spent a couple of weeks thinking about it before Christmas called to get a decision.

Christmas called on the day Grove's grandfather passed away.

"You can call it a sign or whatever," Grove said. "It was interesting how it worked out. When I was at Tech, I talked a lot about my grandfather in different interviews. He was a very important

part of my life. I decided that it [being a high school assistant coach] was something I would be committed to and was ready to embrace the challenge. It's been a really good experience thus far. I've thoroughly enjoyed coaching."

Grove's Tech jersey was retired in 2006. He will be honored at this year's ACC Night of Legends event in Charlotte, North Carolina, the night before the ACC title game.

IEVA KUBLINA (2000-04)

Ieva Kublina's impact on the women's basketball program at Virginia Tech is still easy to see. All one has to do is look at the Hokies' record book.

The former center from Riga, Latvia, is currently ranked among the top 10 players in 15 of the 20 major career individual statistical categories at Tech and still remains among the top five in 10 of those.

Kublina appeared in 31 games as a freshman in 2000-01 and went on to play in all 126 games of her Tech career. She started 98 of those games, including the last 95 in a row. As a sophomore, she posted career bests of 15.8 points per game and 7.8 rebounds a contest. She was named the BIG EAST Conference's Most Improved Player that season and was picked to the WNIT All-Tournament team after helping the Hokies to the semifinals.

Tech won more than 20 games and went to postseason tournaments all four years Kublina played. The Hokies posted wins in six of their 10 tournament games, with Kublina earning first-



team All-BIG EAST honors in 2003 and second-team recognition in 2002 and 2004. She is still first all time at Tech in blocked shots (256), second in rebounds (845) and games played (126) and third in points (1,647).

"My experience at Virginia Tech was great," Kublina said. "It helped me to develop in many ways. I have always said that if I did not have the college-athlete experience in my life, I would not be the person that I am today. So I'm grateful and thankful to have had that experience."

Kublina was a third-round pick of Indiana in the 2004 WNBA Draft. She also played for Latvia in the 2008 Summer Olympics. She currently lives in Ramava, Latvia, and has been playing professionally in FIBA EuroLeague Women since 2005.

"For these past 10 years, I was playing professionally in Europe, and during summers, I played for the Latvian National Team," Kublina said. "We participated in many European championships and Olympic games. I stopped my basketball career in August, and right now, I am working at the International School of Latvia. Unfortunately, since I graduated from Virginia Tech, I haven't been back, but it's been on my mind for a while that sometime I would like to go back for a visit."

Kublina was unable to make it back to Blacksburg for the Hall of Fame banquet and the football game against BC.

LEE SUGGS (1999-2003)

Though now he lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, Lee Suggs spent several years of his



post-Tech career in Ohio, and he made several wagers on his beloved Hokies when they took on Ohio State on Sept. 6. Later on that evening, he felt as though he had won the lottery.

"It felt good," he said. "Living up there, people in Ohio think Ohio State can do no wrong. It felt

good that night."

Suggs left Tech fans feeling great on many occasions following a storied career from 1999-2002. He rushed for more than 1,000 yards on two occasions, joining Cyrus Lawrence and Roscoe Coles as the only players in school history to do so.

Suggs holds three single-season school records, which include marks for total touchdowns (28 in 2000), rushing touchdowns (27 in 2000) and points scored (168 in 2000). He also holds the career marks for total touchdowns (56) and rushing touchdowns (53).

That alone makes him more than worthy of entering the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame.


"I was honored," he said. "I wasn't aware that you had to be out of school 10 years. I saw a couple of years ago where André [Davis] did [gain induction into the Hall]. I was wondering if it was going to happen, and if it did, when it was going to happen. Then I got the letter and saw where you had to be 10 years out, so I felt really honored. It's a good feeling."

Suggs burst onto the scene as a redshirt sophomore during the 2000 season, rushing for 1,207 yards and leading Division I-A in scoring. He was named the co-BIG EAST Offensive Player of the Year and was a unanimous pick for first-team All-BIG EAST after setting six conference

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records. He also earned third-team All-America honors from The Associated Press and Football News.

Suggs tore his ACL in the first game of the 2001 season and missed the remainder of that year. But he bounced back for his final season, rushing for a personal-best 1,325 yards and 22 total touchdowns in 2002.

Suggs scored touchdowns in all 14 games that season, setting an NCAA Division I-A season record for most games scoring a touchdown, a mark he still shares. During his Tech career, Suggs broke a 32-year-old NCAA Division I-A record by scoring at least one touchdown in 27 consecutive games, a mark he still shares. The previous mark was 23 straight games.

The only thing that ended the streak was time – Suggs’ eligibility expired after the Hokies’ win over Air Force at a bowl game in San Francisco. He remains ranked sixth on Tech’s career rushing list with 2,767 yards.

“When people see me and find out who I am, they mostly want to talk about Virginia Tech football and how was it playing with Mike [Vick] and how was Coach [Frank] Beamer,” Suggs said. “I don’t get too many questions about the touchdown game streak. I guess that is the most important one.”

Suggs was drafted by the Cleveland Browns in the fourth round of the 2003 NFL Draft. He spent parts of three seasons with the Browns. He later got into coaching, serving as an assistant at Oberlin College, a Division III school southwest of Cleveland.

Today, he works as a field crew supervisor in Silver Spring for United Social Sports.

DAWN WILL (1996-2000)

When Dawn Will played lacrosse at Virginia Tech in the late 1990s, she never really gave being

inducted into the Hall of Fame much thought. In fact, she didn’t know that the Hall of Fame existed.



So when she received a call this summer from Donna Smith, the administrative assistant in athletics communications who helps organize the Hall of Fame dinner, informing her that she had been selected for induction, she was surprised.

“I was very surprised and full of gratitude for the school,” Will said. “Because no lacrosse players had been inducted, I wasn’t really aware of it. When she went through all the things that they were doing, I was really surprised and shocked, to be honest.”

Will became the first women’s lacrosse player at Tech to be inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame, and she certainly has

worthy credentials. A scoring machine during her playing days, Will still shares or holds outright just about every school record for scoring.


Will made an immediate impact in 1997. She became one of the Hokies’ featured performers on offense, starting 12 of the team’s 15 games as a freshman. She finished the season third in both goals (19) and total points (24).

She set a new standard in 1998 by scoring 46 goals to break the previous team mark of 39. She started 13 of 14 games that season, posting 55 total points and helping the team to eight wins on the way to team MVP honors. As a junior, Will broke her own record for goals with 60 as Tech won the inaugural Atlantic 10 Tournament and earned its first top-20 ranking in the sport with an 11-6 season. Will was named all-conference, all-tournament, all-region and honorable mention All-American.

“I would say when we won the Atlantic 10, just realizing that we had achieved a big goal that year,” Will said of her most memorable moment. “I didn’t think that was going to happen.”

During the 2000 season, Will earned third-team All-America recognition after helping Tech to the A-10 regular-season championship. She was named the A-10 Player of the Year after compiling 61 goals and 74 points.

Scoring goals appeared to come naturally to Will. Even today, she still ranks as the Hokies’ all-time leader in goals in a career (186), goals in a season (61), points in a career (221) and points in a season (74). She is tied for the top spot in goals in a game with nine and is second in points in a game with 11.

Today, Dawn Will Cliffe lives with her family in Severna Park, Maryland, where she works part time as an IT Consultant. Her husband, Kennedy Cliffe, is a former Tech golfer. 



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# GREATEST GAMES VS. UVA AT LANE STADIUM

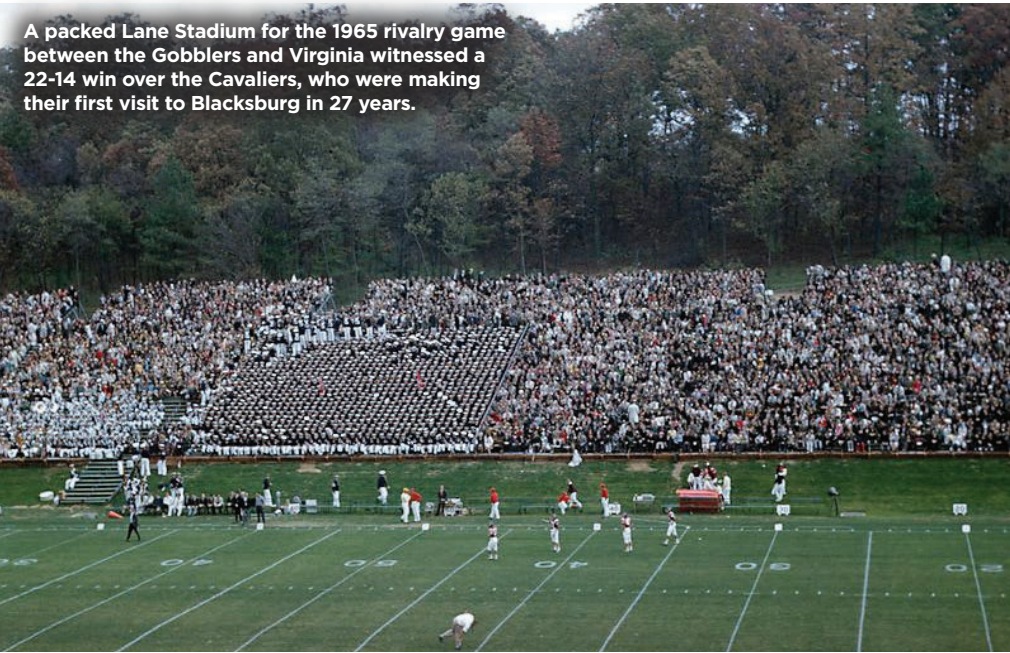
In the last issue, Inside Hokie Sports listed 50 of the greatest Tech football moments in Lane Stadium history. The list started with the first decade, and in fact, the first game, which occurred on Oct. 2, 1965.

In this issue, Inside Hokie Sports is focusing on 10 great games against rival Virginia at Lane Stadium as part of the magazine’s continuing celebration of 50 seasons of the stadium. As with the list in the last issue, this is not an all-encompassing list – the two teams have played at Lane Stadium on 22 occasions – and the list does not attempt to rank the games in terms of greatness. They’re all great!

The list of great games against UVa starts with the first decade – the 1960s, and a game that members of the first team to play in Lane Stadium have never forgotten.

• **Tech rolls past Cavaliers in UVa’s first appearance at Lane Stadium (Oct. 23, 1965)** – Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI, as the school was known then) opened Lane Stadium just three weeks before the University of Virginia football team made its first appearance at Lane Stadium. In fact, the Cavaliers hadn’t played in Blacksburg in nearly three decades (27 years). In that era, the two teams mostly played in Roanoke, with a sprinkling of games in Richmond and Norfolk.

This game also marked the inaugural Governor’s Day. Then-Governor Albertis Harrison came to Blacksburg, and university officials decided to dedicate the stadium in the name of the Edward H. Lane family. Lane, who built a successful furniture business and later served on the school’s Board of Visitors, helped raised more than \$3 million for the stadium’s construction, and he and his family also made a generous contribution toward the building of the stadium.



A packed Lane Stadium for the 1965 rivalry game between the Gobblers and Virginia witnessed a 22-14 win over the Cavaliers, who were making their first visit to Blacksburg in 27 years.

The Gobblers jumped out to a 15-0 halftime lead behind two touchdown runs from quarterback Bobby Owens. Owens’ 1-yard run in the first quarter gave the Gobblers a 7-0 lead, and his 24-yard touchdown run – and Dickie Longerbeam’s pass to Tommy Groom for a two-point conversion – pushed the lead to 15 points.

The Cavaliers got on the board early in the fourth quarter, but 78 seconds after the UVA score, the Gobblers got a big play. Owens found Groom for a 71-yard touchdown pass that gave the Gobblers a 22-8 lead and put the game away. It was one of just two completions on the day for the Gobblers, who won 22-14.

VPI racked up 323 yards rushing, paced by Longerbeam’s 164 yards on 28 carries. They finished with 400 total yards, while Virginia only amassed 280.

• **Win over UVa snaps losing streak (Oct. 20, 1973)** – VPI’s season got off to a humbling start. The Gobblers lost their first six games, including games at home against William & Mary (31-24) and South Carolina (27-24). Three of the first six losses were by a touchdown or less.

But in front of the second-largest crowd in Lane Stadium history at the time – 38,300 – the Gobblers got the better against the Cavaliers. They started quickly, too, scoring on the third play from scrimmage on a halfback pass from Phil Rogers to Ricky Scales. The play went for 80 yards and a touchdown – the longest play in Tech history at the time.

The Cavaliers grabbed a 9-7 lead and were in position to go up even more, but UVa quarterback Scott Gardner’s touchdown pass to Harrison

Davis was ruled incomplete. Davis had quickly dropped the ball, and even though one official had signaled the play was a touchdown, another ruled it an incomplete pass – and that official’s ruling won out. Virginia then missed a 25-yard field goal.

The Gobblers took a 14-9 lead at halftime on a 13-yard touchdown run by James Barber, and they added a 55-yard field goal by Wayne Latimer in the third quarter to grab a 17-9 lead. Virginia cut the lead to 17-15 on a 52-yard touchdown pass from Gardner to Davis toward the end of the third quarter, but the Gobblers scored the final 10 points of the game.

A Billy Hardee punt return set up another field goal by Latimer, and backup quarterback Eddie Joyce, subbing for an injured Ricky Popp, scored on a 3-yard run late in the game to seal a 27-15 win.

The Gobblers only won two games that season under coach Charlie Coffey, who decided to retire after the season. But at least the seniors on the 1973 team can say they beat Virginia.



Tom Beasley was a stalwart on the defensive line for the Gobblers during his career, and his big play late in the 1975 game vs. UVa helped Tech to a 24-17 win.

• **Defense saves the day in 24-17 win over Cavaliers (Oct. 18, 1975)** – The Hokies had big expectations heading into the 1975 season, but lost their first two games – a 27-8 decision at Kentucky and a 17-11 loss at Kent State. They had won three straight games, though, heading into a mid-October game against the rival Cavaliers.

Tech jumped out to a 21-6 lead, scoring on three of its first four possessions. But the Cavaliers rallied in the second half and cut the lead to 21-17. The Hokies tacked on a Wayne Latimer field goal with 2:02 remaining to give them a 24-17 advantage and set up what turned out to be a

thrilling finish.

Using a 46-yard pass play from quarterback Scott Gardner to fullback Mike Dowe, the Cavaliers got down to the Tech 14 with a little more than a minute left in the game. The Hokies’ defense, though, came up with the big play. Defensive lineman Tom Beasley broke through the UVa offensive line and sacked Gardner, forcing him to fumble the football. Tech’s Mike Stollings recovered, and the Hokies ran out the clock to preserve the 24-17 win.

After starting the season 0-2, the Hokies won eight of their final nine games and finished 8-3 under coach Jimmy Sharpe.

• **Late touchdown helps Tech salvage rare tie in the Tech-UVa series (Oct. 14, 1977)** – Virginia Tech and Virginia have played 95 times in football dating back to 1895. On only five occasions has the game ended in a tie, with the last tie coming 37 years ago in this game.

The Hokies started the season 1-3, with only a lone victory over William & Mary, and their offense struggled to muster anything against the Cavaliers. A 32-yard field goal by Paul Engle with 7:44 left in the first quarter gave the Hokies a 3-0 lead, but Tech would not score again until the fourth quarter.

Virginia led 14-3 with less than 10 minutes left in the game. The Hokies, though, put together a drive that ended at the UVa 40. Engle delivered again, hitting a 56-yard field goal with 7:29 left that cut the Tech deficit to 14-6.

With 4:08 left, the Hokies got the ball back, and quarterback David Lamie cranked up the aerial attack. He moved the Hokies 70 yards to the Virginia 1-yard line, and with 45 seconds left, tailback Roscoe Coles scored on a 1-yard run, cutting the UVa lead to 14-12.

Forced to go for two points to get the tie, the Hokies managed to convert. Lamie hit Kenny Lewis for the two points, and the game ended in a 14-all tie.

The Hokies won their final two games that season, but still finished with a 3-7-1 mark. Sharpe was fired after the season.

• **Dooley notches his first win against UVa (Oct. 18, 1980)** – Tech head coach Bill Dooley’s first two seasons were nothing to write home about, as the Hokies suffered losing campaigns in both. But the 1980 season marked the beginning of Tech’s turnaround and ushered in an era of great Tech defense.

The Hokies were 5-1 at the time Virginia came to town, and this season’s rivalry game was never in doubt. A crowd of 52,000 fans – the largest ever to see an athletics event in the state of Virginia at the time – saw the Hokies crush Virginia 30-0 behind a dominating defense.

How dominating was Tech’s defense on this day? Virginia ran just seven plays in Tech territory for the entire game. The Cavaliers finished with 122 yards overall and only 61 rushing.

Offensively, the Hokies rolled up 410 yards behind the rushing of tailback Cyrus Lawrence, who set a school record at the time with 40 carries. He finished with 194 yards and scored two touchdowns. Steve Casey threw a touchdown pass.

The victory turned out to be the most lopsided in the series in 20 years. Tech finished with an 8-4 record and went to the Peach Bowl – its first bowl appearance since 1968 – where it ultimately lost 20-10 to Miami to close the season.



Cyrus Lawrence, who would go on to become Tech’s all-time leading rusher, finished with 194 yards rushing in the Hokies’ 1980 victory over the Cavaliers.

• **First night game at Lane ends with Tech win over Cavaliers (Nov. 25, 1982)** – The Virginia Tech athletics department added lights to Lane Stadium in time for the Hokies’ 1982 contest against UVa, and the two teams played under the lights on national television – the first night game ever at Lane Stadium. WTBS handled the broadcast.

Again, Dooley’s defense was the story, as Tech won the game 21-14 to clinch its third straight win over the Cavaliers and a third straight winning season. The Hokies limited UVa to just 10 rushing yards, had five sacks and intercepted five passes.

The Hokies trailed 7-0 following a Virginia first-quarter touchdown, but the Hokies got on the board in the second quarter on a 6-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Mark Cox to Mike Shaw (Tech missed the extra point). They took the lead early in the second half on a 1-yard touchdown run by tailback Otis Copeland (though went for two points and failed) and added a 44-yard field goal less than three minutes later by Allen Talbott for a 15-7 lead.

Virginia cut the lead to 15-14 on a touchdown pass by Wayne Schuchts with 7:21 left in the third quarter, but the Hokies grabbed a 21-14 lead when Cox scored on a 1-yard run early in the



fourth quarter. The Hokies went for two points and didn't convert, leaving them ahead by seven.

Tech's defense took care of the rest. The Hokies registered interceptions on Virginia's final four drives, including a big one in the end zone by linebacker Mike Johnson with 8:18 left in the game. Virginia finished with just 129 yards of offense and only stayed in the game because of four Tech turnovers.

Copeland led the Hokies with 124 yards rushing.

The Hokies finished with a 7-4 record in 1982. Their defense closed the season ranked No. 1 nationally against the run.



Eddie Hunter rushed for 130 yards and two touchdowns in the Hokies' 42-10 win over UVa in 1986.

• **'Stallions' run wild in 32-point win over Cavaliers (Oct. 25, 1986)** – Virginia Tech head coach Bill Dooley certainly had the

Cavaliers' number toward the end of his tenure, as he won six of his final seven games against the Cavaliers.

Dooley's final game against Virginia was one to remember. The Hokies jumped out to a 14-0 lead, and they owned the second half, outscoring Virginia 21-0 en route to a 42-10 victory.

Tailbacks Maurice Williams and Eddie Hunter, whom many consider to be the original "Stallions" (the nickname given to Tech's running backs), paced Tech's attack. Williams rushed for 143 yards on 18 carries and scored two touchdowns, while Hunter rushed for 130 yards on 25 carries, and he, too, scored twice. Quarterback Erik Chapman threw two touchdown passes to Donald Wayne Snell, as the Hokies amassed 477 yards of offense. Virginia finished with 270.

The Hokies finished with a 10-1-1 record after beating NC State on a Chris Kinzer field goal in the Peach Bowl. The season ended up being Dooley's last – he resigned shortly before the season ended because potential NCAA violations resulted in the university asking Dooley to step down from his AD role.

• **Black shoes spark Hokies to 38-13 upset of No. 17 Cavaliers (Nov. 24, 1990)** – Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer was in his fourth year with the school, but he had not beaten rival Virginia in three previous attempts, and fans were getting antsy.

Before the game, Tech's seniors elected to wear maroon pants with maroon jerseys – something the program hadn't done in six years. Then, right before going out for the opening kickoff, they elected to spray black paint on their white cleats.

The changes worked as Tech jumped out to a 24-0 lead in the second quarter and cruised, giving Beamer his first win over Virginia and the program its second straight winning season under Beamer.

Tech quarterback Will Furrer threw three touchdown passes and tailback Vaughn Hebron rushed for 142 yards on 31 carries to lead the attack. Virginia played without quarterback Shawn Moore (injury), and backup Matt Blundin threw for 305 yards and two touchdowns, but he was intercepted three times.

Virginia had been ranked No. 1 earlier in the season, but came into the game having lost two of its previous three games.

For the Hokies, this game was their bowl game. Tech finished the season with a 6-5 mark and won three of its final four games. The only loss came against Georgia Tech – which went on to claim a share of the national championship that season.

• **Hokies rally past Virginia to keep ACC title hopes alive (Nov. 27, 2004)** – In one of the rare meetings between Tech and UVa as ranked opponents – it has only happened nine times in the 95 games in the series – the Hokies needed a win to keep their ACC title hopes alive in their first season as a member of the league.

Tech entered the game ranked 11th, while Virginia was 16th. Neither team scored in the first half, and a 32-yard pass from Marques Hagans to Alvin Pearman gave the Cavaliers a 7-0 lead with 10:24 left in the third quarter.

The Hokies scored the next 10 points, getting a 31-yard field goal from Brandon Pace and a 45-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Bryan Randall to receiver Josh Hyman. Virginia, though, tied the game at 10 on a 19-yard field goal by Connor Hughes with 13:03 left.

The rest of the game was all Tech. On the ensuing drive, the Hokies went 80 yards in seven plays, and Randall found Hyman again, this time for 32 yards and the touchdown. That made it 17-10 with 9:52 remaining.

On their next possession, the Hokies struck again, going 58 yards in six plays. The drive ended when Cedric Humes scored on a 37-yard


The following Saturday, the Hokies beat Miami 16-10 in Miami to clinch the program's first ACC championship. Tech finished 10-3 overall after falling to Auburn 16-13 in the Sugar Bowl.

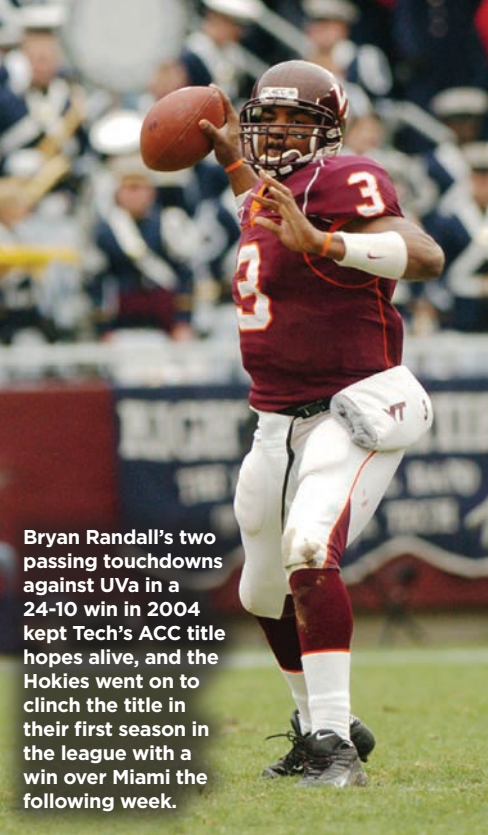
• **Late field goal keeps alive Tech winning streak over UVa (Nov. 24, 2012)** – This was not necessarily the prettiest of games, but it was certainly memorable at the end.

The Hokies struggled against a Virginia squad that came in with a 4-7 record, and they trailed 14-7 in the third quarter after Virginia defensive lineman Brent Urban returned a fumble by Tech quarterback Logan Thomas 16 yards for a touchdown.

But Thomas made amends for the mistake. Toward the end of the third quarter, he led the Hokies on a 15-play, 85-yard drive, and he finished the drive with a 4-yard touchdown run that knotted the game at 14.

Things stayed that way, too, after Tech kicker Cody Journell missed a 42-yard attempt with 3:38 left in the game. Tech's defense, though, came up big, as cornerback Antone Exum intercepted a Michael Rocco pass at the Virginia 36 and returned it to the Virginia 24. The Hokies then salted away the final 3:21 on the clock and won the game when Journell hit a 29-yard field goal as time expired to give Tech the win.

The win marked Tech's ninth in a row over Virginia. More importantly, the Hokies became bowl eligible and finished the season 7-6 after beating Rutgers in the Russell Athletic Bowl. 



Bryan Randall's two passing touchdowns against UVa in a 24-10 win in 2004 kept Tech's ACC title hopes alive, and the Hokies went on to clinch the title in their first season in the league with a win over Miami the following week.

run. Virginia went three-and-out on its next series, and the Hokies then ran the final 4:39 off the clock for the win.

Randall completed 16-of-22 in the game for 200 yards, with the two touchdowns, while Humes ran for 95 yards. Virginia finished with just 299 yards.



Antone Exum's interception set up Cody Journell's game-winning field goal in the 2012 game between Tech and UVa, helping the Hokies extend their winning streak over the Cavaliers to nine games.

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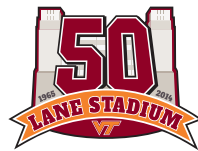
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## FORMER TECH PLAYER SCOTT DAWSON FOUND SUCCESS IN TWO CAREERS – ENGINEERING AND OFFICIATING

*This is the fourth in a series of features spotlighting former Virginia Tech players who played in the very first game at Lane Stadium in October of 1965. Scott Dawson was a member of that team as a long snapper, and he later enjoyed a great career in engineering – he started his own company – and as a football official.*

by Jimmy Robertson

In the mid-1960s, Scott Dawson had no idea that he would be a part of Virginia Tech history. In fact, he had no idea that he would even be a part of Virginia Tech.

“I knew all my life that I was going to Auburn,” he said.

Most of the players at his Fort Walton Beach, Florida, high school went to Auburn. But the school hired a new football coach for Dawson’s senior season, and the coach was a University of Florida fan. So much so that he refused to let other recruiters into the school. The University of Florida already had a player locked into Dawson’s position, so Dawson ended up at Tech after then-assistant Bobby Collins lured him up for a visit.

The move worked out rather nicely for Dawson, who got a civil engineering degree, played on the school’s second ever bowl squad and played for the first team ever to play a game at Lane Stadium. The latter happened in 1965, as Inside Hokie Sports continues to celebrate the 50th season of Lane Stadium by spotlighting various players on the 1965 team.

Dawson, mostly a long snapper on that 1965 squad, readily admitted that he didn’t remember the details of events that occurred 50 years ago. He does remember that the Gobblers played William & Mary in that first game at Lane Stadium and won, and he remembers the new stadium.

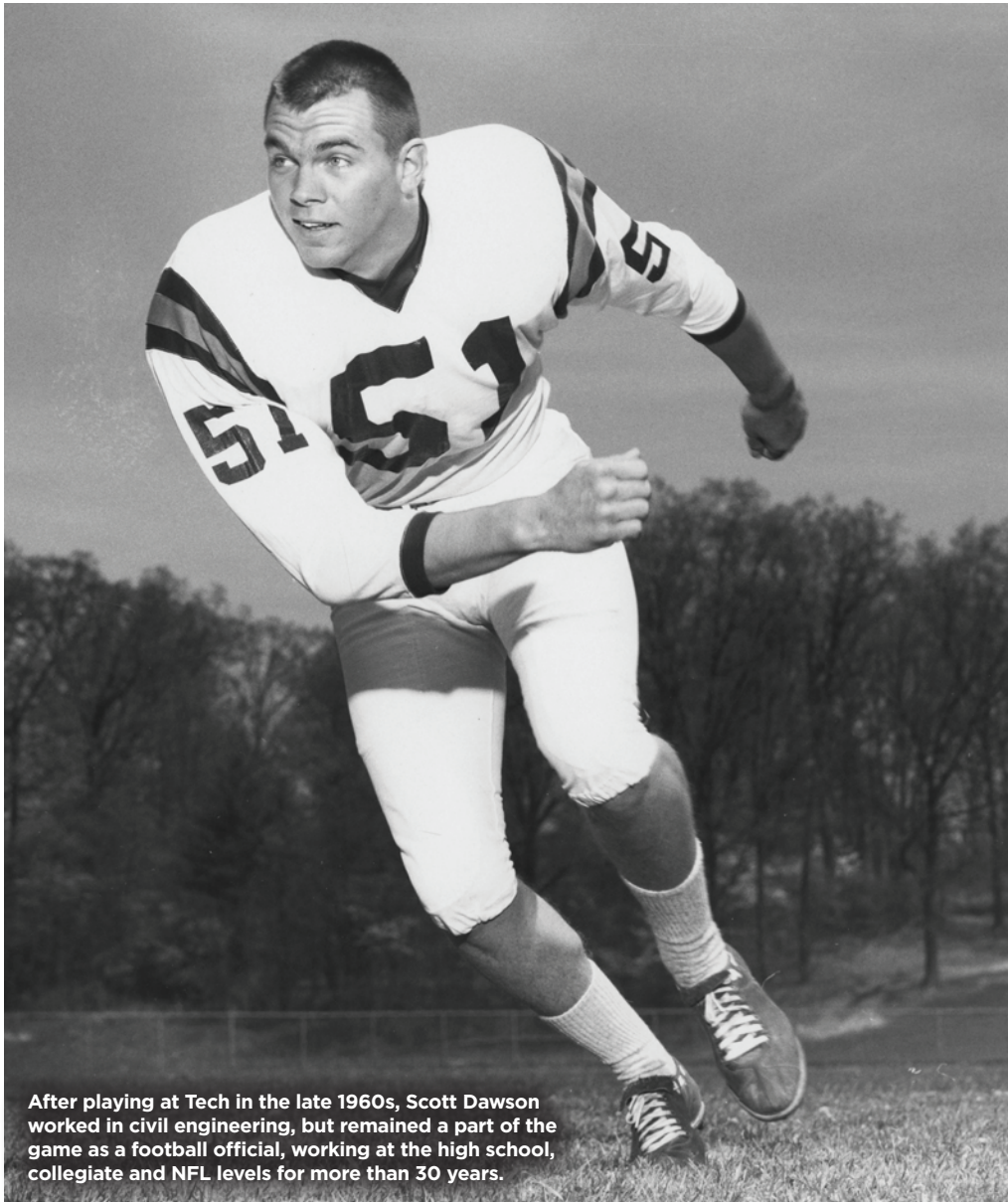
“It was exciting to be in the new stadium. I do remember that,” he said. “It was all new to us. If I’m not mistaken, we had a decent crowd. That always helped when you played. At that point in time, at that age, it was just another game to try and win.”

Dawson’s fondest memory of his playing days came during his junior season. The Gobblers rolled to an 8-1-1 record in the regular season. They lost the season opener at Tulane, but then didn’t lose again in the regular season, winning seven straight after tying West Virginia at Lane Stadium – the first ever tie at Lane.

At the end of the regular season, the Gobblers received a bowl bid – the second in program history. Liberty Bowl officials invited Tech to play against then-No. 9 Miami on Dec. 10 in Memphis.

Dawson remembers the day the bid was announced. It happened to cut short his honeymoon.

“I remember it well,” he said. “My wife and



After playing at Tech in the late 1960s, Scott Dawson worked in civil engineering, but remained a part of the game as a football official, working at the high school, collegiate and NFL levels for more than 30 years.

I were married in the memorial chapel [on the Drillfield]. We were married on Friday, and then we found out Sunday that we were in a bowl game and I was practicing that Monday afternoon. But just having that opportunity ... Virginia Tech didn’t go to bowls then. That was just unheard of in those days.”

The Gobblers went 7-3 in Dawson’s senior year,

but three straight losses to end the season probably prevented them from getting a bowl bid. The next spring, in 1968, Dawson graduated with a degree in civil engineering.

He worked a short stint with the Corps of Engineers before returning to college, working as a graduate assistant at Georgia Tech and using the G.I. Bill to get his master’s degree in civil

engineering and construction management. Once he got his master’s degree in 1972, he went back to work for the Corps of Engineers in Charlottesville. While there, he got introduced to what would become a new passion – officiating.

“I really went into officiating because I wanted to stay in the game,” he said. “Up there, I met up with some people I knew, and they suggested I get into officiating. So I started Saturday mornings with Little League football – my worst nightmare with parents. You’d do three or four games for \$25 a game. It was great income at that time.”

Dawson gradually worked his way up the ranks, while also continuing a career in engineering. In 1977, the Atlantic Coast Conference hired him as an official, and he worked nearly two decades and in 11 bowl games.

“My last game in college was the Rose Bowl – the year Penn State played in the Rose Bowl [in 1995],” Dawson said. “What an experience that was. I didn’t even know the ACC had been assigned that bowl. But I got a call, and we had been assigned that game. It was quite a place for someone coming from a small school to see that atmosphere.”

Dawson went from the ACC to the NFL, though it took a while for him to get into professional football. A friend and fellow official named Gerald Austin told him that he should apply, and Dawson eventually did. Three years after applying, he received an offer to go officiate in the World League (later renamed NFL Europe) over in Europe.

“I went over there for two years and did the

World Bowl one year, which is like the Super Bowl,” he said. “When I finished that year, I got invited in [to the NFL]. A lot of guys did the World League and didn’t get invited into the NFL.”

Dawson went on to officiate in the NFL for 19 years. He officiated playoff games, conference championship games and Pro Bowls. But he never got to officiate in the Super Bowl.

He retired after this past season with a lifetime of memories. One of the best came in the 2004 AFC Championship Game between New England and Indianapolis, with quarterbacks Tom Brady and Peyton Manning going at it. New England won the game and went on to win the Super Bowl.

“If you flew your flag, you better have something dead on,” Dawson said. “You weren’t going to have something that would influence the game. That’s what we did it for – to have those kinds of games. They didn’t want to have a penalty, and we didn’t want to have to call one, but you had to be ready.”

Some of his memories of his NFL days were not so fond. As an umpire, he found himself in the middle of the action, and in one game at Miami, two defensive backs hit him as they chased two tight ends coming across the middle. They knocked out Dawson, who also lost two teeth and had several broken ribs. He left the game – the only time in his career that he did so – and wound up in the hospital.

“That was the worst accident I had throughout all the years,” he said. “They put the umpire in the offensive backfield after a while because it was getting to be pretty bad. But I still loved it. It was a

great experience.”

During his career in engineering, Dawson and his family moved around quite a bit. He worked in Charlottesville; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Appomattox, Virginia, where he worked for longtime Tech supporter Bill Jamerson.

Dawson left Appomattox for Raleigh, North Carolina, where he had stints with two different companies. Before joining the NFL ranks as an official, he started his own company out of his dining room, one called Engineered Construction Company. Today, he and his oldest son run the company, and they specialize mostly in nursing homes and repeat business for past clients.

Though he has retired from officiating, Dawson harbors no such plans of doing so with his current job.

“I’m not retiring. I still enjoy the construction end of it,” he said. “Most of what we do, I enjoy. It’s a challenge right now in this market.

“But that’s probably where Jerry Claiborne still comes into play. He would tell me to meet the challenge and go the extra mile.”

Dawson and his wife of 49 years, Cheryl, have two sons – the other works in Boston for a pharmaceutical company – and three granddaughters. He said they don’t get back to Blacksburg as much as he’d like.

Of course, that doesn’t mean that he doesn’t keep up with the Hokies. After all, destiny took him from Auburn to Blacksburg nearly 55 years ago. Suffice it to say, things have worked out well ever since.



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# FOLLOWING HER FATHER’S ADVICE

Tech volleyball standout LaTasha Samson-Akpan was hesitant about leaving her family in Ohio to come to Blacksburg, but her father, drawing on his past experiences, encouraged her to do so – and she’s thankful that she listened

by Marc Mullen

Among the Samson-Akpan household, he might be considered a pioneer. Back in 1984, Ikemesit Samson-Akpan left his Nigeria home for the United States. The youngest of six children, many of whom stayed in their native country, Samson-Akpan challenged himself by leaving his family and friends to pursue an advanced education. After earning a civil engineering degree from the University of Akron, he decided to stay in Ohio, where he met Melissa Weir, married and started a family in Fairlawn – a suburb of Akron.

Fast-forward almost 30 years, and his youngest child, daughter LaTasha, had similar aspirations. She grew up with a soccer-crazed father and played the sport, just like her two older brothers. Standing almost 6-foot tall, though, she gravitated toward the sports of basketball and volleyball, the latter enabling her to experience the conundrum her father had faced many years ago – a decision to leave the safe haven of family and friends to pursue an education.

LaTasha would end up choosing to attend Virginia Tech, play on the volleyball team – she is currently playing in her final season for the Hokies – and major in engineering. It’s a journey that draws many parallels to her father’s path.

“We absolutely discussed this in detail,” said Ike Samson-Akpan, Sr., referring to the similarities between their choices. “My first year in the United States after arriving from Nigeria was very difficult for me to adjust without having the comfort of family and friends I grew up with. I called and spoke to my mother, who convinced me to give it time and try to make the best of my new life.

“I listened and here I was giving my daughter the same advice, which we hoped she would heed. I think stepping out of one’s comfort zone allows students to explore who they are and what they aspire to do. LaTasha is very close to her family and has a great circle of friends at home. However, after visiting Virginia Tech, she knew that this was the school for her.

“Before she left, we told her that we are only a

phone call away, and if she was in need, we would be there. We talked about individual success and independence all the time. This decision was just one step toward that goal. Her mother and I left the option up to her to set her own goals and vision of where she wants to see herself in the future. She has always been instructed that education would be the key to her future, and that any sacrifices she makes now would pay off later.”

Despite the advice, LaTasha admitted that she didn’t fair any better than her dad did during her first year in Blacksburg. The struggles may have not been the same, as she was serving a reserve’s role on the Hokies’ bench and struggling to adjust to the rigors of her major, but they were difficult to overcome.

On August 27, 2011, LaTasha played in her first college set against High Point, but would not see

the court again until her sophomore season, and the fifth game at that.

“I had no clue what was going to happen when I first came in,” she said. “When I realized I wasn’t going to get any playing time, I took that very hard. I had always played my whole life, and then, now I’m just going to be sitting on the bench.

“And having to deal with that and then dealing with school and time management ... all of that was a struggle my freshman year. I really struggled. But after accepting the fact that my playing time was going to be limited, it kind of got better. But at first, initially, I didn’t like it.”

As one usually does, she figured it out and got on track. She would make sure she stayed on top of things academically, knowing that her work would be hard and take a lot of time. She would also use her professors’ office hours and get help that



LaTasha Samson-Akpan will graduate next spring with a degree in civil engineering and is contemplating moving to Northern Virginia or Raleigh, North Carolina, to start her career in engineering.



way, as they were more than willing to provide guidance.

On the court, she went from a serviceable substitute her sophomore year into a 33-match starter in 2013 and has started every game this season as well – 24 at publication time. She currently leads the team from her middle blocker position in attacking at 37.7 percent and is second in blocks with 76.

With such a young Hokies’ team, though, she knows that this year isn’t all about stats.

“This season, there have been a lot of highs and lows, and mostly because it’s been a learning process. We’ve got a young team,” LaTasha said. “This is such a big learning season, a big adjustment season for the program.

“And being the oldest player at my position with two freshmen behind me, it’s different as well. If the other two come to me and ask me questions during practice or when we are sitting out on the sidelines, I try to help them out.

“But for the rest of the year, we just need to play, have fun and enjoy what we are doing and not worry too much about results. If we just play to our ability, the results will come.”

In May, LaTasha will graduate with a degree in civil engineering, the same degree her father earned. She credited her father for giving her the opportunities over the summer and during

vacations to accompany him to his office.

His employment history consists of several civil engineering firms and construction firms, where he has worked on many private and individual projects. During her time with her father, LaTasha was exposed to all aspects of civil construction projects ranging from bridge construction to underground utility construction to building construction.

“Early on, she was given general office duties, but once I saw that she had a true interest in the field, she was given tasks with greater responsibility,” Ike said. “An example of this would be that she was given an assignment to evaluate two bridge construction projects for the Ohio National Guard that we had just won.

“We discussed structural formwork and other engineering aspects that were required to construct these bridges. She asked several relevant questions that highlighted her interest in this profession. She was also exposed to site gradation evaluation to determine elevation placement of structures.”


Upon graduation, LaTasha is tinkering with the idea of moving to the Raleigh, North Carolina area to start her career, as her father and her have identified Northern Virginia and North Carolina as growing economies that will need help in keeping up the demands of infrastructure growth

and the increased demand for green engineering.

She is very close to her family, especially her two nieces – Ionna, who is 4, and Loah, who is 3 and are the daughters of her oldest brother, AC. She also has a middle brother, Ike, Jr., and most of her mom’s side of the family is in the Ohio area. She struggles with the idea of being so far away and hasn’t ruled out returning home.

“My dream state to live in is North Carolina,” she said. “So hopefully I get a job in North Carolina and that would work out perfectly. I’ve always just loved North Carolina. It’s like the perfect spot. It’s not too hot because I don’t want to go too far south, and Ohio was just way too cold for me. So it’s just a nice balance of weather for me.

“But it’s kind of tough being here, and not being able to see my nieces grow up. When they do come to visit, they are so happy. I can hear them when I’m on the court, ‘Auntie, Auntie,’ just screaming for me and wearing their ‘32’ jerseys. They make me so happy. And that’s the one thing that I struggle with. I want to move back there. All my family is there. So if I moved away, I would be all on my own, but ... that’s just the hardest thing I’m struggling with right now.”

That’s the same struggle her father faced almost 30 years ago after his graduation from Akron. And his decision seemed to work out well for him. Hopefully her decision will work out just as well. 

GETTING TO KNOW LATASHA SAMSON-AKPAN

**Q:** What do you like to do in your free time?

**LS:** “We don’t have too much free time, so I really enjoy just hanging out with friends. I love watching movies, and my favorite one is probably Love and Basketball. I can watch that over and over. It never gets old to me. And online shopping, that kills me.”

**Q:** What is the best thing about being a student-athlete?

**LS:** “The different resources we get, like with SAASS [Student-Athlete Academic Support Services] being there and the tutors that are available to us. That’s a big help and the same thing with the Oasis [Tech’s nutritional area]. If you’re hungry before practice, just run down there real fast. And then the gear we get. I remember, before we got here, we all went crazy buying all this Virginia Tech gear, but now with this being my fourth year here, we have so much. The other day, I found something from my sophomore year still with the tag on it. We just get so much gear, and I think back, ‘Why did I buy so much before I got here?’”

**Q:** This is your final season of volleyball. Has that hit you yet?

**LS:** “It hasn’t really hit me yet, and things don’t really hit me until they are right there. Our one assistant coach is always saying things like, ‘Hey seniors, this is your last time playing Clemson here’ or ‘This is the last time you’ll play at Miami.’ But it hasn’t really hit me yet. I feel like my last game it will.”

**Q:** What was that game at Pittsburgh like last year (which is less than two hours from her hometown)?

**LS:** “Yeah, we played at Pittsburgh last year, and my whole family came, all my mom’s side. You could see them all making a line to come into the game. I expect it to be about the same when we are up there later this year.”

**Q:** You tape your hands for games, but what is written on that?

**LS:** “On my hands, I write [Bible] verses, and it’s always the same two. I do Colossians 3:23 on one, which is ‘Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,’ and on the



other is Philippians 4:13 – ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’ I do those two each game.”

**Q:** Have you ever been to Nigeria to visit your father’s side of the family?

**LS:** “Yes, as a family, we’ve gone to Nigeria twice to visit my dad’s family. When we went there, they have like a little village area. It’s kind of the Samson-Akpan village – kind of like a large gated house, and they just call it the village. So the second time we went there, it was Christmas time and we were there for two weeks and all the family, aunts, uncles and cousins all came. It was nice to see all of them. That was great.”



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Pitchers Nick Anderson (left) and Aaron McGarity were among the first to have their heads shaved at the baseball program's annual "Shave for the Brave" event. Levi Mayo (inset), an honorary member of the baseball team, has been cancer free now for 10 years.

Tech baseball raises more than \$30,000  
with recent "Shave for the Brave"

by Marc Mullen

For five straight years, the Virginia Tech baseball players have lost their hair during fall ball, and it hasn't been because of the stress put on them by the coaching staff. Starting in 2010, the Hokies have shaved their heads and raised money and awareness for the St. Baldrick's Foundation, an organization that supports childhood cancer research, and the "46 Mommas Shave for the Brave" organization.

After a modest start for donations in years 1 and 2 of the team's "Shave for the Brave," the Hokies have turned to social media each of the past three years, and the results have been staggering, pushing past \$25,000 each time. This year's total of \$31,000 and still counting pushed the team's five-year total to more than \$100,000.

"In the past five seasons, to raise that much money is a true testament to the student-athletes we have in our program," Tech head baseball coach Patrick Mason said. "But we couldn't have done this on our own. This year, we had Great Clips volunteer four barbers to help shave participants, Bull & Bones donate food to feed everyone and Fox 21/27's Tara Wheeler, a former 'shavee' herself, serve as a guest shaver.

"Reaching that goal is a cumulative effort that involves all the friends and families of our players and staff that donated to this great cause."

Wheeler, a Woodbridge, Virginia native, was crowned Miss Virginia in 2008 and used her title

to help raise more than \$50,000 for St. Baldrick's in 2009 before shaving her head as well. She welcomed Mason and senior Alex Perez on Fox 21/27's morning show the week of the event to help promote Tech's shave and then came to English Field to help shave the Hokies.

"I was thrilled to be a part of this year's Shave for the Brave event," she said. "The St. Baldrick's Foundation is so incredible, not only in its fundraising for pediatric cancer research, but also for the hope it gives to cancer patients seeing their heroes go bald along with them.

"The Virginia Tech baseball players are undoubtedly heroes and role models to many young cancer patients in our region and beyond, and I wanted to be a part of an event showcasing their strong character."

There was also a first at this year's event, as Lynn Surum, also known as "Betsy," joined the players, coaches and support staff in shaving their heads. She wasn't the first woman to have her head shaved at a Tech baseball event, but she became the first Hokies' mother to shave her head, as she is the proud mother of sophomore Ricky Surum.


"My mother, who is now deceased 20 years, and my sister, a breast cancer survivor, have both been through chemotherapy and radiation, so I wanted to shave my head as a nod of respect to them," Lynn Surum said. "Virginia Tech and

this baseball team and these coaches have been so wonderful to Ricky, so I wanted to help them in their charitable endeavor, and I thought that I could get the attention of a lot of Ricky's friends' parents in Wellesley and Cape Cod, Massachusetts and Atlanta, especially to donate.

"I also did it to show solidarity with the kids that are fighting cancer, support St. Baldrick's good work, and it was a way of saying to the kids, and to the baseball players 'It's only hair. It's temporary. Focus on the important stuff. If you are healthy, the hair grows back!'"

The event is held in conjunction with the efforts put forth by Melina McAlwee, whose son Levi Mayo – an adopted member of the Tech baseball team – was diagnosed with medulloblastoma, a highly malignant primary brain tumor, when he was 4. Now 14, he is cancer free, but every day, 46 mothers in the United States are told their child has cancer, so the fight never ends.

Levi was honored on the field during the Hokies Fall World Series game, which was being played before and during the Shave event. He was also presented with a brand new pair of Nike sneakers, the same kind the Tech players wear.

At the first shave, the Hokies raised \$500. Four years later, the total is more than six figures, signifying the undeniable success of the event and showing that the Hokies can, indeed, make a difference. 

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After finishing as an NCAA runner-up last season, Devin Carter is aiming to get back this season - and win it all.

# TECH LOOKING FOR A THREE-PEAT - AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

Led by the return of Devin Carter, this Virginia Tech wrestling team may be the best since Kevin Dresser took over, and he has huge expectations for the 2014-15 season

by Jimmy Robertson

A year ago, using the added push from an emotional home crowd, the Virginia Tech wrestling team destroyed the competition at the ACC Championship, winning its second straight league title in convincing fashion.

The Hokies lost two of their four individual champions off that team to graduation, but everyone else returns, making Tech the overwhelming favorite to three-peat in the ACC.

Yet Tech coach Kevin Dresser is thinking beyond that.

“I get up every morning to win a national title,” he said. “When I got hired, I said I didn’t take this job to come in second place, and we’re not close to second place. I’m not satisfied until we’re contending for a national title, so we’ve got work to do.

“I’m sure people thought that was a crazy statement nine years ago, but I don’t know if they think it’s quite as crazy now. I’m sure some people still think it’s crazy, but I don’t think it’s crazy.”

Entering his ninth season at Tech, Dresser has arguably his deepest and most talented squad. Yes, the Hokies lost NCAA qualifiers Nick Vetterlein (184 pounds), Zach Neibert (149) and Chris Penny (197), the latter two of whom won ACC titles and were All-Americans (Neibert in 2013, Penny last season). But they return All-Americans from last

season in Devin Carter and Joey Dance, and 2013 All-American Nick Brascetta returns after taking a redshirt season.

Also, NCAA qualifiers Chris Moon, Austin Gabel and Ty Walz return. And Dresser feels so confident about redshirt freshman Kevin Norstrom at 133 pounds that he already has decided to bump 2013 ACC champion Dennis Gustafson to 141 pounds and possibly have him take a redshirt season.

“On paper, this is our best team,” Dresser said. “The point I have to get across to our team is that there are no automatics. Just because we won the ACC last year, it’s not an automatic. Just because Devin Carter made the NCAA finals last year doesn’t give him a free pass to the NCAA finals this year. We have to start all over. We have to have the same chip on our shoulder that we did when we marched into Cassell last March for the ACC Championship.”

Tech’s 2014-15 success hinges with Carter, whose near-miraculous return from a torn hamstring suffered last December sparked the Hokies’ late-season domination. He came back in time to win his third ACC championship and advance to the finals at the NCAA Championships, where a lack of conditioning and the talent of Ohio State’s Logan Stieber got the better of him in a 10-1 loss.

A fierce competitor, Carter is the leader in

the wrestling room, and he holds a long list of accomplishments. The only thing missing is a national title. He moved up a weight class to 149 pounds, which figures to be a better fit for him, as his body has gotten bigger and stronger through training and maturity.

“If he doesn’t win an NCAA title, he’ll be the most disappointed guy in Blacksburg,” Dresser said. “There may be some other disappointed guys, but he’ll be the first. That just shows you where the expectation is for Devin. He’s in it to win it this year.”

Dresser expects all those guys returning to be even better this season. A year ago, the Hokies, because of their youth and inexperience, got off to a slow start, and then Carter got hurt. But Tech ended up qualifying nine guys for the NCAA Championships, with Carter, Dance and Penny earning All-America honors, as Tech went on to finish a program-best eighth nationally.

Given what they return this season, the Hokies should gel much faster, barring injury. Now, here’s a look at each weight class:

**125 pounds** – Dance returns after a season in which he was the ACC Freshman of the Year and an All-American. At the NCAAs, he only lost to the No. 1 seed (who went on to win the national title)

and the No. 3 seed. He got off to a slow start, but finished 28-10 overall, with a 5-1 league record.

“So far, I’ve seen a much more mature and disciplined individual,” Dresser said. “His effort and his focus in conditioning workouts and his attention to detail is impressive. He didn’t figure any of that out last year until late January. So I’m hoping he’s growing up. He’s super talented.”

Brandon Olsen, a freshman from Chesapeake, Virginia, currently serves as the backup to Dance.

**133 pounds** – Gustafson won the ACC title as a freshman and won a match at the NCAAs, but Dresser has decided to move Gustafson to 141 pounds, putting this weight class in the hands of Norstrom. A Brandon, Florida, native, Norstrom went 21-4 last season while wrestling unattached. He won three open tournaments, including the Hokie Open, where he went 4-0.

“This is the one class where we don’t have a lot of depth,” Dresser said. “We’ve got a really good guy there, and we’ve got to keep him healthy. Kevin is super talented. Wrestling is really important to him. He has to embrace the street fighting mentality of wrestling week in and week out. When he becomes a street fighter and a wrestler, he’s going to be good – really, really good.”

**141 pounds** – Carter wrestled at this weight class last year, but will be moving to 149 pounds for his senior season. Dresser is looking to freshman Solomon Chishko to take over at this weight class. The Pennsylvania native won a state title last year and was ranked among the top 15 recruits in the country by many services.

“Solomon is a very good and unorthodox wrestler,” Dresser said. “He’s been wrestling in the hotbed of Pennsylvania since he was 5 years old. The dude has some skill. He’s a lot like Norstrom. When he gets that physical style that he’s going to have to have to be the very best, then he could be the very best. You just never know how he’s going to react to having to wrestle a good guy every weekend all year long.

“If he can handle the grind of a full season, he’s going to be something else. Besides Logan Stieber, I think he could beat anyone in the nation on a good day. But on a bad day ... I don’t know. We’ve got to get his good days and his bad days closer together.”

Although scheduled to take a redshirt season, Gustafson could factor into the mix. Nick Anderson and Jerry Ronnau give Dresser some depth.

**149 pounds** – Carter gives the Hokies a legit national title contender. Northwestern’s Jason Tsirtsis won the national title a year ago, and he returns, along with runner-up Josh Kindig of Oklahoma State and two-time All-American



Joey Dance earned All-America honors as a freshman last season, and Kevin Dresser has high expectations for Dance this season.

Hunter Stieber of Ohio State [the younger brother of Logan]. Carter could wrestle Tsirtsis at the Midlands Championships in late December and is slated to wrestle Stieber in Tech’s dual match with Ohio State on Nov. 23.

Carter went 18-1 last season, losing only in the national title match to Ohio State’s Logan Stieber.

“There is no complacency in Devin Carter,” Dresser said. “Devin’s chink is that he sometimes, from a technical standpoint, he’ll make the same mistake, just not staying in a good stance and letting guys get to his legs. He’s so confident. He doesn’t tactically do some of the things he needs to do. When you have that much confidence, you think you’re invincible, and he has a crazy amount of confidence.”

Carter’s backup will be Sal Mastriani, who went 12-16 last season, but wrestled at 157 pounds. Dresser likes what he has seen so far from Mastriani at 149, and he also likes Taylor Misuna, a freshman from Chesapeake, Virginia.

**157 pounds** – Brascetta returns after taking a redshirt season last year. He’s a two-time ACC champion at 149 pounds, and in 2013, he earned All-America honors after placing eighth at 149. He enters his redshirt junior season with a 41-12 career record.

“Nick’s excited,” Dresser said. “Wrestling is important to him. He’s looking great in the room. He’s got all the tools to be an NCAA title contender.

“Nick’s chink is that he’s a perfectionist, and sports isn’t perfect. When things go wrong, he has to figure out how to be the same guy when things are going right. If he can do that, he can go with anybody. He’s got to understand that he’s going to be poked in the eye or get a bad call ... there are things that are going to go wrong. You can’t get too high or too low, and if you do, you’re vulnerable.”

Dresser has some depth in this class. Mastriani could move back if needed, and Dresser likes what

he has seen from Virginia transfer David Wesley.

**165 pounds** – Moon returns in this weight class after going 22-9 as a redshirt junior and qualifying for an NCAA bid. He went 5-1 in ACC dual matches and finished third at the ACC Championship.

“Chris started out slow, like he’s done historically,” Dresser said. “He came on toward the end. I’d consider it a good year, not a great year for him. I think he’d agree with me. He’s made some adjustments. The biggest thing is he has to tweak the way he thinks about things. He sometimes sabotages himself with the way he thinks, but when he’s relaxed and wrestling, he’s really good. Work ethic-wise and physically, he does everything right. I’m hoping he has a Chris Penny-like of year.”

Dresser also has some depth in this class. Wesley could move up, and Chad Strube and David Bergida figure in here as well.

**174 pounds** – Most Tech wrestling fans cannot wait to watch Zach Epperly, a freshman who took a redshirt year last season. Epperly, a Christiansburg, Virginia, native, dominated last season, going 29-2 while wrestling unattached last season and winning six open tournaments. He replaces Gabel, who moved up a weight class to replace Vetterlein.

“He had a super redshirt year,” Dresser said of Epperly. “He’s got tons of tools. I think he can be as good as he wants to be. If he decides not to take a backseat to anyone, I think he can be high on the podium as a freshman, and that’s a pretty amazing statement.

“He’s got to be ready to go out there. He’s sometimes a bit of a slow starter, and he needs to be ready to rock. When he’s ready to go, he’s got some tools. He’s a guy that can put up a lot of points.”

Brooks Morrison, a junior from Pennsylvania, will be the backup at this weight.



**184 pounds** – Gabel, a redshirt junior from Parker, Colorado, moved up after wrestling at 174 last season. He went 14-9 overall and 7-3 in dual meet action, but missed a chunk of the season with a knee injury. He still qualified for the NCAA Championships after finishing fourth at the ACC meet, and he won a match.

“Austin does everything right,” Dresser said. “He trains perfectly. He just has to mentally figure it out and wrestle with more confidence. He needs to trust his training and trust his ability. He and Chris Moon are a lot alike.”

Freshman Zack Zavatsky is listed as the backup here. Zavatsky was a top-75 recruit out of Latrobe, Pennsylvania, but Dresser wants him to take a redshirt year.

**197 pounds** – This is the weight class in Tech’s lineup with some uncertainty. Whoever wins the job has a tough task in replacing Penny, who enjoyed a terrific senior season.

Right now, David Reck, a redshirt freshman from Stafford, Virginia, and Jared Haught, a redshirt freshman from Parkersburg, West Virginia, are battling for the job. Haught went 24-4 while wrestling unattached last season, and he won three tournament titles.

“Jared looks to be the favorite,” Dresser said.

“He’s a hard-working guy. He trains hard, and he’s tough. I’m curious to see how he competes.

“This is the one weight on paper where we’re unsettled. It’s probably our weakest weight. I’m sure Jared wants to dismiss that.”

**Heavyweight** – Normally, Tech has struggled to find guys as this weight class, but Ty Walz returns and finds himself being challenged by two others. Walz, a redshirt sophomore from Cleveland, Ohio, went 27-14 a year ago and 16-7 in dual meet action. He qualified for the NCAA Championships and won two matches. He finished third at the ACC Championship.

“The thing with Walz is that, as a coach, you don’t like inconsistency,” Dresser said. “I’d call him Ty ‘inconsistency’ Walz, and I don’t see a lot of change in that right now. That concerns me. On his good days, it’s like, ‘Wow.’ But then some days I feel like anyone can beat him. He’s got to get consistent, but the ability is there.”

Dan Garwood and Brandon Taylor are pushing Walz. Garwood took a redshirt year last season and went 17-5 while wrestling unattached.

Dresser’s talented and relatively experienced squad will grapple with the toughest schedule in school history. The Hokies face Virginia, Pittsburgh

and NC State all here in Blacksburg, but all within an eight-day span. Outside the conference, Tech plays host to Ohio State and travels to both Penn State and Iowa State.


Penn State won the national championship last spring, while Ohio State came in sixth and Iowa State finished 12th. NC State (19th), Pittsburgh (22nd) and Virginia (23rd) each finished in the top 25.

“I wanted to get us in some big venues,” Dresser said. “You wrestle at Iowa State and you wrestle at Penn State ... you’re in hostile environments. Everyone is against you. The referee is against you. It’s hot in there. Those are tough environments. When we get to the ACC’s and the nationals, I want us to be battle tested. So we’re going to have a lot of battles.”

Dresser feels like the Hokies have established themselves as a top-10 program, and the results certainly prove that. Tech has finished 11th, 10th and eighth, respectively, at the NCAA Championships each of the past three years.

Now, he wants to get in the top four, get a trophy and maybe even contend for it all.

Can this team do it?

“A lot of factors play into it,” Dresser said. “You’ve got to stay healthy and have a little luck – and be damn good. We’re going to try and be damn good and hope the luck falls into our lap.” 



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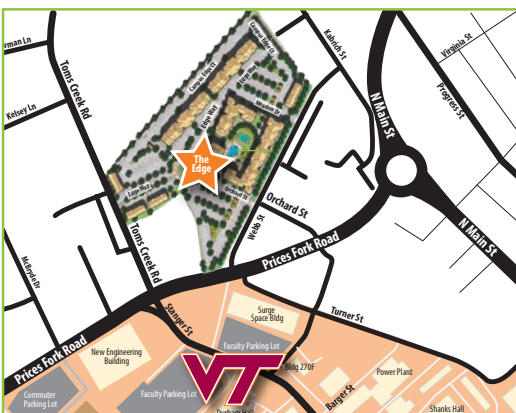
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