

inside

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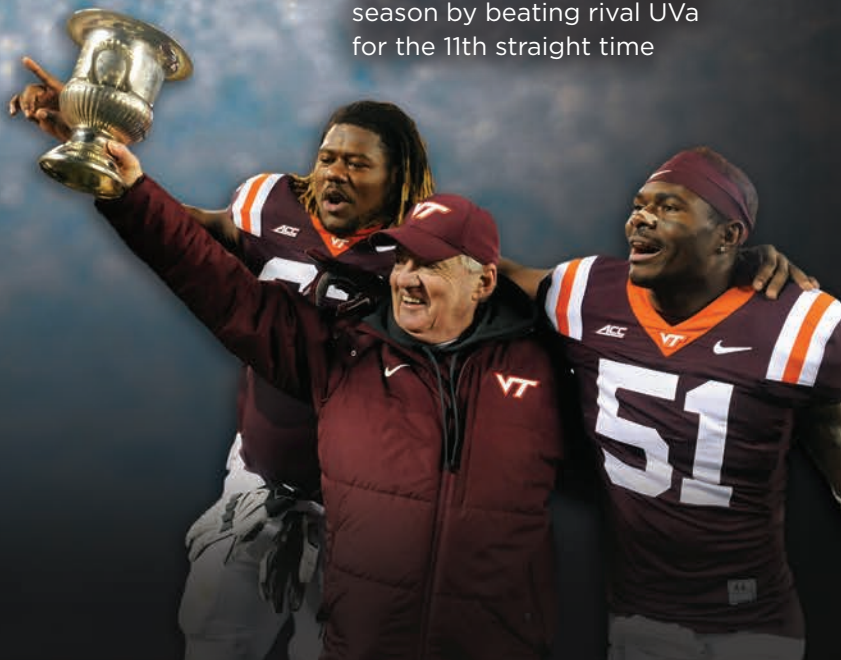
The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

RECORDS RUN IN THE FAMILY

Morgan Latimer is setting records in the pool these days for Tech - just like his father did on the gridiron during his playing days in Blacksburg

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Tech closed the 2014 regular season by beating rival UVa for the 11th straight time



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HOKIES CLAIM COMMONWEALTH CLASH

Behind strong running from J.C. Coleman, big plays from the offense and a terrific game from the defense, Virginia Tech retained possession of the Commonwealth Cup with a 24-20 victory over rival Virginia in the Commonwealth Clash. Coleman's 118 yards rushing and Michael Brewer's touchdown pass to Bucky Hodges late in the fourth quarter enabled Tech to beat UVa for the 11th straight time, and Tech became bowl eligible for the 22nd straight year.

THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"I am really grateful for my scholarship because it allows me to continue my dream as a football player while getting the best education from Virginia Tech. I know this wouldn't be possible without the Hokie Club's efforts to raise money, and I thoroughly appreciate everything they do."

David Wang
Redshirt Senior | Football

"I am very appreciative of the Hokie Club and all they do for us. The other day at the basketball game, I actually got to meet one of the guys who helps with my scholarship, and I really expressed my appreciation for what he does. Thank you to everyone who helps us be successful on and off the field."

J.C. Coleman
Junior | Football

The Donor File

Lawrence Phipps

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL: Golden Hokie Champion

CURRENTLY RESIDES: Richmond, Virginia

WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE?
1960

FAMILY: Jane (wife-JMU, class of 1960); David (son, Virginia Tech, class of 1986; MBA, Michigan, class of 1992); Christie (daughter, VCU, class of 1989; PTA certification, 1992, Brevard C.C., Florida).



Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...

A: A person who supports Virginia Tech in all its aspects. A Hokie tells his friends and neighbors about Virginia Tech and invites them to visit the campus.

Q: Do you have a tailgating tradition?

A: We tailgate with our son and daughter and families and with my childhood friends from Independence, Virginia. That's 60-plus years of friendship and lots of tales to spin.

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

A: The 1999 season. Coach Beamer was taking us to the pinnacle of college football. On Nov. 6, we played at West Virginia in Morgantown. I was with my tailgating buddies in South Dakota to hunt Chinese Ring Neck pheasants on opening day. On our way to our motel that afternoon, we were getting scores

on the radio and Tech was behind 20-19 with less than three minutes to go. The radio switched to live coverage of the Tech game. Vick ran for 26 yards to the WVU 36-yard line with 23 seconds left. Shane Graham kicked a 44-yard field goal to win the game 22-20. We played Florida State for the national championship that year.

Q: How did you get involved with the Hokie Club?

A: John Moody came to our house in Wise, Virginia, in the early 1970s. I invited eight or 10 Hokie friends, and we all donated \$10 (yes, \$10 – can you imagine that?) for the Hokie Club. I had been actively rooting for the Hokies in the 1960s while living in Abingdon, but John's visit made the Hokie Club a priority. Today, I am a Hokie Representative.

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

A: Raised in Southwest Virginia, Virginia Tech is the school of choice. While in high school, I decided to seek an engineering degree, knowing it would result in a good-paying job. Virginia Tech was the only school I considered. Chuck Noe was the basketball coach during my tenure at Virginia Tech (1956-60). He had recruited the top five West Virginia high school players and created wild excitement in the old Memorial Gym (much like "Enter Sandman" today). I've been a fan ever since for all Hokie sports and a season ticket holder in football since Lane Stadium opened.

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

A: It is a privilege to support a great university and feel a small part of the ascent of our academics and athletics while meeting other Hokies.

LETTER FROM LU

Dear Hokie Club members:

As the fall semester comes to a conclusion, I want to thank all of our members for their support. The Hokie Club staff enjoyed spending time with many of you, whether in the parking lots prior to football games or during Hokie Club events in your hometown or here on campus.



On Nov. 1, prior to the Boston College game, the Hokie Club recognized 33 members who have been ACTIVE members for a minimum of 50 years. It was good to see old friends reunite during a pregame luncheon and go on the field prior to kickoff. Each attendee also received a beautiful Hokie quilt as a token of appreciation.

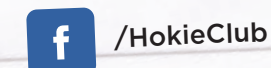
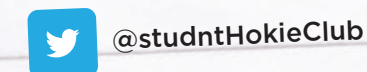
Recently, the Student Hokie Club went over the 700 registered members mark. This is an increase from 200 when the program started in September. Already student members have qualified to be on the field for "Enter Sandman," participated in behind-the-scenes tours of athletics facilities, won tickets to away games and won Hokie "swag" giveaways. Upcoming experiences with Tech's baseball, softball and golf teams are among spring special promotions. Registration is free at <http://hokieclub.com/students/> and you can follow activities on Twitter at @studntHokieClub. You can help by referring any students whom you know.

December is traditionally our single largest month for donor gifts. On Jan. 1, the budgeted amount for tuition, books and computer support increases from \$11.7 million to \$12.2 million. The rapidly rising costs of higher education are outpacing the growth in the Annual Fund. As you plan your year-end charitable giving, I ask that you consider increasing your support. The stock markets have been favorable, and should you have appreciated securities in your portfolio, please consider the tax advantages available to you by gifting them to Virginia Tech.

Your investment in Virginia Tech Athletics has paid dividends for our 22 varsity sports and approximately 550 student-athletes. You can continue to have a significant impact on Hokie Athletics by increasing your active support this year. Individually, if each of us does our part, then collectively the program gets stronger. Join with me and increase your support for 2014! Thank you!

Lu Merritt

Senior Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics



Fuller, four others earn All-ACC nods

Tech cornerback Kendall Fuller was named first-team All-ACC in balloting conducted by the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association (ACSMA), the lone Hokie on the first team. Four other Tech players received All-ACC recognition. Defensive end Dadi Nicolas earned a spot on the second team, while defensive end Ken Ekanem, tight end Bucky Hodges, and defensive tackle Corey Marshall made the third team. Three Hokies: wide receiver Isaiah Ford, defensive tackle Luther Maddy and defensive tackle Nigel Williams received honorable mention honors.

Fuller, a sophomore from Baltimore, Maryland, earned the most points of any ACC player at his position under ACSMA’s point system. He has recorded 50 tackles, including 4.5 for loss and two sacks to go along with 14 pass breakups and an interception that he returned for a touchdown at North Carolina. His 14 pass breakups lead the team. He made the second team a year ago. Nicolas, a redshirt junior from Delray Beach, Florida, has tallied 63 tackles, including 17.5 for loss and 9.0 sacks, to go along with 34 quarterback hurries, a pass break up, two blocked kicks and a fumble recovery. He leads the team in sacks and tackles for a loss.

Ekanem, a redshirt sophomore from Centreville, Virginia, has registered 46 tackles, 13.5 of which are for loss, along with 8.5 sacks. Marshall, a redshirt junior from North Dinwiddie, Virginia, has 39 tackles, including 9.5 for loss and 2.5 sacks, to go along with one interception and 23 quarterback hurries. Hodges, a redshirt freshman from Virginia Beach, Virginia, has caught 42 passes for 517 yards and seven touchdowns and also scored when he recovered a blocked punt in the end zone against Virginia. Nicolas, Ekanem, Marshall and Hodges made the All-ACC squad for the first time.

Hodges, Ford set new marks

Two freshmen – true freshman Isaiah Ford and redshirt freshman Bucky Hodges – etched their names in the Tech record books after terrific debut seasons. With his 58 yards against UVa, Ford broke the Tech freshman record for receiving yards in a season. His 665 receiving yards enabled him to move past Josh Stanford, who recorded 614 yards last season. Earlier this season, Ford set Tech freshman records for catches in a season (53) and touchdown catches (6), breaking marks held by Stanford (40 last season) and Josh Hyman (five in 2004), respectively. He became the first freshman at Tech to catch 50 passes in a season. Hodges set the Tech single-season record for touchdown receptions by a tight end, and his 517 yards are the most yards receiving by a tight end under current head coach Frank Beamer. Jeff King owned the previous record for touchdown receptions with six, which he set in 2005, and Steve Johnson had the mark for receiving yards by a tight end under Beamer (475 in 1987). “It feels good,” Hodges said of the records. “I know Coach Beamer’s had a lot of great players come through here. Just to have my name up there is a great feeling.”

Tech women finish 25th at NCAA Cross Country Championships

The Virginia Tech women’s cross country team posted a 25th-place finish at the 2014 NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships held in Terre Haute, Indiana, on Nov. 22. “We didn’t have our best race of the year,” Tech cross country coach Ben Thomas said. “We had a couple of girls go down and come to a full stop in the first kilometer and never really got our pack together. Despite the lapses, their effort was great.” Competing at nationals for just the second time in school history, the Hokies used a top-100 finish from senior Paige Kvartunas to push them into the 25th spot in a field of 31 of the nation’s best teams (255 individual runners). Kvartunas crossed the line in 88th position with a time of 21 minutes, 8.1 seconds, just 24 seconds away from receiving All-America honors.

Senior Sarah Rapp, competing in the final cross country race of her career, finished in the top half of the field in 112th place with a time of 21:16.5. Senior Hilary Krein finished in 131st with a time of 21:25.9. Sophomore Shannon Morton was the next to cross the line for Tech with a time of 21:42.8 – good for a 172nd-place finish. Senior Katarina Smiljanec posted a 227th-place finish with a time of 22:20.7. Sophomore Hanna Green crossed the finish line in 235th place with a time of 22:40.4, while senior Amanda Smith closed out the Hokie contingent with a time of 23:28.4 for a 251st-place finish. Tech finished with 574 points. All of the distance runners will now set their sights on the 2014 indoor track & field season.



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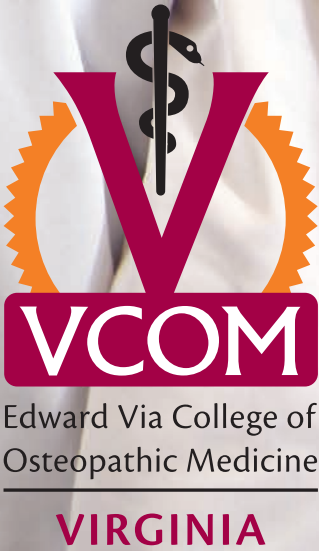


Thanks to all for a fantastic year! Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season from the G&H family to yours!

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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Coleman comes up large for the Hokies down the stretch

At some point in the second half of Tech's season ender against in-state rival Virginia, J.C. Coleman felt a few of his muscles starting to tighten and then the tiny spasms of pain started arriving.

Recognizing the arrival of cramps, Coleman chugged a combination of Gatorade and electrolytes, and the concoction resulted in the genesis of a hurricane in his stomach. Shortly thereafter, he spilled the remnants of the category 5 into a sideline garbage can.

Load lightened, he proceeded to blow past and uproot a strong Virginia defense, wrapping up the best performance of his collegiate career.

"It was just a bad second half there for a while, but I overcame it," Coleman said. "I had some nice runs, ran tough and physical. I broke some tackles and stiff-armed a couple of guys. I had a good game overall. It was fun."

Coleman rushed for 118 yards on 18 carries, helping Tech rally from a fourth-quarter deficit to beat the Cavaliers for the 11th straight season. He averaged 6.6 yards per carry, and he only lost two yards all game. That's not too shabby for a young man who stands all of 5-foot-7, weighs less than 200 pounds and was facing a stout Virginia front seven.

It capped an unbelievable roller coaster of a season for Coleman. He started the first game of the season and the last. In between, he lost his starting job, dropped to fourth on the depth chart, had a costly fumble against Pittsburgh, didn't see the field the next two games, saved Tech's bacon against Duke and served as the

only bright spot on offense against Wake.

The ride ended with him being carried off the field by his teammates, Commonwealth Cup firmly entrenched in his left hand.

"It's amazing to go from not playing to being sort of a hero for the team," he said. "I embrace it. I love the feeling. I love the confidence that everyone has in me. It's an amazing feeling. The players are excited to see me out there and see me making plays. It's exciting to see them embracing me making plays in these games."

Coleman lost reps and carries as freshmen Shai McKenzie and Marshawn Williams emerged – and then both went down for the season with ACL injuries. Trey Edmunds was working his way back, too, until a fractured clavicle ruined his season.

Tech running backs coach Shane Beamer planned to give Coleman a bigger workload against the Panthers after Edmunds went down. But the Hokies got behind, which resulted in more passing, and then Coleman fumbled on a second-half carry – which led to a Pittsburgh touchdown in a 21-16 loss.

He didn't carry again – for the next two games.

"I did feel they [Tech's coaches] didn't have the confidence to put me out there," Coleman said. "It kind of showed. I didn't play much after that. That's understandable. When I get out there, I can't put the ball on the ground. That helped us lose that game. I take full accountability for that. I understand that running backs can't fumble. I understood that and all the consequences that

came with it."

After not playing in the Hokies' losses to Miami and BC, Coleman met with Beamer. He had kept working hard in practices and kept being a good teammate. He wanted a role, whether it be getting a few carries or working more on special teams.


Tech had lost three straight games at the time. He wanted to help end the slide.

"It wasn't a meeting where I was complaining about a lack of playing time or a lack of carries," Coleman said. "It was just a meeting where I could see where I was at and what I could do to contribute. I felt I could contribute on this level and for this team. I wanted to figure out what I could do. He told me, and I got a few carries early against Duke before Marshawn got hurt."

Coleman rushed for 95 yards against Duke and 98 yards against Wake. His 118-yard performance against UVa marked his second 100-yard performance as a Hokie.

More impressively, he averaged 5.6 yards per carry in that three-game span, and the Hokies, as an offense, have rushed for an average of 162 yards per game.

The Hokies hope to get Edmunds back for the bowl game. But if not, they can rest a little more comfortably knowing that their diminutive back is playing rather big right now.

"I know I can play at this level, I know I can compete with the best of them, and I know I can succeed at this level," he said. "When Marshawn got hurt, I looked at it as I had to step up and take on a different role – and that's what I did." 



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Injuries, inexperience and inconsistency lead to an unusual 2014 season for Tech

The 2014 football season will be remembered as one of the most unusually quirky football seasons in Virginia Tech history. It was frustrating at times and confounding at others, and yet extraordinarily thrilling as well.

Yes, the Hokies had their moments, but ...

At the end of the day, Tech was too young and too injured to be a consistent football team. The inexperience at key positions and the injuries were too much to overcome.

That adds up to a 6-6 record.

Usually, 6-6 doesn't fly at Virginia Tech. Not for head coach Frank Beamer, his assistants, Tech's players or for the legion of constituents who comprise Tech's passionate fan base.

Beamer – to his credit – nailed this season back in August when he predicted it would be one full of “growing pains.” And that was before season-ending injuries to Brandon Facyson, Luther Maddy, Shai McKenzie, Trey Edmunds, Marshawn Williams, and three offensive linemen (seniors Mark Shuman and Brent Benedict and sophomore Jonathan McLaughlin). It's hard to say what this team's record would've been with a healthy McKenzie, Facyson and Maddy, but it's probably a safe bet to say it would have been better than 6-6. That the Hokies got to six wins is an accomplishment considering the injury situation alone.

“I really like this football team,” Beamer said after the Hokies' 24-20 victory over UVa in the regular-season finale. “I know the record hasn't been as good as some of them, but the quality of kid, the determination and the hard play ... we didn't always play well, but we played hard.



Bucky Hodges scored eight touchdowns this season and was part of a group of freshmen who accounted for more than 80 percent of the Hokies' scoring.

I really appreciate the type of kid we have in our program and particularly this group of players.”

The Hokies showed their promise in the early-season win at then-No. 8 Ohio State and later at then-No. 19 Duke. They lost three games (Georgia Tech, BC and Wake) by three points or less. Games at Pitt and against East Carolina came down to the final possession.

Were those five games winnable? Of course.

Thus, this easily could've been an eight- or nine-win season, or perhaps even 10 with a few breaks.

Of course, the Hokies escaped Duke when one of the ACC's most reliable kickers missed a chip-shot field-goal attempt and pulled out the UVa win in the final seconds, so things have a way of evening out over the course of the entire season.

While the impact of the injuries was a factor, previous Tech teams have had the experience and

depth to overcome injuries and still succeed. This one didn't.

So why not?

The same short-handed offense that was shut out for four quarters at Wake Forest exploded for 433 yards six days later against Virginia. That yardage total was the most UVa had allowed all year – more than Florida State, UCLA, BYU or Georgia Tech gained against the Cavaliers. Tech didn't win the line of scrimmage against UVa, but it made enough plays on offense to pull out a gutty win.

So the same offense that was helpless against Miami and hapless at Wake Forest got it done against Virginia. It got it done because tough guys like Michael Brewer, Wade Hansen and J.C. Coleman played through pain, and the offense made a play here or there.

The defense improved down the stretch and executed its plan much better except for “one busted coverage that really irritates me,” coordinator Bud Foster said after the Virginia game.

For a variety of reasons, though, overall the team didn't develop the cohesiveness to make those winning plays consistently. For example, during the regular season:

- Tech missed eight field goals, more than any other team in the league.
- The Hokies committed 94 penalties, the most in the ACC.
- Tech committed 25 turnovers, 13th in the league.
- Tech finished last in the ACC in turnover margin.
- Tech was last in the ACC in punting average (40 yards per punt)

Those are things that make the difference between winning and losing close games.

All year long, Tech seemed to be fighting an uphill battle in many ways. From injuries to bad breaks to the backup quarterback leaving the team in November, the Hokies' 2014 season was a true obstacle course.

But at the end of the day, the reason that Tech won just six games goes back to recruiting misses from 2010-12. Review the list of those 75 names from those three classes. You'll walk away saying, “What ever happened to that guy?” more than you'd like.

More than 80 percent of Tech's scoring came from its freshman class this year. That's exciting. That's really exciting, actually. But while that bodes extremely well for the future, it shows you that there weren't enough playmakers in the sophomore, junior

or senior classes.

This group of players provided some incredible memories from that night in Columbus to the season finale against Virginia. It showed no quit, kept battling and found a way to become bowl eligible in the final seconds of the season.


“I don't know if I've ever had a team go through as many injuries as this one,” Beamer said after the UVa game. “A third of our starters are gone – people that were supposed to start at the beginning of the year. I don't know if I've ever gone through a season with as many freshmen playing. Everybody wants a great record, and I do, too, but I also recognize that we played hard and gave it our best shot, and we had some games that we could have won and maybe should have won, but didn't.

“But this coaching staff and this group of players have done a great job with the circumstances as far as personnel being in and out. We've had to overcome some things. For us to hang in there like we did, I'm really proud of them. We've gone to a lot of bowls around here over the years, but this team, this year, really deserves one because nothing was easy for them.”

It wasn't easy for them. It wasn't easy for their coaches or Tech fans either.

Despite all the injuries and attrition and obstacles, the Hokies are going to their 22nd straight bowl, which is a tremendous accomplishment. Only Nebraska, Michigan, Florida, Florida State and Alabama have ever pulled off a 22-year run like Tech's current bowl streak. It might seem simple because of the proliferation of bowl games, but a lot of tradition-rich programs in places like South Bend, State College, Austin, Lincoln, Columbus, Knoxville and Baton Rouge haven't put together a streak like Virginia Tech's.

The next few months are going to be very important to the future of Tech's football program, starting with the bowl game in December and then with signing day in February. Winning this bowl game and having a 22nd straight winning season is vital for the program. But winning on signing day – and Tech coaches are enthused about the commitments they've received so far – is also critical.

We're going to remember this Virginia Tech football season for both the highs and the lows. But in the grand scheme, Tech fans should hope that 2014's obstacles will help make the 2015 team a bigger winner. 



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Keeping up *with* Compliance

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

Q: Have you submitted the paperwork on getting medical hardship waivers for Luther Maddy, Brandon Facyson and Calvin Cline? What's the likelihood of those three being granted waivers? I would hate to see them lose a year. Thanks, Rachel in Blacksburg.

TP: "We will submit the paperwork to the ACC office once the season ends - we are prohibited from doing it before then - and we feel very confident that the conference will grant all three waivers. All played in fewer than 30 percent of the Hokies' games, and none of them played during the second half of the season. Those are the two key criteria for receiving the waiver, along with providing the necessary substantiating medical documentation, of course.

"The decisions usually come pretty quick, so we should know about all three at some point in January of next year. If the ACC office denies any of the waivers, there is an appeal process through a specific NCAA committee."

Q: I'm a football season ticket holder, and I noticed several recruits at the Tech-Boston College game. It was freezing cold outside that game, and I was wondering if the Tech athletics department could have recruits sit in any available indoor club seating. It seems that would be a nice way of treating them, but it's probably illegal. Thanks, JC in Blacksburg.

TP: "Good question, and your assumption is correct. This is not permissible under NCAA rules. "Under Bylaw 13.7.5.2, which is part of the

legislation governing official visits, a school can provide complimentary admissions to the institution's athletics events during the official visit for the prospect, his/her parents (or legal guardians) and spouse. But the bylaw states, 'Such admissions may provide seating only in the general seating area. Providing seating for the prospect, his/her parents or legal guardians or spouse in the facility's press box, special seating boxes or bench area is specifically prohibited.'"

Q: Has there been any more discussion on letting athletes play for five years instead of four and doing away with the redshirt season and all the waivers, like the medical hardship waiver (e.g. Luther Maddy)? It also would allow schools to have more depth. We can't play Andrew Ford or Chris Durkin now without burning the redshirt. Thanks, April in Blacksburg.

TP: "This is something that Tech head coach Frank Beamer has advocated for years, and it has been proposed on numerous occasions. In fact, it's been proposed four times in the past 10 years, but has never been adopted by the Division I membership.

"The idea does make some sense. It would eliminate many of the waiver issues, and it might increase graduation rates. The idea was discussed at ACC meetings this past May, and most of the 15 schools appear to be in favor of it. This viewpoint, as well as freshman ineligibility (the flipside of the issue), continue to reappear periodically.

"I don't know whether either will happen in the


near-term, but I do think that five-year eligibility is an idea that will be discussed in more detail by the ACC, Big 12, Big 10, Pac 12 and SEC now that the five conferences have been granted the autonomy to chart their own legislative course."

Q: I read where UConn women's basketball coach Geno Auriemma called that young girl who played in the Little League World Series and congratulated her, and yet the NCAA ruled that was a secondary violation. Your thoughts? Derek from Pearisburg.

TP: "Yes, Auriemma did call Mo'ne Davis, the young lady whom you refer to, and this was determined to be a minor violation of NCAA regulations.

"The NCAA rule is pretty clear on this. Telephone calls to an individual, or his or her relatives or guardians may not be made before Sept. 1 at the beginning of his or her junior year of high school.

"UConn tried to argue that Davis was not a recruitable athlete because she wasn't in the ninth grade yet (for NCAA purposes, ninth grade is the point where an individual becomes a prospective student-athlete). But the applicable rule is not limited to prospective student-athletes. It refers specifically to calls 'to an individual,' not 'to a prospect.'

"UConn also tried to argue that the call had nothing to do with recruiting. But in this case, as in many others, that's simply not enough to get a school off the hook." 



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DANIELLE KING

Women's Soccer | Fairfax, Virginia

by Jimmy Robertson

After starting every match in each of the past two seasons for the Tech women's soccer team, defender Danielle King graduates next May with a degree in human development. She then plans on getting a master's degree, and from there, pursuing a career in education.

Q: Why did you decide to major in human development?

DK: "My major is human development, with a concentration in child and adolescent development. I chose this major mainly because I have a passion for helping people, specifically young children. This major focuses on the entire life span of humans and has a mixture of different classes, which diversifies my knowledge of human development. I also really liked that this major gave me the basis for many different career options such as teaching, counseling or possibly clinical psychology."

Q: Are you going to pursue a master's degree? Why?

DK: "My current plan is to pursue a master's in education, which will advance my knowledge about the education process as a whole and will allow me to gather more insight into that occupation. Having a master's degree will also make my background more competitive during the job search process. The student teaching requirement that is completed during the program will give me additional classroom experience and will increase my confidence with the kids."

"I am still assessing a variety of graduate programs, but I'm very interested in a partial online master's program offered by Liberty University. This option really interests me because it allows me to work while I pursue my degree. I am also interested in coaching soccer at the collegiate level if the opportunity presents itself."

Q: Why have you decided on your particular career path?

DK: "My soccer career at Tech has given me many opportunities to get involved with children and interact with younger students on and off the field while coaching at camps during the summer months. These kids have so much energy and eagerness to learn the game of soccer and are a lot of fun to hang out with on a more informal level."




I want to make a life-long difference in children's lives and have found such joy and fulfillment when I know that I have been able to influence them in a positive and beneficial way beyond the soccer field. I'm confident I can find that same fulfillment in an elementary teaching career."

Q: Have you done any internships, co-ops, etc., and what did you learn from these experiences?

DK: "This past summer, I worked at Trinity Christian School in Fairfax, Virginia, in the athletics department. I learned that there is still a lot of activity at a school even during the summer months. My responsibilities included organization of a variety of camp activities, coordination

with other schools in the development of team schedules and interacting with coaches and teachers as we prepared for the new school year. I will be completing my field study this spring at a Blacksburg elementary school in a kindergarten and first grade classroom. Since this will be geared more specifically to my career path, I am really excited for that to start."

Q: What are your future plans?

DK: "My plan is to get my master's degree in education in a one-year program and then apply for teaching jobs in Northern Virginia for the 2016-17 school year. I also will be applying this winter and spring to collegiate soccer coaching jobs in the Northern Virginia area." 

DREW RANAHAH

Men's Soccer | Oakland, California

by Jimmy Robertson

Drew Ranahan played on the Tech men's soccer team for four years, and he made the All-ACC Academic Team for men's soccer on two occasions. The West Coast native and economics major plans on returning home after graduation to work for Aon Hewitt, a consulting and outsourcing solutions company.

Q: Why did you decide to major in economics?

DR: "I chose to major in economics because I knew it would be a challenging major that would push me to my full potential as a student. I have always liked using numbers and data to solve problems and tell stories, which is exactly the basis of economics. I also knew that a business degree in economics can take you a lot of different ways in terms of career paths, and I was not so sure what kind of work I would want to be doing after school."

Q: Are you going to pursue a master's degree?

DR: "I am not going to continue a master's degree immediately after undergrad. However, I would like to some day come back to school and receive an MBA. I would like to run my own business one day, and I think getting to a higher level of education would help me reach those goals."

Q: Have you done any internships, and if so what did you learn from those experiences?

DR: "I have had two internships over the past two summers. One was in San Francisco, California, with TechSoup, and the other was in Berkeley, California, with RedAwning. I learned a lot over these two experiences. Both were geared toward analyzing data and compiling certain marketing analytics to reflect information to our clients and to my superiors. I also learned what it was like to commute and work a 9-5 job, which is a lot different than the average day at Virginia Tech."

Q: How did you come about to pursuing a career in data analysis?


DR: "I decided to go down my particular career path by staying motivated and taking advantage of the opportunities laid out in front



of me. Virginia Tech does a great job of setting up its students with prospective job offers, and also preparing its students for what comes after school and soccer. I was not sure what field of work I wanted to be in, and the resources provided by Virginia Tech and the support from friends and family helped me figure out what direction I wanted to go in."

Q: What are your future plans?

DR: "I plan on graduating with a business

degree in economics in December. After graduation, I will go home to California for the holidays. Just recently, I accepted an offer to do consulting with Aon Hewitt. I will start work with Aon Hewitt out in California in June. Before I start, I would love to do some traveling outside of the country, possibly South America. I also plan to get involved in coaching soccer for my local club team in Oakland. I think that coaching and staying involved with the game is huge for me as I pursue my dreams outside of the sport I love." 

Coming off the bench against Morgan State, Adam Smith scored 22 points and hit a career-best six 3-pointers in the Hokies' 20-point win.

SMITH HEATS UP IN RESERVE ROLE

Tech guard Adam Smith put up big numbers during a three-game stretch in which he came off the bench, lifting the Hokies to two wins

by Jimmy Robertson

Adam Smith probably hasn't heard of former NBA standout Vinnie Johnson. After all, Johnson retired the same year that Smith entered this world.

But Smith's recent role certainly parallels that of Johnson, affectionately known by most as "The Microwave."

Johnson played for three NBA teams, but is best remembered for his role with the Detroit Pistons for whom he won a couple of championship rings. He came off the bench for the Pistons and provided instant offense. His ability to "heat things up quickly" earned him his moniker.

In the early part of this season, Smith is doing similar things. After starting the first three games of this season, he found himself coming off the bench, and he produced, averaging 18 points per game over a three-game stretch (Northern Iowa, Miami (Ohio) and Morgan State). He shot 57.7

percent from the floor (19-of-33), with 12 of the 19 baskets being 3-pointers.

"Whether I start or not, I've still got to produce," Smith said after a 22-point outing against Morgan State. "It's the same game. Everybody's got to contribute in some way or some form. I really don't think about it [starting] too much."

"I think it's an advantage seeing the game from the outside first, watching them and checking out the pace and watching how the refs call the game. So I use it to my advantage."

The redshirt junior from Jonesboro, Georgia, hit 7-of-11 from the floor against Morgan State, including a career-high six 3-pointers. He came within a trey of tying the school record held by three players and most recently set by Malcolm Delaney (vs. North Carolina, Jan. 13, 2011).

Smith started nine games a year ago, including

a game against then-No. 1 Michigan State in which he scored 27 points. But injuries derailed his season, particularly a lower leg injury that caused him to miss the final 14 games.

He played reasonably well in the three games he started to open this season, scoring in double figures in two of those. He led Tech with 11 points in 25 minutes in a loss to Appalachian State, hitting 5-of-10 from the floor and 1-of-4 from beyond the arc.

Tech coach Buzz Williams doesn't get caught up in who starts a game. He cares about who finishes a game – and Smith is getting to finish. He played 26, 33 and 32 minutes in his three games off the bench compared to 27, 31 and 25 in his three starts.

"Adam's best games have been coming off the bench so far," Williams said. "It [taking Smith out of the starting lineup] wasn't for punishment.

I'll start anybody because I don't get into that. I want to get our best guys that can finish on the floor at the end [of games], and I want to have the opportunity to be able to do that without having to worry about foul trouble or things of that nature."

Williams is taking a similar approach with center Joey van Zegeren. Like Smith, van Zegeren started the first three games of the season, but Williams brought him off the bench in the Northern Iowa, Miami (Ohio) and Morgan State games. Van Zegeren scored 15, 8 and 13 points in those three games, and he also grabbed six, nine and eight rebounds.

Williams would rather play van Zegeren 25 minutes a game and get that type of productivity instead of starting him, run the risk of him getting in foul trouble and having him sit for huge stretches of a game.

"I think it takes a little bit of pressure off Joey," Williams said. "Let Shane [Henry] pick up the first 'dumb' foul instead of Joey picking up the first dumb foul."

Van Zegeren averaged 12 points and 7.7 rebounds per game, and he shot nearly 70 percent in that span. He also blocked six shots against Morgan State, meaning the fewer minutes and the fewer fouls allowed him to be more aggressive on that end of the floor as well.

"Joey can't play 40 minutes and be effective," Williams said. "There is a little bit of diminishing returns with Joey. I've only coached him six games, so I don't want to pre-judge him, but the longer he goes, the less effective he becomes."

Williams did not say if he planned to move either back into the starting lineup any time soon. Most players like to start – though at least one would be hesitant leaving his role off the bench.

"I'm playing well off the bench," Smith laughed. "So I don't know."

SUCCESSFUL DEBUT FOR WILLIAMS, HOKIES

The Buzz Williams Era at Tech got started in near-perfect fashion.

On Nov. 14, the Hokies beat Maryland-Eastern Shore 71-46, shot better than 50 percent (52.2), forced the Hawks into a wretched shooting night (27.7 percent), and perhaps most impressively, protected the ball judiciously, committing just six turnovers.

In fact, the Hokies went 32 minutes and 15 seconds before committing their first turnover, one that came when freshman Satchel Pierce was whistled for traveling underneath the basket.

Outside of some subpar free-throw shooting (17-of-29) and getting edged on the boards (35-33), there was little for Williams to complain about in the opener.

"I'm thankful to be here," he said when asked what it was like to win his debut as Tech's coach. "I'm not dodging it at all, but there is a lot of emotion and a lot of decisions and a lot of people moving across the world. Not me, but parents who trusted the previous staff. Those kids signed here, and those coaches did an unbelievable job. You look at Justin Bibbs and Jalen Hudson [who signed under James Johnson], two really good players, and then Satchel and Med [Ahmed Hill] signed without visiting here. Shane Henry signed late. Seth [Allen], I had never met him. There were a lot of decisions, a lot of work, a lot of time and a lot of emotion that led up to Nov. 14."

"When it's your first one, it means a lot to a lot of different people."

Tech never trailed in the game, jumping out to a 7-0 lead. Bibbs scored nine of the Hokies' first 18 points and ended up tied with Malik Müller with a game-high 15 points. Hill scored 11.

The last time three freshmen scored in double figures in their first game at Tech came in 2000. That season, Carlos Dixon (21 points), Chris Exilus (20 points) and Bryant Matthews (10 points) scored in double figures against VMI in a 92-68 win at Cassell Coliseum.

BIG MAN COMES UP BIG VERSUS LIBERTY

Facing a tall and talented front line in Liberty, Tech's big man in the middle came up big against the Flames.

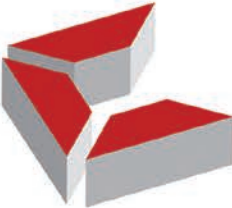
Van Zegeren scored 17 points and grabbed 10 rebounds in the Hokies' 73-63 win over Liberty on Nov. 19. The double-double marked the first of van Zegeren's career. He became the only active Tech player with a double-double.

Van Zegeren played 34 minutes and hit 7-of-9 from the floor and 3-of-6 from the free-throw line. Eleven of his 17 points came in the second half, as the Hokies led by as many as 14 and then held on down the stretch for the win.

"I think I've taken a big step," van Zegeren said when asked about his improvement from this season compared to last season. "We've all been working hard in the gym. I think it's up to us now. We're all in the best shape we've been in. It's now a mental game that we make sure we have our engine's going before the game and that we make sure we're the tougher team on the court."

"I don't know that he needs to play 34 minutes, but I do think, when he's not in foul trouble, it gives us the opportunity to make that decision," Williams said. "I did think he was in a good groove ... I thought that groove those kids were in, the large part was because Joey was playing pretty well."

Van Zegeren's shooting was a big part of the



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Hokies' shooting performance in the game. Tech shot 61 percent from the floor – its best shooting percentage since 2011 when the Hokies shot 62.5 percent against Monmouth.

BIBBS WITH DOUBLE FIGURES IN FIRST THREE GAMES

Bibbs quickly established himself as a player to watch this season when he scored 15 points in the Hokies' 71-46 season-opening win over Maryland-Eastern Shore.

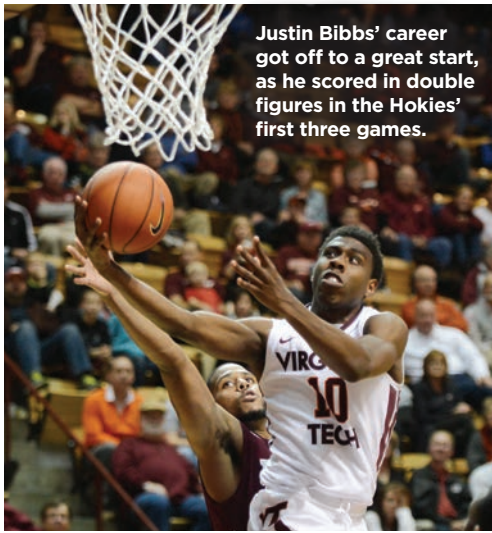
The lone freshman in the starting lineup, Bibbs hit 6-of-10 from the floor, including 1-of-2 from beyond the 3-point arc, and both of his free-throw attempts against UMES.

His 15 points were the most by a Tech freshman in a debut since Jeff Allen scored 19 against Elon in his debut in 2007.

"Devin [Wilson] and my teammates kept going to the paint, and they dished it out to me when I was open," Bibbs said. "They make it easy for me."

Bibbs scored 10 points on 4-of-7 shooting against Liberty, hitting two 3-pointers in 35 minutes of action. Against Appalachian State, he scored 10 points on 5-of-11 shooting in 30 minutes.

Bibbs became the first Tech freshman to score in double figures in his first three games since



Justin Bibbs' career got off to a great start, as he scored in double figures in the Hokies' first three games.

Allen opened with three double-figure scoring games in 2007.

"This is his third year of living away from home," Williams said. "He lived in a prep school [in Florida] for two years a long way from where he grew up [in Ohio]. His mom and dad are very quiet leaders, very good, wholesome people.

"Bibbs is not emotional. He's not caught up in a lot of hype. He's going to do exactly what you tell him to do, and then, he's going to come back tomorrow and do exactly what you tell him to do. I think he lives like that. He's that way as a

student and as a person.


"I don't know if I would be strong enough as a dad to let any of my children leave home at the conclusion of their sophomore year [of high school]. That's really hard. But in some ways, I think there is some residual effect to that."

WILLIAMS AND LAYER BEST OF FRIENDS

Williams and Liberty head coach Dale Layer had a prior relationship, one that made coaching against each other quite uncomfortable.

Layer used to be the head coach at Colorado State (2000-07), and he hired Williams to be his assistant. It marked Williams' first job at a bigger school – he had worked previously at Texas-Arlington, Texas A&M-Kingsville and Northwestern State.

Williams later returned the favor, hiring Layer as an assistant when he was named the head coach at Marquette when Tom Crean took the Indiana job. Layer worked for Williams for one season (2008-09) before getting the head job at Liberty in 2009.

"He's the best human being I know, other than my wife," Williams said of Layer. "He absolutely changed my life. It was the most uncomfortable game I've ever coached. To be very frank with you, that's probably the reason we weren't very good in the first half." 

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WILLIAMS AND STAFF BRING IN ANOTHER STRONG RECRUITING HAUL

by Jimmy Robertson

Virginia Tech hadn't even played a game yet, but new head coach Buzz Williams' season could not have gotten off to a better start.

Two days before the season opener, Williams and his staff signed three prospects to letters-of-intent, a group that many of those in recruiting circles ranked among the top 30 classes in the nation. In fact, 247Sports ranked the class No. 18, while Rivals ranked it No. 27. Only Duke, Louisville, Syracuse, Florida State and Wake Forest checked in ahead of the Hokies among ACC schools.

Tech's class consists of Chris Clarke, a 6-foot-6, 185-pound wing player from Virginia Beach, Virginia; Justin Robinson, a 6-1, 170-pound point guard from Manassas, Virginia; and Kerry Blackshear, Jr., a 6-9, 230-pound forward from Orlando, Florida. They were the only three prospects whom Williams brought to campus for an official visit, and he managed to land all three.

"I'm really, really excited about the group we've signed," Williams said. "They represent who we want to be about on the floor, and more importantly, off the floor."

"You know, it's hard in a lot of ways when you're not from here, when you've had the roster turnover that we've had when I got the job. The campus visits were probably more important than they typically are just so that everyone could meet everyone so they could put a face to the name. We'll never forget the trust that those kids and their families have put in us and our dreams and our plans for what we want the program to be."

"I think we addressed some needs physically. I think we addressed some depth issues that are glaring. Our current kids were phenomenal hosts. I hope this will pay dividends down the road."

For the first time since the fall signing period of 2010, a Tech basketball staff has signed more than one prospect from Virginia. That year, then-coach Seth Greenberg signed C.J. Barksdale out of Danville and Dorian Finney-Smith out of Portsmouth.

Tech's roster over the past decade has lacked a Virginia flavor. In recent years, guys like Cat Barbour (NC State), Andrew Miller (Kansas) and Seth Allen, a current Hokie now after transferring from Maryland, never really considered Tech.

But Williams took steps to remedy that by



plucking Clarke and Robinson out of the storied Boo Williams AAU program in the Hampton/Newport News area. Williams went to every Boo Williams game over the summer except for one.

"I felt it was important to recruit from the inside out," Williams said. "Not that I was unaware because I had studied it, but there are a lot of good players within driving distance of Blacksburg, Virginia. So you have to build

incredibly trustful relationships inside and out."

Clarke headlines the class, as four major recruiting services rated him the top player in Virginia and most ranked him among the top 100 recruits in the nation. He averaged 17 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists per game last season as a junior at Cape Henry Collegiate School.

Clarke originally committed to Tennessee after also considering Tech, Connecticut and

Creighton. But his family kept in contact with Williams, and days before signing day, Clarke decided to switch.

Clarke is a microcosm of the type of player Williams likes. He plays hard and possesses the ability to play multiple positions.

"His motor does not stop," Williams said. "He doesn't buy unleaded. He does not buy super-unleaded. He gets his gas from T. Boone Pickens. He is non-stop. He's long, rangy and very hard to guard. I love his energy and his fight. I think he can play anywhere on the floor. I think he's a clone to some of those guys we've coached in the past."

Robinson's signing gave the Hokies a point guard whom they desperately needed. The roster currently includes one true point guard in Devin Wilson, with Williams trying to steal minutes from the trio of Malik Müller, Adam Smith and freshman Jalen Hudson.

Robinson plays at St. James School in St. James, Maryland, after playing his sophomore year at Montrose Christian School. He averaged 14.6 points and 7.9 assists as a junior at St. James, leading the team to a 22-5 record and earning all-conference honors. He chose the Hokies over UNLV and Providence.

"Justin is left-handed and is a true point," Williams said. "He runs the game mentally and physically for his team. I love left-handed guards.

He plays at a high level and has been coached the right way."

"God doesn't make many point guards anymore, true run-the-team, I-can-make-an-open-shot, you-have-to-guard-me, I-know-where-everyone-is supposed to be on the floor ... He's not a jet, but he's definitely not slow. As his body begins to take shape, he's going to be able to own and hold his own space, which is important for a guard."

Blackshear, Jr., rounds out the group. He comes from good stock, as his father is the all-time leading scorer in Stetson University basketball history.

Blackshear, Jr., averaged 12 points and 7.6 rebounds for Maynard Evans High School as a junior, leading his team to the Class 8A state championship game. He scored 10 points and grabbed nine rebounds in a 66-64 loss.

"I think Kerry has a very high ceiling," Williams said. "He's extremely skilled for his age. He will play for another state championship this year. He's a true combo forward. He can shoot it out to 3. He's a great passer. He's got guard-like feet. He can guard a ball screen however you want."

"He's a great kid. He's quiet. I think he has a very high ceiling. I don't think he knows how good he can be. He can be a guy who has a distinct role very early in his career."

This class gives the Hokies a projected 2015-16


roster of 14 players – one over the NCAA limit. But Williams wasn't about to pass on players who could make Tech's program better, and given the volatility in college basketball these days, it makes sense for a coach to protect his program from potential departures.

Williams knows this first hand. After he was hired, he saw Trevor Thompson, Ben Emelogu, Marshall Wood and Maurice Kirby transfer and Barksdale give up basketball for health reasons.

"It will always work itself out," Williams said. "I can't tell you exactly what day, what time or who it will be, whether it will be someone on our team or someone coming to our team. Just like I don't think I could have anticipated the velocity of changes that have happened over a six- or eight-week period [after he was hired]. They were all different. That's just how it goes."

"You have to do what's right by the program, No. 1, and then you have to do what's right by the young man and/or the coach. But if there's ever a decision, you have to do what's right by the program."

For Williams, recruiting is not complete. It never will be. He has said that he plans on recruiting every single day while he is the coach at Tech.

That type of work ethic pays dividends. It certainly did this fall. 



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BYRN IN TUNE WITH FUTURE PLANS

Tech receiver Willie Byrn has a passion for music, and he is heading to Los Angeles once his football career runs its course.

by **Jimmy Robertson**

Questions concerning life-altering influences on student-athletes illicit several common responses, ones ranging from parents to siblings to high school coaches.

Ask that question to football player Willie Byrn, and he is apt to toss out names like Michael Jackson, Prince or The Beatles.

Tech's eccentric receiver, the one with certain eclectic tastes, doesn't think in the same manner as most student-athletes. Yes, he loves football and plans on riding the game as far as it will carry him, but his interests extend well beyond the football field.

Byrn already has his degree in communications, with a minor in political science – something he picked up last May. But he doesn't plan on being a speechwriter for a congressman or a media relations coordinator for a governor. His vision is much bigger than that.

Actually, he has Hollywood-sized aspirations. "As soon as football is over, I'm going to move to L.A.," he said.

Byrn isn't going across the country for the weather and the surfing, or because it's the "hip" thing to do. He wants to pursue a career in the entertainment industry, specifically in music as a singer/songwriter or producer.

Hokie Nation learned about Byrn's passion during halftime of the Tech-Boston College game. The athletics department's video office ran a package on the video scoreboard that featured Byrn singing, playing his guitar and discussing his passion for music.

This isn't some fly-by-night hobby. This past summer, Byrn approached various local establishments about providing some live entertainment for the patrons. It allowed him the opportunity to get some experience, and while he sings cover songs, he also produces original music and wanted to get some reaction to some of his original stuff.

A quick search of YouTube revealed Byrn playing in a tank top and shorts at Shaka's Live, a popular nightclub in his hometown of Virginia Beach. A friend of his helped arrange the gig, which was his first.

"I wasn't really sure about it, but it all happened so fast," he said. "I didn't have much choice. I decided to go with it. It was so much fun. The first song or two, I was uncomfortable. Once I let loose and didn't

care who was there, it was a blast.

“So I wanted to do it again. I started calling around here, and my dad started calling around here and tried to find some places that would understand the football schedule in the summer. I didn’t have to take any classes in the summer because I had graduated, so I had a lot of time to mess around and maybe play a show or two.”

He landed a couple of gigs here in the Blacksburg area, including one at The Palisades Restaurant in remote Eggleston, Virginia, a 30-minute drive from campus. Here is a clip of him singing Michael Jackson's hit "The Way You Make Me Feel" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhxytVanyqI>.

The genesis for this love of music came about at birth. His mother, Kim, used to play in a band, and his father, Spencer, grew up on The Beatles and The Rolling Stones.

“She [his mother] has a really good voice and loves music, and my dad has so much pop culture knowledge about The Beatles and The Rolling Stones and all these bands, and the crazy stuff they did,” Byrn said. “So it was always in me, and I was always interested. I always sang in the car and stuff like that.

“Then about two years ago, I picked up the guitar and really committed myself to learning it. That’s when I got serious about it. It’s just a lot of fun.”

Byrn's immediate future first consists of helping the Hokies close out their season with a win in a bowl game. Tech has not played very well in bowl games during Byrn's career, getting handled in losses to Stanford and UCLA, losing an overtime squeaker to Michigan and then winning ugly against Rutgers.

Once he wraps up his collegiate career, he wants to try and play professionally. That means working out for the scouts and gauging his NFL Draft stock. But he's realistic about his chances. There is a lot of supply, but limited demand for 5-foot-10, 185-pound receivers.

"The lifelong dream was to be a professional athlete," Byrn said. "That was the end game, but I don't have any regrets, and I've done so much. I'm content if it doesn't work out. I'm not going to float around in free agency for two or three years. I have some other ambitions."

Those entail moving to Los Angeles. One of his friends from high school graduated from the University of Virginia last spring and moved to Los Angeles, and he works as a personal assistant to Al Jarreau, a rather famous jazz musician. Byrn and his friend have talked about rooming together and pursuing their dreams.

Byrn only has a dream right now – there is no firm job offer. But he harbors no fear.

"I'm willing to sleep on some couches, or live off Ramen noodles just to get that experience," he said. "I'd really like to get into the entertainment industry somehow, writing or producing. I feel that's [Los Angeles] where the action is. You turn on the TV and you see stuff going on in L.A. or New York, and those are two places that I plan on living. One of my best friends from high school is already out there, and we've already talked. We're going to see what happens out there and have fun."

Byrn understands the challenges ahead. The music industry is as competitive as any out there, and most struggle to get a foot in the proverbial door. One of Byrn's inspirations is Jason Mraz, a Virginia native whose path to stardom started humbly in a San Diego coffeehouse. Mraz now owns two Grammy Awards.

Could Byrn achieve that kind of fame? Well, he's already defied odds once. He arrived at Tech as a walk-on, getting that invitation only after tight ends coach Bryan Stinespring saw him play at First Colonial High School while recruiting

former running back Tony Gregory.

Byrn received no scholarship offers. William & Mary's coaches wanted him to wait while they waited on another recruit, and that left a sour taste in Byrn's mouth.

“In the end, Coach [Frank] Beamer seemed like he was the one who was the most truly interested in me, not just as a walk-on, but as a football player,” Byrn said. “So I decided to come here.”

After a redshirt season, Byrn caught just one pass the next two years. But before last season, he earned a scholarship, and under a new offensive coordinator (Scot Loeffler) and a new receivers coach (Aaron Moorehead), his career took off. He caught 51 passes for 660 yards, leading the team in both categories.

“I was a lot more patient on the field, and I was playing a lot faster because I wasn’t worried about what the coaches were going to think or what I had to do,” Byrn said. “I just played free, and I played like myself – and I was able to make some plays.”

This season, he has caught 44 passes for 374 yards – his receptions rank second on the team. His numbers are a little down, but only because of the emergence of freshmen Cam Phillips and Isaiah Ford and redshirt freshman Bucky Hodges. They have excelled in large part because Byrn took them under his wing and tutored them in the meeting room and on the field.

"He's a guy I never take for granted,"

Moorehead said. “A year ago, we probably lose two or three games more than we did. He has a leadership role, but he also can keep the meeting room light, and you need that kind of guy. He’s taken Isaiah and Cam under his wing, and knowing that those guys are taking catches and taking reps and being selfless like that, I really like him. I appreciate what he’s about.”


Like nearly everyone else, Moorehead had no idea about Byrn's zeal for music until seeing the piece on the video scoreboard. And like everyone else, he thought Byrn was pretty good.

But Moorehead said there was a more important message here. Byrn serves as an example to other football players.

"The guy has a good time, and he enjoys himself," Moorehead said. "I like that with my players. I don't want guys who are going to be cooped up in their room and sitting in a hole for the week, just coming to practice and then going back. That's not what college is about."

“College is about exploring. It’s about seeing different things and meeting different people. Willie’s had five years to do that, and I think he’s enjoyed it.”

The new year will see Byrn heading off to the next adventure, one that he hopes includes music. He's going to a place where stars are made, with a guitar, a pick and a dream in tow.

It seems like so little to take for such lofty ambitions. Yet for Byrn, it may be just enough. 



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PROGRESS CONTINUES ON INDOOR PRACTICE FACILITY

Workers from W.M. Jordan Company have nearly finished the framing and the roof for Virginia Tech's new indoor practice facility, as can be seen from these photos taken in early December. They also have started hanging precast concrete for the exterior of the building, specifically on the lower third of the building.

The \$21.3 million project features a building that is 210 feet wide, 400 feet long and 85 feet high, and will have an artificial turf surface. Eight-foot padded walls, wide sidelines, a full scoreboard and 40-second clocks on each end will allow for a full-contact scrimmage. Tech administrators expect the project to be completed by August of 2015.





50 SEASONS AT LANE STADIUM

All-Lane Stadium Team

Michael Vick, Tyrod Taylor, Bruce Smith, Frank Loria and DeAngelo Hall are just a few of the names voted to the All-Lane Stadium Team by Hokie Nation

by Jimmy Robertson

Inside Hokie Sports has spent the past five months celebrating the 50 seasons of Lane Stadium, the Hokies’ football home. The magazine has told the story of Lane Stadium, from interviews with those who played in the first game to educating readers about the Lane family to listing 50 great moments to taking a look at the best games against the University of Virginia at Lane Stadium.

The athletics department launched this website - <http://www.hokiesports.com/football/lane50/> - to commemorate the 50 years of Lane Stadium. The website contains video highlights of the stadium’s greatest moments of each decade, every game program cover since 1965, and nominees for an All-Lane Stadium Team. Fans were asked to vote for Tech nominees at each position, with the team being announced during the regular-season finale against Virginia.

That brings readers to this point – a look back at the greatest players to play at Lane. Here is the All-Lane Stadium Team, with more than 16,000 casting votes:

OFFENSE

QUARTERBACKS

Michael Vick (1999-2000): Arguably the most dynamic player ever to wear a Tech uniform, Vick led Tech to a perfect regular season in 1999 and to the national championship game. He finished third in the Heisman voting that same season.



Michael Vick

Tyrod Taylor (2007-10): Taylor set career marks for total offense and passing yards at Tech (later broken by Logan Thomas) and won at least 10 games every season as a starter.

RUNNING BACKS

Kevin Jones (2001-03): A consensus All-American in 2003, Jones rushed for 3,475 yards

during his career and ranks second on Tech’s all-time career rushing list. He could own the record had he not left school for the NFL after his junior season.

Lee Suggs (1999-02): Recently inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame, Suggs rushed for 2,767 career yards and holds records for touchdowns in a season (28) and career (56). Suggs, too, could have owned the career rushing record except for a knee injury that robbed him of a season.

David Wilson (2009-11): Wilson holds the single-season record for rushing yards (1,709) and ranks eighth on Tech’s list for career rushing yards (2,662).

Ryan Williams (2009-10): Williams’ 1,655 rushing yards in 2009 is second on Tech’s single-season list. He finished with 2,132 for his career.

RECEIVERS

Antonio Freeman (1991-94): Freeman still holds the career record for touchdown receptions (22) and shares the single-season record in the same category (9).

Jarrett Boykin (2008-11): Boykin holds career (184) and season records (61) for receptions and the career mark for receiving yardage (2,884).

André Davis (1998-2001): Davis’ record of 27.5 yards per catch in 1999 may never be broken. He also shares the record with Freeman for touchdown receptions in a season (9).

Danny Coale (2008-11): Coale finished his career second behind Boykin in career receiving yards (2,658).

Eddie Royal (2004-07): Royal was one of two players (Frank Loria) to make this team at two positions. He still ranks sixth in career receiving yardage with 1,768 yards.

TIGHT ENDS

Ken Barefoot (1965-67): Barefoot led the Hokies in receiving in 1966 (22 receptions) and 1967 (26).

Jeff King (2002-05): King’s six touchdown receptions in 2005 were the most by a tight end until Bucky Hodges broke that mark with his seventh touchdown catch (vs. UVa).

Mike Burnop (1970-72): Burnop’s 46 receptions in 1971 were a single-season record that lasted for more than 30 years.

OFFENSIVE LINE

Jake Grove (2000, 2002-03): A rare unanimous All-American at Tech, he won the Rimington Trophy as the nation’s top center in 2003.

Jim Pyne (1990-93): Pyne was Tech’s first unanimous All-American, earning the honors in 1993. He started 41 of 42 games at Tech and only allowed one sack in his career.

Eugene Chung (1988-91): Inducted into

the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame in 2008, Chung earned All-America honors in 1991 and later was a first-round NFL Draft pick.

Billy Conaty (1993-96): A first-team All-American in 1996, Conaty went on to play in more games (48) than any other Tech player at the time.

Will Montgomery (2003-05): Montgomery was Tech’s first All-ACC offensive lineman along with Jason Murphy, earning the honor in 2005. He was a two-time member of the team and has enjoyed a successful NFL career.

Blake DeChristopher (2008-11): DeChristopher is the only Tech player to win the Jacobs Award (2011), which goes annually to the ACC’s most outstanding blocker. He was a three-time member of the All-ACC team.

Todd Washington (1995-97): Washington was a first-team All-BIG EAST Conference lineman in 1997 and enjoyed a successful NFL career.

DEFENSE

DEFENSIVE LINE

Bruce Smith (1981-84): A two-time All-American and a member of the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame, Smith holds or shares the school record for sacks in a game (4), sacks in a season (22) and sacks in a career (46).

Corey Moore (1997-99): Another two-time All-American and member of the school’s Hall of Fame, Moore finished his career with 35 sacks and won the 1999 Bronko Nagurski Award (college football’s defensive player of the year) and Lombardi Award (college football’s lineman of the year).



Bruce Smith

George Foussekis (1965-67): Foussekis was a second-team All-American in 1966, and in 1989, was inducted into the university’s Hall of Fame.

Cornell Brown (1993-96): The 1995 national defensive player of the year by Football News, Brown was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2013. He was a two-time All-American and Tech’s first consensus All-American as a junior.

Darryl Tapp (2002-05): A first-team All-American in 2005, Tapp was also a first-team All-ACC choice during Tech’s first two seasons in the league.

John Engelberger (1996-1999): A second-team All-American in 1999, Engelberger finished with 26.5 sacks and 25 tackles for a loss in his career. His 51.5 tackles behind the line of scrimmage still rank in the top five all time at Tech.

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LINEBACKERS

Xavier Adibi (2004-07): Adibi earned first-team All-America honors in 2007 and was a two-time All-ACC choice in his career, earning second-team honors in 2006 and first-team honors in 2007.

Cody Grimm (2006-09): A third-team All-American and a first-team All-ACC choice in 2009, Grimm is still tied with several players nationally for forced fumbles in a game, forcing three against NC State in 2009.

Vince Hall (2004-07): Hall was a three-time All-ACC selection, earning second-team honors as a sophomore, first-team honors as a junior and an honorable mention nod as a senior.

Ben Taylor (1998-2001): Taylor was a two-time All-American and a two-time first-team All-BIG EAST choice.

SAFETIES

Frank Loria (1965-67): Loria was a two-time All-American and Virginia Tech's first consensus All-American (1967). He recorded seven interceptions in his career.

Lenny Smith (1968-70): Smith shares a school record with three interceptions in a game against Wake Forest, and he tied a school record at the time with 13 career interceptions. He still ranks tied for fifth in career interceptions.

Torrian Gray (1993-96): Gray was a three-time All-BIG EAST choice, earning first-team honors in 1994 and 1996 and a second-team nod in 1995. He recorded nine interceptions in his career, one of which he returned for a touchdown.

Willie Pile (1999-2002): Pile led Tech in interceptions in 2000 and 2001, and his 14 career interceptions are fourth in school history. He was an All-American in 2002.

CORNERBACKS

DeAngelo Hall (2001-03): Hall scored touchdowns five different ways in his career, but earned All-America honors in 2003 as a defensive back. He was a two-time All-BIG EAST choice and finished his career with eight interceptions.

Brandon Flowers (2004-07): A two-time All-American and a two-time All-ACC choice, Flowers intercepted 10 passes in his career, returning two for touchdowns.

Macho Harris (2005-08): An All-American in 2008 and a two-time first-team All-ACC choice, Harris intercepted 15 passes in his career – a number that ranks third on Tech's list. He holds the school record with four interception returns for touchdowns.

Kyle Fuller (2010-13): An All-American in 2013 and a three-time All-ACC choice, Fuller intercepted six passes and had 173 tackles in his career.

SPECIALISTS

RETURN SPECIALISTS

Eddie Royal (2004-07): Royal holds the school record for punt return yardage (1,296 yards) and returned three punts for touchdowns in his career. He also ranks third at Tech in career kickoff return yardage (1,376).

Frank Loria (1965-67): Loria still holds Tech records for most touchdowns on punt returns for a season (3) and the second-best punt return average for a career (13.3 ypr). His 95-yard punt return for a touchdown against Miami in 1967 is still the longest in school history.


PUNTERS

Nic Schmitt (2002-06): Schmitt holds the school record for career punting average, averaging 42.6 yards per punt.

A.J. Hughes (2012-current): Hughes is averaging 41.7 yards per punt in his career, with 48 of his career punts being longer than 50 yards.

KICKERS

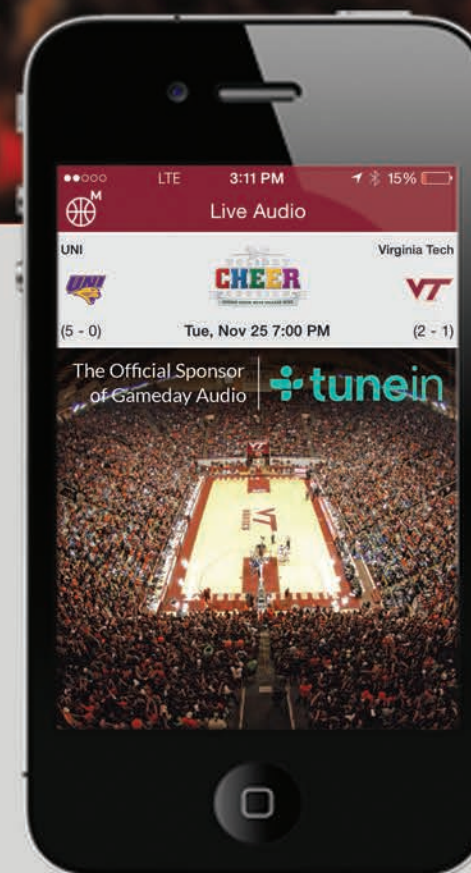
Shayne Graham (1996-99): A four-time All-BIG EAST first-team choice, Graham still holds the record for points in a career (371), career field goals made (68) and career field goals attempted (93).

Brandon Pace (2003-06): A three-time All-ACC selection, Pace made a school-record 22 straight field goals spanning two seasons (2005-06). His 310 career points are third at Tech behind Graham (371) and Suggs (336). 



VIRGINIA TECH GAMEDAY

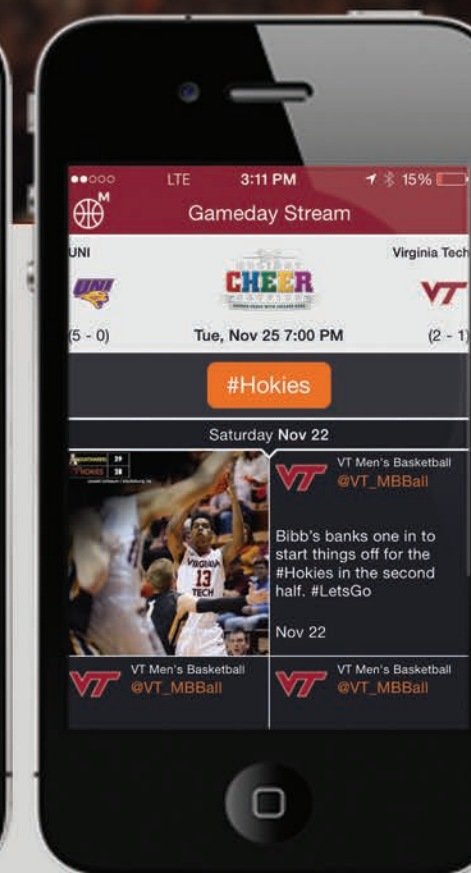
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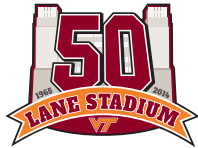
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Erick Johnson was all set to go to the University of Maryland, but life brought the New Jersey native to Tech, and even after leaving, he still finds his way back

This is the fifth in a series of features spotlighting former Virginia Tech players who played in the very first game at Lane Stadium in October of 1965. Erick Johnson was a starting tackle in that game, and he ended up being a three-year starter for the Gobblers. He then went on to work more than 40 years in the technical sales profession.

by Jimmy Robertson

Over the course of the past several decades, Virginia Tech’s football coaching staff has dipped into the state of New Jersey and plucked some very good players. Guys like Mike Widger, Ron Davidson, Jason Worilds, Cory Bird, John Burke, Billy Conaty, Jared Mazzetta and current starter Ryan Malleck come to mind.

One of Jerry Claiborne’s best recruiting coups came about in the mid-1960s when he convinced Erick Johnson to come to Blacksburg in the fall of 1963. Johnson ended up being a three-year starter on the offensive line and started in the first game ever at Lane Stadium, as Inside Hokie Sports continues its celebration of the 50th season of the venue by spotlighting various players who played in that game.

Johnson, a Barrington, New Jersey, native, originally planned on going to the University of Maryland to play for then-coach Tom Nugent. Nugent only recruited tight ends and fullbacks, but some of his assistants went against that philosophy, which is how Johnson wound up committing there. Nugent later found out and rescinded the scholarship offers of all those who weren’t tight ends or fullbacks.

“He ended up honoring them again,” Johnson said. “But by that time, I had other offers, and I decided that I wasn’t going to mess with that. The University of Maryland appealed to me because it was closer to home than some of the other places. Believe it or not, I was contacted by Oklahoma and Arizona. But I’m from New Jersey, and I started wondering how I would get home. How do I get home for Thanksgiving and for Christmas? You have to fly, and my family didn’t have a lot of money. So I declined because of the distances.”

Johnson had an offer from Virginia Tech, and he decided to come to Blacksburg and play for Claiborne and the Gobblers. As required per NCAA rules in those days, he sat out the 1963 season, playing on the freshman team. Early in his sophomore season in 1964, he moved into the starting lineup.

Johnson ended up starting at one tackle spot and Richard Mollo started at the other tackle spot, with John Sheehy, Les Hanly and Mike Saunders comprising the interior. Tommy Marvin and Bob Churchill were the ends. Lynn Jones was the

first substitute. The group became known as the “Mighty Mites” because most of them weighed less than 200 pounds.

“We were undersized,” Johnson said. “We were little guys. I think I was 190 pounds at the beginning of the year. Mike Saunders went back and calculated the averages, and the average weight was 194 pounds. We did fairly well, so they termed us the ‘Mighty Mites.’”

Johnson got used to playing for Claiborne, a strict taskmaster noted for his physical practices. Many players in that era gave up football, failing to survive Claiborne’s demanding ways. But those who did survive grew up loving, admiring and respecting Claiborne, especially after their playing days ended.

Count Johnson among those.

“I enjoyed playing for him,” he said. “It was tough, really tough. I remember people leaving. There were somewhere between 63 and 65 recruits, and I think maybe 10 finished, plus or minus one or two numbers on either side.

“But as a person, as a leader, as someone to develop character, Jerry Claiborne was very good. There was nothing immoral or unethical. He just expected you to work hard.”

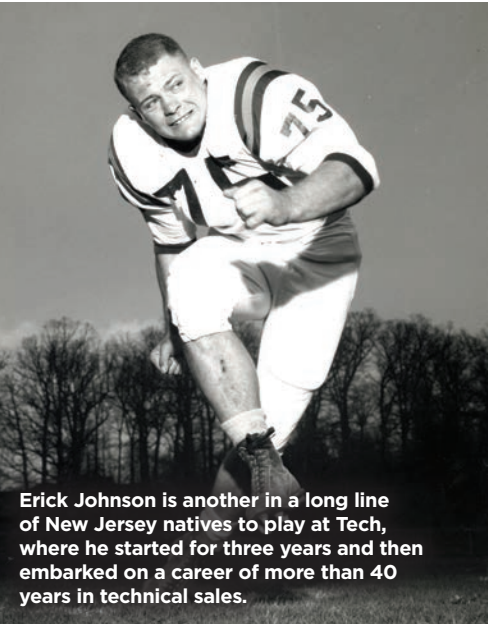
Though he played in the first game at Lane Stadium in 1965, Johnson – like several others from that team – remembered few of the details of the game. The Gobblers got a touchdown late in the game from Bobby Owens and escaped with a 9-7 win over William & Mary.

Johnson does remember several of the other games from those days. He played a huge role in helping the Gobblers stun then-No. 10 Florida State 20-11 at Miles Stadium, a game that many remember because frustrated Seminole All-American receiver Fred Biletnikoff threw a football out of the stadium after scoring a two-point conversion simply out of frustration.

Johnson remembers it for another reason.

“My claim to fame was my sophomore year when I caught two tackle-eligible passes,” he said. “One of them helped beat Florida State [in 1964].

“The other was against Syracuse in Syracuse [a 20-15 loss], and it was called back. They [the officials] said Tommy Groom wasn’t set back. He was on the line, so I was an ineligible receiver. But



Erick Johnson is another in a long line of New Jersey natives to play at Tech, where he started for three years and then embarked on a career of more than 40 years in technical sales.

when we looked at the film, that wasn’t correct. We could have won that game, too.”

The Gobblers finished 6-4 in 1964, 7-3 in 1965 and 8-2-1 in 1966, Johnson’s final season. They won their final seven regular-season games that season and eight of their final nine, with the only blemish being a tie against West Virginia.

Johnson’s career ended with a 14-7 loss to then-No. 9 Miami in the Liberty Bowl. The Gobblers, though, still finished the season ranked No. 20 in the final United Press International poll.

The game turned out to be one of the most memorable games of his career because he held up well against two-time All-American Ted Hendricks, a defensive end.

“I thought one of my best games was the Liberty Bowl, even though we lost,” he said.

Johnson spent another year at Tech after his playing days concluded, wrapping up coursework in his industrial engineering and operations research major. He graduated in 1968, while also getting married.

Johnson then spent the next 40-plus years working in various aspects of technical sales, including management. He started his career in 1968 with DuPont, working at the company’s

south New Jersey plant for two years.

From DuPont, he bounced around in three different fields with different companies, working in a technical sales capacity at every stop. He left DuPont to work in process control systems for another local company, something he did for six years. Later in his career, he sold specialty chemicals before getting involved in environmental consulting.

Johnson sold specialty chemicals to refineries and steel mills for 18 years, and then his career took him to environmental consulting for 15 years. He finished his career with General Electric, selling specialty chemicals in his sales area of Northwest Pennsylvania for three years before retiring at the age of 66. The job afforded him the opportunity to keep his home in the Philadelphia area. During the week, he would stay in Warren, Pennsylvania – near the New York state line – and he returned home on weekends.

“They treated me nicely,” he said. “They paid me well, and I got a car and nice benefits. They paid for my apartment out there. I stayed there Monday through Friday, and I left Friday about 3 o’clock and went home and then went back on Monday.

“I’ve worked in three different industries and had a lot of ups and downs. I’ve worked for a lot of people in some of the biggest companies in the world and for some of the smallest. I saw a lot and learned quite a bit along the way during my career.”



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Erick Johnson (back middle), seen here with his family, has lived in the Philadelphia area since he left Tech in 1968.

Johnson has done something that very few people in America do these days. He purchased his current home in 1974, and he and his family have stayed there ever since. All of his job moves (except for the last one) were in the south New Jersey/Philadelphia area. He and wife Janet never wanted to move while raising their three daughters.

“When I started out at DuPont in New Jersey, nearly all of my family was in the area, and we were closely knit then,” Johnson said. “My brother and sister were there, and my parents were still alive. I had a bunch of uncles and aunts there, so there was an incentive.”

Johnson still makes it back to Blacksburg for a football game at least once a year. This season, he has been back twice, once for the Georgia Tech

game and once for the Miami game.

His return for the Miami game was inspired by a reunion of the first team to play at Lane Stadium 50 seasons ago. The Hokies lost the Miami game 30-6, but seeing old teammates made the trip worthwhile.

“It was good to see everyone you played with,” Johnson said. “We don’t see one another that often, so it’s good to see how everyone is doing and say hi.”

Like most of Tech’s former players from the Garden State, Johnson will always call the Philadelphia/south New Jersey area “home.” It’s undeniable and understandable.

But just like all of those former players from that state, he’s a Hokie through and through.



Freshman Rachel Camp started six of Tech's first seven games and led the team by averaging 16.3 points per game in that span.

FRESHMEN QUICKLY ESTABLISHING THEMSELVES

First-year players Rachel Camp and Regan Magarity have picked up some of the scoring slack left behind when Uju Ugoka and Monet Tellier graduated

by **Marc Mullen**

The question facing the Virginia Tech women's basketball team entering the 2014-15 season was clearly who would be picking up the slack left behind by departing seniors Uju Ugoka and Monet Tellier, as the pair combined to score 28.5 points and 15.5 rebounds per game last year. The only returning scorer averaging more than seven points per game was sophomore Vanessa Panousis.

Through the first month of the season, the answer has been the freshmen, or more specifically, Rachel Camp and Regan Magarity. In the first six games of November, the pair each started five games and combined to score 29.5 points and 16.6 rebounds per game.

Magarity, a 6-foot-3 forward from Norrköping, Sweden, quickly introduced herself to the college basketball world by scoring 25 points in the Hokies'

season-opening loss at George Mason. She scored the most points by a Tech freshman in a first game in school history.

She also led the team with seven rebounds – her lowest output during the month. In her four other starts, she either scored in double figures or pulled down at least 10 boards, and she was averaging a double-double at publication time.

She scored 10 points and had 17 rebounds – the most ever in a single game by a freshman in school history – in a win over Norfolk State for her only double-double of the month. Magarity also had 17 points and nine boards at Providence and nine and 10 versus Old Dominion.

"I knew her potential when we recruited her, and I think now that she's the best player we've been able to get," Tech head women's basketball coach

Dennis Wolff said. "I found it ridiculous that the ACC All-Freshman Team took five or six girls in the preseason, and she wasn't recognized.

"Regan Magarity can do a little bit of everything. It's not just scoring or rebounding. She handles the ball like a guard, and she can guard inside or out, so we're very lucky to have her."

Camp, a 5-11 guard out of Forest City, North Carolina, was limited to just 11 minutes of playing time in the season opener, but has since played at least 30 minutes a game, has started every contest and has scored in double figures in each of those – which includes a loss at Florida on Dec. 1.

She is clearly a scorer – averaging 20.5 points a game during a recent four-game stretch – and not just from the floor, as she has connected on 36 of 48 free-throw attempts in the young season. To put that into perspective, only three Hokies last season attempted more than 44 free throws – the three identified in the opening paragraph.

Camp knocked down 10-of-14 from the charity stripe in a three-point win at Providence and sealed the victory by hitting her final six – of a 13-for-15 night from the free-throw line – down the stretch in a win over East Tennessee State.

"I just knew that I needed to keep playing hard, and they are going to eventually foul you that late in the game," Camp said of her approach late against ETSU. "I don't really get nervous. I just

need to remember my technique [at the line]. We've been practicing free throws every day, but I'm not really a good free-throw shooter."

Wolff interrupted Camp during the interview and said, "Rachel, yes, you are a good free-throw shooter. That's how you should answer that. It's not an easy thing to do what Rachel did. She took 15 free throws and made 13 and every one of them mattered. When you have freshmen doing things like that, it's a good thing."

It's early, but these two freshmen have certainly proved their worth on the court so far – even if they still might need some help in postgame interviews.

PANOUSIS SETS SCHOOL RECORD

Although the streak ended with an 0-for-5 shooting night at Florida on Dec. 1 – the entire team combined to hit 1-of-18 from behind the arc – Panousis set a new school record for consecutive games with a made 3-point basket.

The Sydney, Australia, native started her streak on Jan. 30 of last season with a made 3-pointer at Notre Dame. Through 17 games, she made at least one, while knocking down at least two in 13 of those contests. Her high during the streak was five makes, which she did twice, and she hit 42 in all during the span.

Carrie Mason set the previous mark during the 2004-05 season when she went 16 straight games

with a make starting on Dec. 18 against Western Michigan and ending on Feb. 13 against Virginia.

COOK BECOMES A MUCH-NEEDED ADDITION

Only seven games into the season, the injury bug already had hit the Hokies, as junior forward Tajjah Campbell missed three games and returned for the Florida contest, and Magarity has been sidelined for the two. Tech did not disclose the injuries.

Just as Campbell went down, Tech announced sophomore Sidney Cook would be eligible to compete for the remainder of the season after transferring from Seton Hall over the summer.

"We are thrilled that Sidney is able to continue her career without any interruption," Wolff said. "It is a great thing for her and our team that she will be able to play this season. We are excited to have her in a Virginia Tech uniform this season."

The NCAA will allow Cook to compete this season without having to sit out the usual academic year-in-residence after transferring. The Parkton, North Carolina, native will have two years of eligibility remaining after this season.

Cook started the East Tennessee State and Florida games and she averaged a little more than 13 minutes a game in her first four games. She had scored 17 points and had 13 rebounds at publication time. **VT**

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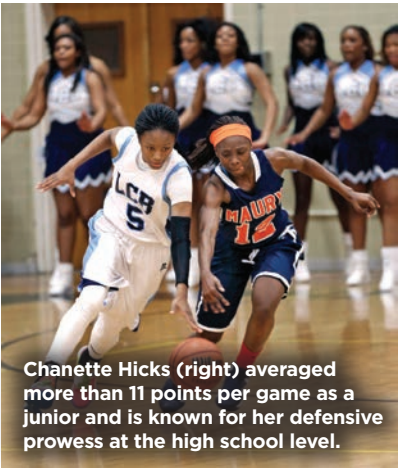
TECH WOMEN’S RECRUITING CLASS WITH IN-STATE FLAVOR

Head coach Dennis Wolff and his staff signed a three-player class that included two from Virginia and is ranked in the top 20 nationally

by **Marc Mullen**



Kelly Koshuta, a five-star recruit from Vienna, Virginia, headlines the Hokies' recruiting class.(Photo courtesy of Nick Ellerson, The Farifax Times).



Chanette Hicks (right) averaged more than 11 points per game as a junior and is known for her defensive prowess at the high school level.



Alana Gilmer averaged 22 points per game as a junior, and as a sophomore, helped her team to the 2013 state championship.

It has been almost a decade since the Virginia Tech women’s basketball program had the phrase “Top 20” used to describe its team. After improving to a 14-1 record during the 2005-06 season, the Hokies climbed into the top 20 and were ranked No. 18. They slipped out of the top 25 two weeks later and have not been ranked since.

Coming out of the early November signing period, though, Tech head women’s basketball coach Dennis Wolff signed a recruiting class that was ranked No. 20 by ESPN HoopGurlz, a welcomed sign that his program is on the rise, one attracting top-notch talent and heading toward a better future.

“I’m excited about the whole class,” Wolff said on signing day. “I think that, every year we have been here as a staff, we have been able to recruit a little bit better, and this is a continuation of that.

“I am also very happy with the fact that, in Kelly’s [Koshuta] and Chanette’s [Hicks] cases, they are two girls who fit the profile geographically, with both being from the state of Virginia.”

The two Commonwealth of Virginia natives are actually two of the top three ranked players from the state, according to ESPN HoopGurlz.

Koshuta, from Vienna, Virginia, was rated a five-star recruit, the 32nd-best player overall nationally and second in the state. Hicks, from Norfolk, was a four-star recruit, the 53rd-best player overall nationally and third in Virginia. Alana Gilmer, a North Easton, Massachusetts, native, completes

the early signing class. She was rated a three-star recruit and the 139th overall player nationally.

Koshuta had more than 20 offers, ones which came from the likes of Kentucky, Oklahoma and Georgetown, and she had narrowed her choices to Boston College, James Madison and Tech. Family ties won out when she became a Hokie, as both of her parents graduated from Tech. She’ll add depth to a solid frontcourt that Wolff has been stockpiling.

Standing at 6-foot-2, Koshuta already has scored more than 1,200 points and grabbed 600 rebounds in three years at James Madison High School. The forward was a 2014 6A first-team all-state selection and the Liberty Conference Player of the Year. At the 2014 Nike EYBL Summer 17 Nationals, she averaged 18.6 points a game, which included a tournament high of 34 points in one game.

“Kelly may have been the most productive back-to-the-basket player on the women’s AAU circuit last summer,” Wolff said. “She is extremely clever around the basket with either hand and really has a knack for scoring. She is very tough minded in regard to fighting in the lane for the ball on both offense and defense.”

The adjective mostly identified with Hicks is “quick,” and she comes to Tech out of Maury High School, where, as a junior, she averaged 11.6 points, 7.2 rebounds, 9.4 assists and 6.1 steals a game. The 5-6 point guard is ranked as the 17th-best at her position nationally and earned second-

team all-state honors in 2014. For three straight seasons, she has been named the All-Tidewater Defensive Player of the Year, as well as a first-team all-conference and an all-region performer.

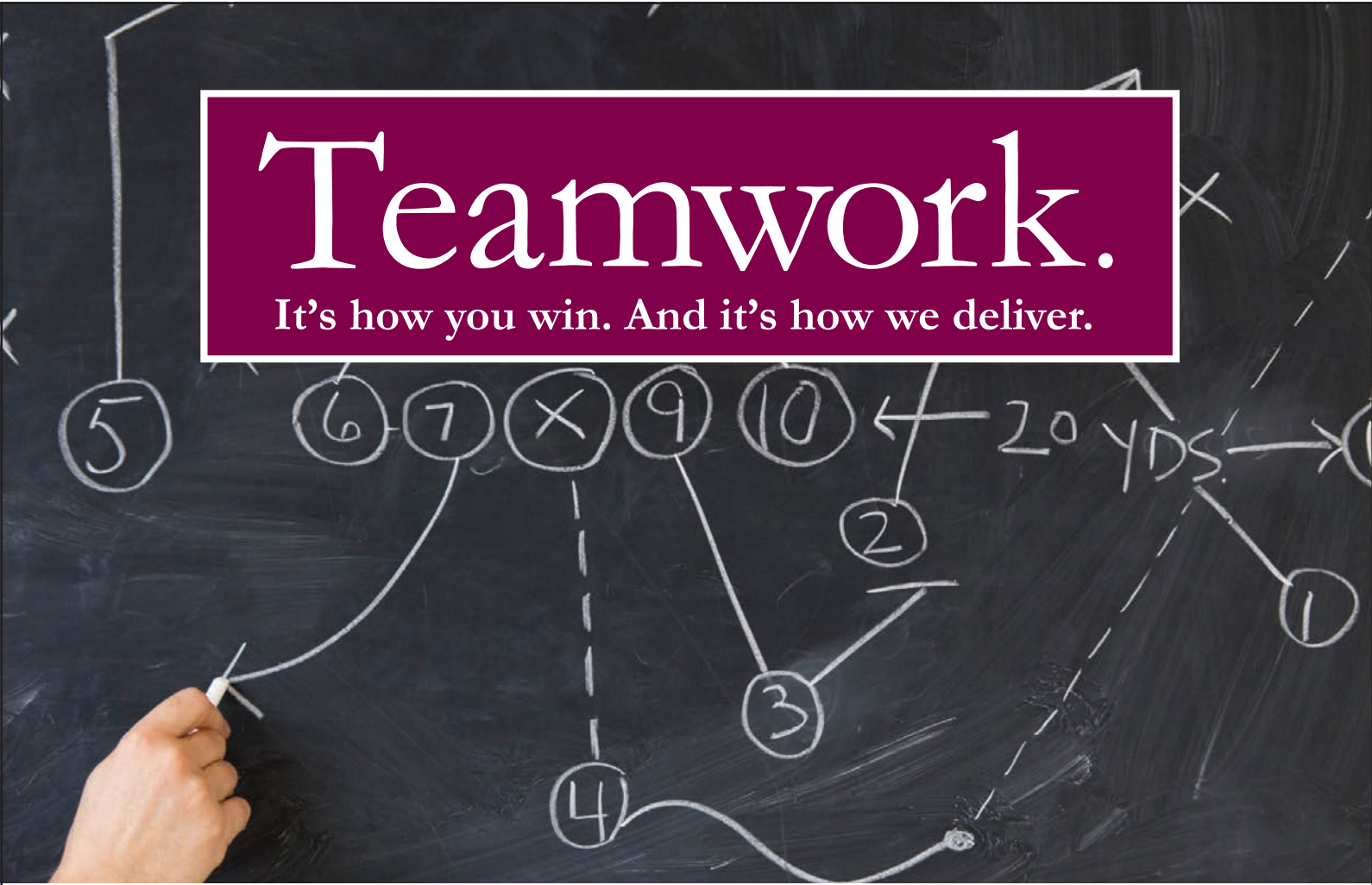
“Chanette has been very well coached throughout her high school career,” Wolff said. “She is as good an on-the-ball defender as there is coming into women’s college basketball in the country. Her energy level, her presence defensively and her unselfishness on offense will immediately help our team.”

Rounding out the class is Gilmer, a 6-foot forward who plays for Archbishop Williams. She averaged 22 points, nine rebounds and four assists per game last season for the Bishops, who, despite an 11-11 regular season, advanced to the Division 3 state semifinals after winning the crown the previous season.

Gilmer has been named to all-scholastic teams by the Boston Globe, Boston Herald and The Patriot Ledger and helped her team to the 2013 state championship.

“Alana is a skilled wing player who shoots the ball with good range and is a good athlete,” Wolff said. “She will immediately add to our wing depth.”

Tech will graduate just one senior off of its current roster – Kelsey Conyers – and the three signees bring the 2015-16 roster (which counts all current players as returners) to 15 players, the full allotment allowed by the NCAA.



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Shannon Mayrose scored a goal in the 80th minute to help Tech to a victory over Georgetown in the NCAA Tournament. The loss to Penn State marked her last game, and her 27 career goals rank second all time at Tech.

ANOTHER GREAT SEASON COMES TO AN END

The Tech women’s soccer team fell to Penn State in the third round of the NAAs, but that shouldn’t take away from another record-setting season for one of the most successful varsity sports at Tech

by **Marc Mullen**


The sun was slowly setting on what was the most successful senior class in Virginia Tech women’s soccer program history. The seniors on the 2014 squad were the first to post at least 13 wins in each of their four years and the first to eclipse the 60-career win plateau. They were also a big reason why the Hokies advanced to their first ever College Cup (in 2013). But here they were, on a frozen Jeffrey Field in University Park, Pennsylvania, facing elimination in the round of 32 to a team that had been the cause of the class’ only first-round exit in the NCAA Tournament. In 2012, Georgetown came into Blacksburg and escaped with a 3-2 overtime victory. This year, the Hoyas – who Tech easily

dismissed 6-1 earlier in the season at Thompson Field – erased an early Murielle Tiernan goal scored just 2:27 into the match and held a 2-1 lead with a little more than 11 minutes left in regulation. What followed could put the Florida State-Virginia Tech 2013 NCAA semifinal closing minutes to shame. With 10:23 left on the clock, Tech’s Bria Dixon put away a loose ball on a scramble in front of the goal to tie the game only to see Georgetown score just seconds later on the ensuing kickoff to reclaim its one-goal advantage. Tech returned the favor, though, just 20 seconds later. Shannon Mayrose, the sixth-year player of the Hokies, buried a shot assisted by

Tiernan to knot the score again at 3 in the 80th minute. The two teams scored three goals in the span of 23 seconds and ultimately went into overtime. The overtime session lasted only 30 seconds. Tiernan found Ashley Meier for the game winner and sent the Hokie seniors to their third Sweet 16 in four years. “It was a crazy game,” Tech women’s soccer head coach Chugger Adair said afterward. “And it was a crazy second half. We got down not once, but twice, and we were able to fight back and grind through it. The comeback was great for us. “I thought we were on top of them, and we kept pressing them. We played a little more direct

because of the conditions. It was very difficult to play out (there). It was cold. The ground was frozen. So just getting after it and playing more direct just helped us. “My hat goes off to the girls because they really showed their determination. We didn’t play great soccer, but we got a real hard-fought result.” Meier, who scored her sixth career game-winning goal, was a freshman when the Hokies lost to Georgetown back in 2012 and certainly remembered the sting she felt after her first postseason loss. “Amazing,” she said afterward. “This is absolutely amazing. I know that, two years ago, we had the opposite feeling. We were on the opposite end of the overtime decision. So to just put that last goal away was absolutely amazing, and our team has just come together so much. “The game-winning goal – that was just Murielle really putting the perfect ball in. We were high-pressuring, and I just closed my eyes and shot the ball as hard as I could and luckily the next thing I knew the ball was in the back of the net and we were all celebrating. It’s just the best feeling in the world, and I’m so proud of the team.” Two days later, it would be a different feeling for Meier and the Hokies, as they faced the host Penn State Nittany Lions, seeded second in the

region. She would score the lone goal in a 2-1 loss to the No. 8 team in the nation. Tech had several chances late in the contest, as a Dixon shot soared just wide of the goal and a Meier chance from just inside the 18-yard box sailed just high of the crossbar. “We played very well,” Adair said. “We were a bit unfortunate to be down 1-0 at halftime, but I think we played a very solid first half. They took care of a chance in the first half, and we didn’t. We both had very equal breakaway chances in the first half. “It was very balanced and a game that could have gone either way. I was very proud of our team the way they came out in the second half and really had the flow of the game and created the equalizing goal. A half chance here or there could have gotten the winner. The winner went against us, but I’m very proud of our girls. I’m proud of the team, the mentality and the fight they had.” With the loss, the Hokies finished the season with a 16-6 record, but left their mark on the program with record-breaking numbers. The squad notched a program-best 62 goals during the year, surpassing last year’s previous mark of 54, and the defense allowed a record-low 18 goals, besting the previous mark of 20 set in 2007 and matched in 2012.

Tiernan, a sophomore forward, tallied 14 goals, the third-most goals in a single season at Tech, and she scored the second-most points in a single season with 31 – eight behind Ashley Stinson, who had 39 in 2004. Other individual marks set were by senior Katie Yensen, who tied the all-time record for career games played at the school with 91, while Mayrose finished her career with the second-most goals by a Tech player (27). Senior Kelsey Loupee finished her career with the third-most assists by a Hokie with 22 and was third in games played with 89. “I’ve seen a lot of growth and maturity,” Adair said about his senior class. “They came in as young, teenage girls, and they are going out as young adults. They battled and grew and learned leadership and helped grow the culture that has been established here at Virginia Tech. “They are tremendous people for that. They are better people since they’ve grown and developed and are now ready for the real world. I’m really proud of that group ... a huge core of our team that has been with us through a Round of 16, a Final Four, and another Round of 16. I think they’ve been great.” The senior class consisted of Danielle King, Jodie Zelenky, Ellie Zoepfl, Loupee, Mayrose and Yensen. 

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LATIMER MAINTAINS FAMILY TRADITION

Tech swimmer Morgan Latimer followed in his dad’s footsteps by coming to Tech, and just like his father, worked his way into the school’s record books

by Marc Mullen

The Virginia Tech men’s swimming and diving program has enjoyed its greatest success over the past three seasons, placing in the top 20 at the NCAA meet all three years and winning just its second conference crown ever – this one coming in the more competitive ACC – after a pair of runner-up finishes.

It happened because of men like senior Morgan Latimer, an example of a student-athlete who comes into the program maybe not as the top-caliber of performers in high school, but one who works his tail off to improve and also puts the team first. That’s a recipe that works well for head coach Ned Skinner, who took 20 men to the 2014 ACC Championships, and despite just one Hokie winning an individual title, came home with the team trophy.

“The transformation that this program has made over the past five years is pretty amazing,” Latimer said. “It first comes from Ned and the coaches he’s been able to put around himself because they really do develop us. You can look at each individual on the team, and everyone has really developed tremendous amounts as a swimmer while they’ve been here.

“And a big part of that also comes from the athletics department making a big investment in the program. Having trust in them and the coaches, they have really proved to us, year after year, that they care about this program, and they want to do everything they can to help us succeed. I think the new administration with Whit Babcock [Tech’s AD] is even showing that more.”

Latimer. *Latimer*. Does that name ring a bell? If it doesn’t, that’s OK, but many Hokie football fans have already come up with the answer, and yes, it probably does ring a bell.

Morgan Latimer, the Hokies’ top butterfly swimmer, is the youngest son of Wayne Latimer, the former placekicker for the Tech football squad. Wayne is also the answer to the Tech trivia question, “Who holds the school record for longest field goal?”

Against Florida State in the 1975 Homecoming

game, Wayne boomed a school-record 61-yard field goal to help knock off the Seminoles, 13-10. At the time of his graduation, Wayne was third all time in scoring at the school and first among kickers. He is now 23rd overall and eighth among kickers, having been passed in 1984.

“My dad never really talks about it [the record],” Morgan said. “He’s actually a really humble guy, but my coaches like to mention it to people, and it’s always a good conversation piece. We had acquired a video of it at one point, so we saw it, but I don’t think we have it anymore.

“I know there is a picture of it somewhere, but he never really talks about it too much. But it’s funny hearing old alumni who were at the school at the time or recent graduates of that time who recall the story. So I’ve heard quite of few stories about it.”

– Morgan Latimer on his father, who holds the school record for the longest field goal

“I know there is a picture of it somewhere, but he never really talks about it too much. But it’s funny hearing old alumni who were at the school at the time or recent graduates of that time who recall the story. So I’ve heard quite of few stories about it.”

Morgan, who grew up getting a taste of many sports – football, basketball, baseball and tennis – , gravitated toward the pool because his two older brothers, Michael and Matt, swam as well. It wasn’t until high school, though, that he really started to concentrate on swimming and the opportunities it could afford.

“In high school, I also played one year of volleyball, randomly, but after that, I had to start focusing on swimming,” Latimer said. “Not a whole lot of people can split their time with swimming and another sport, so I started focusing on that [swimming] in high school.

“That’s when I started to realize where I could

go with it because our club team had a history of sending people to Division I schools for swimming. So as the younger kids, we would watch the older kids move on to these schools and then come back on breaks in all their team gear and all their school gear. We would see that and strive for it.”

During his recruiting process, Latimer was looking at a few of the ACC schools and took trips to Tennessee and Penn State. He said that his parents, especially his dad, did not want to influence him at all in his decision. They wanted him to make the decision on his own, and of course, it turned out to be Tech.

Maybe it was just the familiarity he’s had with Blacksburg and the Tech campus since he’s been coming down for football games for as long as he can remember. In fact, the first game he can recall is a date that goes down in Hokie Nation history – September 4, 1999.

“My first time at Tech that I really remember was Michael Vick’s first game against James Madison,” Latimer said. “And I remember crying the whole football game because we were sitting in front of the band. But we probably came up once or twice a year for games, and my middle brother, Matt, ended up coming here, so we would come visit him a lot.

“So I had been on the campus a lot, and definitely, there was already a comfort level here when I came on campus. I really liked the other schools, too, but it turns out that Tech was the best fit overall because it had everything I was looking for.”

Latimer hit some rough waters in his first season with the Hokies, but put in a lot of work in the offseason before his sophomore year and advanced to the NCAA Championships in both of the butterfly events.

He made it again last season after earning 77 team points for Tech at the ACC Championships, helping Tech to the team title. At the ACC meet, he broke the school record in the 200 butterfly. He and his father are believed to be the only father-son combination ever at Tech to hold school records in two different sports.



“I don’t think I came in with terribly lofty expectations. I expected to do well and improve, but I did have a very humbling freshman year,” Latimer said. “I didn’t do nearly as well as I would have like to. But the big thing was that I was able to keep my head down and keep moving, and now I’ve been able to achieve things that I didn’t really think about coming in.

“Looking back, maybe I should have had loftier expectations. But I really put in a lot of work following my freshman year. I put in a lot of extra hours, and it really paid off big and I had a great ACC meet my sophomore year. I was very happy about it, and I ended up making NCAAAs. Unfortunately last year at NCAAAs, I had a stomach bug for about a week before it, and I didn’t really perform to where I could. That just gives me a little bit more motivation moving forward this year.”

Latimer believes that the Hokies, again, have what it takes to compete for the team title, and it’s all because of that team-first mentality that they have. That’s something he isn’t familiar with because he did not have a swimming program in high school and swam only for a club team – Poseidon Swimming – for more than a decade.

“In college, the team does come first,” Latimer said. “In club swimming, which is most of swimming before college, you’re just more focused on yourself and your times. And there



is still that aspect in college swimming because each individual effort builds to the team effort. But in the end, everything you are doing is for the team. At ACCs, I couldn’t care less about winning an individual event as long as my result ends up pushing the team to where it needs to go.

“The whole year last year, the team just stuck together, worked together. Some teams, the diving and the swimming are very separate, but on our team, it’s all the same. All the different groups within the team, everyone is working toward the same goal. And it was pretty cool to see and fun to watch us winning that title.”

Latimer, a history major who will graduate this December and enter graduate school in the spring, will look to continue making history with the swimming and diving team during his final season in the pool. He holds or is part of three school records, which includes a pair of relay records, and he holds the Christiansburg Aquatic Center record in the 200 butterfly. He has the rest of this season to add some more.

That’s a couple more than his father has. However, will any of his records match the longevity of his father’s mark, which is now at 39 years and counting? Only time will tell.

GETTING TO KNOW MORGAN LATIMER

Q: You are probably the most recognizable swimmer because of your hair. Is there a story behind it?

ML: “We always cut our hair freshman year at the end of the season for our championship meets, and I haven’t really cut it since then. I’ve gotten it trimmed up a couple of times. I figured this is the time to grow it out. I don’t think I’ll ever grow it out again. So I have just kept going with it. In high school, I had my hair short. I have actually been told that it looks better long than short, so it has definitely grown on me and my mom finally accepted it.”

Q: How did you become great in the butterfly stroke?

ML: “I tend to think that, when you are younger with the butterfly, it’s just a matter of doing a lot of it. With my club team, I ended up doing a lot of butterfly, and it’s not the easiest thing to do, especially when you are younger, but

it definitely pays off. I think just doing a lot of long butterfly sets when I was younger ... I started to excel in it.”

Q: What’s your favorite part of a swim meet?

ML: “I love relays. Relays are a totally different animal and a lot of swimmers are like this, but I swim much faster on relays than I do in individual events because you’re just so amped up. It’s all about the team. During relays, you have the entire team on the side of the pool deck cheering you on, and that’s the best part of the sport.”

Q: What are your future plans?

ML: “I’ll be starting grad school in the spring, and I’ll be working toward a master’s in education. My plan is to start coaching here, in some capacity while finishing up my masters and then either teaching or coaching, as long as it’s available.”



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TECH’S OLYMPIC SPORTS BRING IN LATEST RECRUITING HAULS

Wrestling program leads the way with one of the top-ranked prep standouts in the nation

by Jimmy Robertson

Virginia Tech head wrestling coach Kevin Dresser signed what he hopes is the next installment of great wrestlers, inking four prep prospects to national letters-of-intent during the early signing period in November.

Dresser’s class includes David McFadden from West Milford, New Jersey; Andrew Dunn from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Cody Hughes from South Berwick, Maine; and B.C. LaPrade from New Kent, Virginia.

“These four guys represent another class of quality individuals that we are excited to welcome to the Virginia Tech wrestling family,” Dresser said in a signing day release. “We will potentially be looking for a few more guys this spring, but we feel this is an excellent start.”

McFadden, from DePaul Catholic, is the No. 1-ranked 152-pounder in the country, according to both FloWrestling and InterMat. InterMat also ranked him as the overall No. 18 prep wrestler in the nation, while FloWrestling ranked him at 37th overall.

McFadden won the New Jersey state championship last year at 145 pounds and took sixth as a sophomore (126 pounds) and second as a freshman (113 pounds). He recently won his match at FloWrestling’s “Who’s No. 1?” dual meet at Lehigh University to take over the top spot in his weight class. McFadden placed second at the 2014 junior nationals and enters his senior season with a career record of 118-8. Dresser projects him as a 165-pounder in college.

Dunn is a top-flight heavyweight who wrestles at Bethlehem Catholic. Ranked as the No. 12 heavyweight in the country and the No. 69 senior prospect overall nationally by FloWrestling, Dunn is a two-time PIAA Class AA state wrestling medalist who recently won the heavyweight division at the Super 32 meet in Greensboro, North Carolina. He enters his senior season with a 100-35 record.

Dunn is a two-time District 11 champion and was the 2014 Southeast Regional champion at 220 pounds. He finished sixth at the PIAA tournament as a sophomore at 285 pounds and third at 220 pounds as a junior. He earned second-team all-area honors by The Express-Times, a newspaper in Easton, Pennsylvania, last season.

Hughes wrestles at Marshwood High School in Maine and placed third at the 2014 NHSCA Junior

Nationals in folkstyle at 152 pounds. He took second at the New England Regional Championships as a junior and won the NHSCA Sophomore Nationals in 2013. A three-time state champion, he went 50-0 as a junior, and Dresser projects Hughes as a 157- or 165-pounder in college.

LaPrade wrestles at New Kent High in central Virginia. As a junior, he went 43-4 and was the Group 3A state champion, the 3A East champion and the Conference 25 champion. He finished first at the Turner Ashby Invitational, sixth at the Escape the Rock tournament and third at the WRAL tournament. He was undefeated and didn’t allow an offensive point against opponents from Virginia. Dresser views him as a 149-pounder in college.

THOMAS BRINGING IN BIG CLASS FOR 2015

With a roster that features 10 upperclassmen, Tech softball coach Scot Thomas signed a large class of six prospects to compete for the Hokies beginning in the fall of 2015. The class includes five out-of-state prospects and one Virginian.

“This is one of the most athletic classes we have had in a long time,” Thomas said. “It is going to be fun to see how they develop over time, because the upside is enormous. I’m very excited for the future of our softball program.”

The native Virginian is Lauren Duff, a 5-foot-8 right-handed catcher and hitter from Chesapeake who ranks as arguably the top catcher in the state. The conference player of the year as a junior, Duff hit .547, with nine doubles, five triples and three homers for Hickory High School. As a sophomore, she hit .455, with 12 doubles and three homers. Perhaps more importantly, she possesses a tremendous arm to keep opposing base stealers at bay.

Tech’s other five signees are all from the East Coast – with one each hailing from North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, New York and Florida.

Casey Gerhard, a 5-9 catcher/utility player, plays at Montverde Academy and hails from Clermont, Florida. The three-time first-team all-state choice hit .429 as a junior, with 11 doubles, five triples, two home runs and 33 RBIs. She hit .412 as a sophomore, with seven doubles and five triples.

Kinsey Johnson, a native of Highland, Maryland, is a 5-9 third baseman/outfielder who plays at



River Hill High School. She hit .434 as a junior, with two homers and 25 RBIs. She also scored 28 runs, had seven doubles and stole seven bases.

Thomas added another utility player in Olivia Lattin, a 5-6 right-handed thrower and hitter from Kingston High School in Kingston, New York. She hit .400 as a junior on her way to earning all-state honors. She also hit four homers and drove in 19.

Caitlyn Nolan is probably a corner infielder for the Hokies. The 5-7 right-handed thrower and hitter from Bennettsville, South Carolina, hit .540 as a junior for Marlboro County High School, with a homer and 19 RBIs. She also added nine doubles and three triples. As a sophomore, she led the area with a .578 batting average.

Last, but not least, is Emma Strouth, a 5-7 right-handed outfielder from Julian, North Carolina. Strouth is a two-time all-state selection from Southeast Guilford High School who was named the Greensboro News and Record’s Player of the Year. She hit .516 as a junior, with six homers and 32 RBIs. She also had nine doubles and three triples, and she stole 14 bases.

HARDWICK BRINGS THREE INTO THE MEN’S GOLF FOLD

Tech men’s golf coach Jay Hardwick and assistant coach Brian Sharpe signed three

prospects to letters-of-intent during the early signing period. The class includes Will Duma from Atlanta; Blake Fiest from Huntersville, North Carolina; and Logan Yates from Ruckersville, Virginia.

“Blake, Logan, and Will should each have a major impact on our team’s success in the years to come,” Hardwick said of the class. “All three are currently captains of their high school team, a testament to the respect and confidence their teammates have in them. More importantly, they are all fine young men who will be outstanding additions to the Virginia Tech community.”

Yates attends William Monroe High School – the same school that produced former Tech golfer Mikey Moyers. He won the 2013 Virginia State Golf Association junior championship, and he finished in second place at the 2014 VSGA junior match play championship. He also finished second at the 2014 Cannon Cup.

Yates represented Virginia the past two years at the Mid-Atlantic Junior Invitational and the Virginia/Carolinas junior team matches. He also competed in the 2014 men’s Virginia/Carolinas team matches, and he finished tied for 16th at this year’s State Open, arguably the top tournament in Virginia.

Fiest attends William A. Hough High School. A MECKA 4A all-conference selection this past season, he was the Southern Piedmont Conference Player of the Year in 2012 while attending Lake Norman Charter High School. He competed in the 2013 USGA Junior Amateur in Lake Tahoe, California, and was named to the 2013 North Carolina all-state team by the Carolinas Golf Association.

Earlier this summer Fiest finished sixth at the AJGA Izod Championship, which included a tournament-low 64 in the final round, and he finished fifth at the Hudson Junior Invitational. He represented North and South Carolina in the

Carolinas/Georgia Invitational in 2013 and 2014.

Duma is a dean’s list student at Marist High School, which has won the past three Georgia 4A state championships. He won the 2013 Dogwood Junior Invitational and posted top-10 finishes in the Press Thornton Future Masters, the Georgia State Junior Championship and the AJGA E-Z-GO Vaughn Taylor Championship.

ROBERTSON SIGNS FOUR AS PART OF SECOND RECRUITING CLASS

The Virginia Tech women’s golf team, which begins competition next fall, added four players to the current two-person squad, as Tech coach Carol Robertson signed a quartet of golfers to letters-of-intent. Those four will join current team members Amanda Hollandsworth and Allison Woodward, who both signed last fall and are taking a redshirt year this season.

The class includes Elizabeth Bose from Norfolk, Virginia; Nicolette Donovan from Ponte Vedra, Florida; Anne Taylor Hough from Spartanburg, South Carolina; and Whitney Stevenson from Canton, Georgia.

Bose, who attends Norfolk Christian, is a three-time all-conference selection and was named to the all-state team last season. She competed in the 2014 US Girls’ Junior Championship and was the runner-up in the 2013 Virginia Junior Girls’ Championship. She has been selected for Virginia Junior girls’ team four times and has six junior golf wins between 2012 and 2014.

Bose was the champion of the 2014 Northern Junior Golf Championship, and posted wins at Kingsmill Resort, home of annual LPGA tournament, and at Pine Needles Lodge and Golf Club, site of three U.S. Women’s Opens.

Donovan attends Ponte Vedra High School and has a solid record of success in junior golf. She was co-medalist at the USGA Girls’ Junior Qualifier and qualified for match play

at the Florida Women’s Amateur Match Play championship. She won the 2013 FHSAA Class 2A state championship and tied for second place at the Florida High School Tournament of Champions.

Donovan is a two-time Florida Times Union Player of the Year and was named the St. Augustine Record Player of the Year in 2013. She qualified for the 2013 USGA Girls’ Junior Championship and won the Florida Junior Tour championship (ages 13-15).

Hough is a six-time all-region choice and a three-time all-state selection at Spartanburg High School. She won the 2013 Upstate championship and the 2014 regional title, and she helped her high school team to runner-up finishes each of the past three years.

Hough was the 2014 Beth Daniel Azalea junior champion and was the runner-up in the event in 2013. She has two Peggy Kirk Bell Tour wins and was a member of the 2013 Can-Am Team. In 2013-14, she had four top-10 finishes and two top-fives in AJGA events along with a top-10 state ranking.

Stevenson is the lone junior college transfer in the group. The Canton, Georgia, native currently attends Daytona State Junior College in Daytona, Florida, where she helped the school to the 2014 NJCAA national championship. Stevenson earned junior-college All-America honors in the process.

Stevenson was the 2013-14 Daytona State Athletic Scholar of the Year and made the 2013-14 Dean’s List. Her highest individual finish last season was a third-place finish in the 2013 Lady Falcon Invitational.

VOLLEYBALL STAFF SIGNS MINNESOTA PROSPECT

Virginia Tech volleyball coach Chris Riley signed one prospect during the fall signing period



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— Minnesota prep standout Jaila Tolbert.

Tolbert, a 6-foot-1 middle blocker from Minneapolis, was a Ms. Baden Volleyball Award finalist as a senior, an award that goes to the top volleyball player in the state. She earned four letters at the Breck School and was a first-team all-state honoree her senior season. She earned all-conference honors for the past three seasons.

“We are thrilled to welcome Jaila and her family into our Virginia Tech family,” Riley said in a signing day release. “Jaila is a wonderful young lady who will be a terrific addition to our program. She is a great athlete and will help us immediately, but she is an even better person, and we are excited to add her to our group.”

LACROSSE STAFF INKS SEVEN

Virginia Tech lacrosse coach Megan Burk and her staff signed seven prospects to letters-of-intent, a group that includes six out-of-state signees and one Virginian.

The class includes Zan Biedenharn from Vero Beach, Florida; Alyssa Cox from Westfield, New Jersey; Paige Murray from Westport, Connecticut; Kelci O'Donnell from Downingtown, Pennsylvania; Molly Wentz from West Chester, Pennsylvania; and Emily Wilson from Pittsford, New York. Charlie Fix is the lone Virginian, and

she hails from Alexandria.

“We are thrilled to welcome this group to Virginia Tech lacrosse,” Burk said. “This class is marked by their strong work ethic and conviction. I know they will make a big impact both on and off the field, as our program builds to the next level.”

A goalie, Fix attends St. Stephens and St. Agnes and earned her first varsity letter a season ago after helping her team to an ISL championship as well as the VISAA championship game as a junior. She has played three years of club ball for Capital Lacrosse.

Biedenharn, who has earned three letters thus far at Vero Beach High School, will become the second Vero Beach, Florida, native on the Tech roster, joining current junior Gracee Hendrix. The middle attacker has helped her team to three state championships and was named to the U.S. Lacrosse All-America first team as a junior. She earned first-team all-district, All-League South and all-area honors in each of the past two years, while also adding first-team all-region accolades this past season.

Cox has been a three-year starter at Westfield High School and will captain her team in her final season. The all-conference defender was selected to represent New Jersey on the Elite Under Armour All-America team in the summer of 2014.

She was named to the All-New Jersey All-Star team by MSGVarsity.com and was voted the site’s “Player to Watch” over the summer.

Murray will join the Hokies after spending four years on the varsity team at Staples High School. She was named her team’s offensive player of the year as a junior and will serve as a team captain for the second straight season. A three-year starter at attack/midfield, Murray was named to the all-state and All-FCIAC second teams as both a sophomore and junior.

O'Donnell has won three letters so far at Bishop Shanahan High School. The senior captain was named team offensive MVP as a junior, and she was named to the all-area offense and All-Chesmont first teams following her junior season. She was selected to play on the Under Armour All-American Underclass Team and was named an Academic All-American in 2014.

Wentz has logged two seasons as a starter for Unionville High School. She helped her team to the district tournament in each of those seasons, and she finished second on her team in ground balls and assists.

Wilson has spent three years on the varsity team at Pittsford Sutherland High School. She will captain her squad as a senior and was named to the all-county second team as a junior. VT

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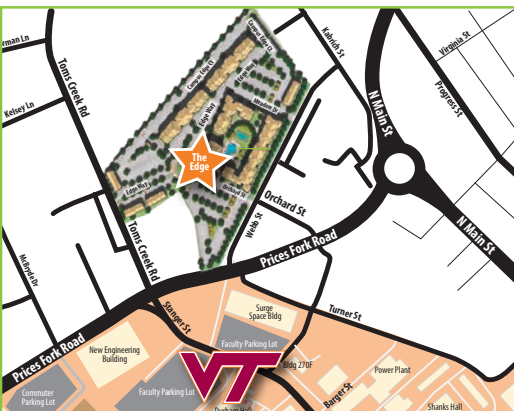
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