

inside

Vol. 7 No. 8, March 2015 • \$4

HOKIESPORTS

The Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Marshawn Williams is optimistic about being ready for the 2015 football season opener

ACC CHAMPIONS

Chris Uhle and the Virginia Tech men's track and field team vaulted past the competition and won the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championship – the program's third indoor title and second in the past three years



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HOKIESPORTS

March 2015 • Vol. 7, No. 8

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Published by the Virginia Tech Athletics Department

Inside Hokie Sports (ISSN 8750-9148, periodical postage paid at Blacksburg Va. 24060 and additional mailing offices) covers Virginia Tech athletics and is published 11 times annually – monthly from August through June. The publisher is the Virginia Tech Athletics Department, 165 Spring Rd., Blacksburg, VA 24061.

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

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ATTN POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Inside Hokie Sports, P.O. Box 11101, Blacksburg, Va. 24061-1101.

Printed by Worth Higgins & Associates of Richmond, Virginia

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PODIUM FINISHES FOR BOTH TECH SWIMMING AND DIVING TEAMS

Both the Virginia Tech men's and women's swimming and diving teams finished in third place at the 2015 ACC Swimming and Diving Championships held on separate weeks in Atlanta in late February.

C.J. Fiala (in the photo) and the men's team won six medals, set six school records and had 13 top-five finishes overall in coming in behind champion NC State and second-place Louisville. Kaylea Arnett won three medals for the women's team, including two gold medals which enabled her to win the ACC Most Valuable Diver Award for the fourth straight year.

Both squads had several competitors qualify for NCAA competition, which was to be held later in March.

THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"I'm extremely appreciative of the scholarship opportunity that I have had as a Hokie student-athlete. Having a scholarship has given me the opportunity to leave college debt free, which is a huge benefit heading into a competitive and evolving work force. Thank you so much to all the kind people who have helped in raising and donating money for student-athlete scholarships. You have given us a truly incredible gift."

C.J. Fiala
Senior | Centreville, Virginia

"I am so thankful for every person who helps make our athletics scholarships possible. It takes the passion of many people at all levels of Hokie Nation to make this happen. The Hokie Club and our amazing supporters have positively impacted my life in countless ways, and I will always be grateful for this."

Morgan Latimer
Senior | Richmond, Virginia





RACHEL CAMP
Women's
Basketball

COST OF ATTENDANCE WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

On Jan. 18 at the NCAA Convention held in Washington, D.C., five conferences – the ACC, Big 12, Big Ten, SEC and Pac-12 – passed a package of legislation that centered on student-athlete benefits, concussion safety protocol, and scholarship protection.

*We, as an athletics department, set forth our answer to these changes in our **Pylons of Promise** (www.hokiesports.com/pylons/). However, much has been written about the “cost of attendance,” an impactful piece of this new legislation that closes the “gap” between a traditional athletics scholarship and the maximum amount of a scholarship allowed by an institution.*

Below is a list of questions and answers to educate those unfamiliar with this term:

What is cost of attendance?

A student’s cost of attendance (COA) is an estimate of expenses designed to represent his/her projected actual cost to attend a specific college or university. The cost of attendance number serves as a maximum, and comprises only those expenses that are directly related to college attendance. Typical items include tuition, fees, room, board, books, transportation and miscellaneous personal expenses.

Athletics scholarships already cover all this, right?

No. Currently, the maximum allowable athletics scholarship covers just tuition, room, board, books and fees. An athletics scholarship does not cover all the incidental costs of attending college. That’s what we mean when we say there is a “gap” between what an athletics scholarship covers and the maximum amount of a scholarship allowed by an institution, and this NCAA legislation closes that gap. Student-athletes have been covering this gap out of their own pockets to pay for these expenses. Academic scholarships have included COA for years. This is not “pay for play.”

What are some of these incidental costs?

Some examples include gas for one’s vehicle, transportation, toothpaste,

laundry detergent, razor blades, curtains, bedsheets, etc.

How much extra will it cost to close this gap?

It will be different for each university. At Virginia Tech, the difference between the current full scholarship and the new full scholarship will be nearly \$3,300 for in-state student-athletes, and more than \$3,600 for out-of-state student-athletes. That equates to an increase of approximately \$950,000 extra per year.

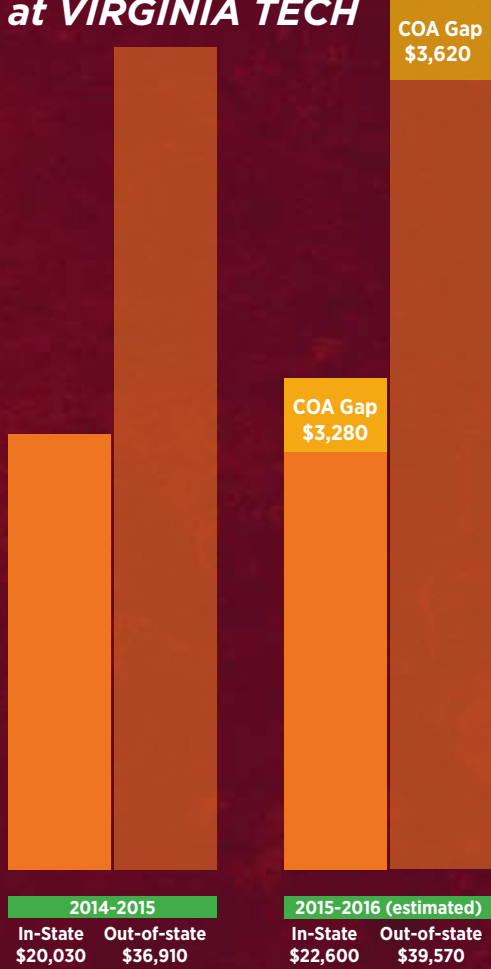
How is that number determined?

Each school’s financial aid office tabulates the cost of attendance within broad federal guidelines originating from the Higher Education Act of 1965.

How will schools pay to close this cost-of-attendance gap?

That will be left up to the individual schools within the five conferences, and those schools outside of the five conferences that elect to participate. At Virginia Tech, the athletics department pays for scholarships through donations to the Hokie Club’s Annual Fund. Additional money will need to be raised to close the cost-of-attendance gap, as well as pay the annual scholarship costs for all of Virginia Tech student-athletes, now approximately \$12.9 million.

SCHOLARSHIP COSTS at VIRGINIA TECH



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FRAZIER LATEST ADDITION TO VTAF STAFF

Trey Frazier serves as an annual giving officer within the Hokie Club. His primary responsibilities include identifying, cultivating, soliciting and stewarding annual gift prospects and donors to the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund. He joined the Hokie Club staff in November of 2014 after serving as a development coordinator at the University of Wisconsin. He received his undergraduate degree in finance from Dallas Baptist University in 2012 and his master of

business administration and master of sports administration in 2014 from Ohio University. During his time at Dallas Baptist University, Frazier was a three-year letter winner on the baseball team. He also served as class president for the Ohio University sports administration program while completing his graduate education. He currently resides in Christiansburg with his dog Bentley.



Deadline for renewing season tickets is April 6

On March 2, the Virginia Tech athletics department began accepting season ticket renewal applications for the 2015 football season, and all Hokie Club members and 2014 football season ticket holders have until April 6 at 5 p.m. to renew their tickets.

Those who renew before March 30 at 5 p.m. will be eligible to receive “Early Bird” perks. These perks are listed in the 2015 ticket catalog, and to view that online, please type in this URL – <http://vthoki.es/FB15Tix>.

The cost of a season ticket is \$350—the same as last season. There is one less home game this upcoming season compared to last season, but for

Ford talks about basketball future

Before this past football season, Isaiah Ford was adamant about playing both football and basketball at Virginia Tech.

But after playing as a true freshman last season—and starting 11 games—the Jacksonville, Florida native came to the realization that his body needed rest following Tech’s bowl win over Cincinnati. So he never approached men’s basketball coach Buzz Williams about a tryout.

“Coming from high school, it was a long season,” Ford said. “I was a little worn down. My legs weren’t under me. I thought it would be important to rest and really hit the weight room and worry about getting bigger and stronger.”

Ford, who led Tech with 56 catches for 709 yards and six touchdowns in 2014, has put on eight pounds since the season ended. He played

that price, a Tech fan will get to see the Hokies open the 2015 season against the defending national champion Ohio State Buckeyes at Lane Stadium on Labor Day. Plus, the home schedule includes four other games against teams that played in bowl games last season (Duke, North Carolina, Pittsburgh and NC State).

For the first time, the ticket office will assign a personal season ticket service executive to each customer. Service executives are available to answer any questions from account holders on Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The phone number is 800-VA TECH4.

last season at 174 pounds and recently checked in at 182.

“It’s paying off,” he said of the offseason program. “I feel a lot stronger, and I’m gaining weight, so that’s a plus.”

Ford averaged more than 30 points per game his senior season at Trinity Christian Academy in Jacksonville. He said he misses basketball and will try to play both sports next season.

“I still think I can do it. I’m going to try and do it next year,” he said. “I miss it a lot. I had to work more in basketball. Football came more naturally to me. With basketball, I had to spend a lot of time on my own, just in the gym working hard, and I could see the results. Maybe that’s why I liked it so much.”

Coleman earns All-ACC honors – in track

Virginia Tech tailback J.C. Coleman grew up participating in track and field and has wanted to continue that ever since arriving in Blacksburg, but his schedule never really afforded him the opportunity until this spring.

Coleman made the most of that opportunity after finishing fifth in the 60-meter dash at the 2015 ACC Indoor Track and Field Championship held at Rector Field House on Feb. 26-28. Coleman earned four points for the Hokies, who won the ACC men’s title with 101 points.


“My expectations were just to come out here and compete,” Coleman said. “I wasn’t expected to make it to the finals, but then as I started training more, I’m like, ‘Hold on, I can really do this.’”

Coleman said several factors played into his decision to approach the track and field staff about participating. He wanted to work on his speed, but he also liked competition.

“Everyone welcomed me with open arms,” he said. “People I don’t even know came up to me and congratulated me and were rooting for me. I love the track team. It’s a family atmosphere, and I love that.”

Several of Tech’s coaches jumped onto the track and hugged Coleman after his performance in the 60, fully realizing that the Hokies needed every point possible. For Dave Cianelli, the director of track and field and cross country, the decision to allow Coleman to run was a no-brainer.

“He approached Coach [Charles] Foster [Tech’s sprints coach] about it,” Cianelli said. “We said absolutely. We can use that. We’re pretty thin in the sprints anyway. What he did, making the final and then getting fifth in the final, that was way beyond our expectations. In a meet like this, you need a couple of things like that to push you over the top.”



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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Tech football program uses strength and conditioning testing for much more than personal benefit

Luther Maddy had every reason to feel great about himself. He hoisted 450 pounds in the bench press during the football team's testing in that category, the best on the squad. The number also represented a personal best for him.

But minutes after the testing concluded, the player affectionately known as "Big Lu" by his teammates and Hokie Nation was disappointed.

"I really wanted to get 470," he said. "I really wanted to help the Lone Survivor Foundation."

During this testing session, Maddy and his teammates were lifting for a much bigger cause than themselves. They lifted for U.S. combat service members and their families.

In a much-publicized event, at least locally, the Virginia Tech football team received more than \$39,000 in pledges to go to the Lone Survivor Foundation, an organization founded by retired U.S. Navy Seal Marcus Luttrell and whose mission is to restore, empower and renew hope for U.S. combat service members and their families. The Foundation does this by providing educational, therapeutic and wellness opportunities for combat service members and their families.

"Wow," said Dr. Mike Gentry, Tech's associate AD for athletic performance and the brainstorm of this initiative. "I'm humbled and shocked and happy. I didn't know what to expect. Somewhere in my head, I thought if we could get to \$10,000, that would be great. I'm just really pleased and thankful. And these guys care, I can promise you."

"We all thought it was a great cause," Maddy said. "I love the bench press, and what a great opportunity to help people out by doing

something I love to do, which is benching. My heart was beating so fast going into the lift. I wanted to get that weight up to help raise money for the Lone Survivor. I didn't get 470, but 450 ... you add that up, and I think that's a pretty good sum of money going to the foundation."

Gentry's idea germinated in a coffee shop in Roanoke, of all places. He admitted he takes an interest in all things military, largely because his father is a Korean War veteran. So when he saw a man wearing a T-shirt that proclaimed he had lifted so many pounds for a military-based charity, he became intrigued.

He approached the man, asking a few questions. The answers got him to thinking.

"It became clear to me that we had a better way of approaching this because we had these unique guys [football players] that had the attention of the public and were connected to them and wanted them to do well anyway," Gentry said. "We had a means to reach out to people through these guys."

With the help of John Ballein, Tech's associate AD for football operations, Gentry researched charities and picked The Lone Survivor Foundation because, of the charities researched, The Lone Survivor Foundation sends the greatest percentage of a donation directly to the veterans and their families.

Gentry's idea was simple, yet so effective. Tabbed "Hokies Helping Heroes," the initiative allowed fans to pick a player and then pledge a certain amount of money per pound lifted by that player in the bench press. So if a fan pledged 50

cents per pound for a particular player and that player lifted 420 pounds in the bench press (one repetition), then the fan would owe \$210, all of which would go to the Lone Survivor Foundation.

Exactly 338 people made pledges, everyone from parents to family members to athletics department staff members and Tech fans. Calvin Cline received the most pledges, which came as no surprise because Cline is a Corps of Cadets member. Another 22 people agreed to make a flat donation to the foundation.

Those who pledged received an email after the event, with a link directing them to pay their pledge. The athletics department, thanks to the work of webmaster Damian Salas, gets an email every time someone donates. Those who pledged at least \$75 got a Tech strength and conditioning T-shirt, with a slogan "Never quit on those who never quit on us!"

The initiative made such perfect sense, considering Tech's military tradition and because many of the players have family members in the military. Plus, most of them had seen the movie "Lone Survivor," which was based on Luttrell's story and a mission while serving in Afghanistan. Others had read the book.

"This was in the players' wheelhouse," Gentry said. "We were already going to max and work hard, so if we could help other people, that was a bonus. They really bought into it."

So, too, did a lot of others. Hopefully, it's a tradition that will continue and a model for other football programs to follow as well.



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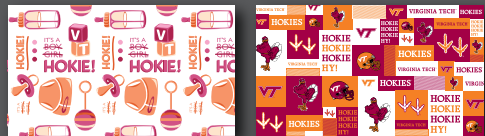
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groger roth report | by **Bill Roth**



Burden embracing the opportunity to be at Tech, looking forward to Tidewater recruiting battles with old friends

Last month, Virginia Tech named 31-year-old Norfolk, Virginia, native Zohn Burden (pronounced ZONN) the wide receivers coach for the Hokies, moving him into the role vacated by Aaron Moorehead, who left for Texas A&M.

Burden grew up in Virginia Beach and graduated in 2002 from Salem High School, where he was coached by current University of Virginia running backs coach Chris Beatty. He played collegiately at VMI before getting into coaching at Fork Union Military Academy.

He then had two stints at Old Dominion, from 2007-10, when he coached defensive backs, and then from 2012-14, when he served as the Monarchs' passing game coordinator. Burden also spent one year as the wide receivers coach at the University of Richmond.

I had the chance to visit with the newest member of Tech's coaching staff and ask him some questions:

BR: Welcome to Virginia Tech. It's nice to have you here.

ZB: "Thank you. It's nice to be here."

BR: Give me your early impressions so far of Tech.

ZB: "Honestly, it's been great. Even better than I thought it would be."

BR: Why?

ZB: "The people. The people here are just incredible. The atmosphere. The legacy and the tradition you see when you walk in the doors is a dream come true for me."

BR: For an in-state guy like yourself from Virginia Beach, what was your perception of Virginia Tech football from the outside, and specifically, from the view as an assistant coach at ODU?

ZB: "Being from Virginia, I watched this football program grow, and a lot of kids I went to high school with had a chance to come here and play football in college. I've always been a fan. Virginia Tech has always been a special place for me. As far as being the receivers coach at ODU, I've always been keeping up with Virginia schools, and Virginia Tech was just always one of those places that you always checked the score when the game was over."

BR: Let me tell you that Virginia Tech people – fans and coaches – took notice of what you guys were doing at ODU. Everyone saw those passing yards and scoring totals. How did you do it?

ZB: "We had a great quarterback, we had some really good receivers, and we had a good offensive line and good running backs. The ODU program is built around the offense. It's all catered toward that, and we just let the quarterback run the show."

BR: Did you know that you always wanted to get into coaching?

ZB: "No. It kind of just fell into my lap. I had a chance to get to Fork Union as soon as I graduated from VMI, and Coach [John] Shuman told me, 'You're kinda good at this,' and I stuck with it from that point."

BR: We've had several coaches here at Virginia Tech, in many different sports over the years, with a Fork Union background. Each one talks about how the discipline learned as a student there helps them as a coach in their professional lives today. Would you agree with that?"

ZB: "I agree 100 percent. Waking up at 5 a.m. becomes a natural thing starting when you're there until however old you happen to be. Those small things, like shining your shoes and tucking your shirt in, carry you a long way in life."

BR: Coach Shuman is one of the best ever. What do you think makes you – from Coach Shuman's perspective and from your own perspective today – a good coach?

ZB: "I think I can relate to my players, and I'm coaching the wide receiver position, which I played at VMI. So it's been a natural transition for me, and I think kids feed off my energy as far as how I like to coach the position. I want them to get better each and every day."

BR: At Virginia Tech, you're inheriting a talented, but still relatively young, receiving corps, with guys like Isaiah Ford and Cam Phillips. When you watched the tapes, what were your initial impressions of the receivers here at Virginia Tech?

ZB: "I think the sky's the limit for these young guys. That's the beauty of being the receivers coach here now. The previous coach left a great room of kids that want to work and get better, and they listen when you ask them to do something."

groger roth report | by **Bill Roth**



BR: Let's talk recruiting. One of the aspects that has Tech fans excited is your background as a Virginia Beach guy, and clearly, some of the best players ever at Tech are from the Hampton Roads area. How would you describe your recruiting philosophy?

ZB: "I'm all about building relationships. That comes from growing up around this area, playing high school football in Virginia Beach and the Tidewater area. There are still coaches there now that I played against when I was in high school, and they know who I am, but I think building relationships is my goal, and then maintaining those relationships wherever you go."

BR: You obviously have a very close relationship with Coach [Chip] West and Coach Beatty at UVA. That's going

to make for some very interesting recruiting battles in the 757 area, isn't it?

ZB: "Oh yes [smiling]. It will be fun. Chip helped me get to ODU, and we worked together there, so yeah, it will be fun."

Looking ahead, there's no question there will be some really interesting recruiting battles in the 757 area with the Burden-West-Beatty triangle in Blacksburg and Charlottesville. Their familiarity with the region – and each other – certainly adds a new flavor to the Tech-UVa rivalry.

But more than recruiting, Tech has added a classy, articulate, successful coach to its staff. It was a blow to lose Moorehead, but coach Frank Beamer has added a real rising star to his staff, which is encouraging.

THE VOICE'S MAILBAG

Dear Bill,

I think it is imperative that Tech fans be able to tailgate the entire day of next year's OSU game. Tech weekday night games are ruined by the university not allowing Hokie Club members to park earlier than a few hours before the game. I, for one, plan to be out there in the morning and know many other locals that are planning for the same. I am basically a Hokie Club member so that I can have a great tailgate/parking spot. Please pass along to Mr. Babcock and see if he can pull some strings. Regards, Robert, Blacksburg, Virginia.

Hi Robert,

I will pass on your note. As you know, that's a regular workday on Virginia Tech's campus – regular workday for faculty, staff, researchers, and of course, a full class day for students. For the previous Labor Day game in 2012, Tech opened up parking lots on 4:30 p.m. the day of the game. The RV lots opened on Saturday at noon.

Dear Bill,

The recent passing of Dean Smith made me think about basketball history, specifically the four corners offense, perhaps perfected by Coach Smith and Phil Ford. Some research showed it was invented by Neal Baisi of West Virginia Tech. I've also heard ESPN analyst Stephen A. Smith proclaim that his former coach, Clarence "Big House" Gaines, was the architect. Then I recalled an article by you about former Tech coach Chuck Noe being the inventor. So I ask you, Bill, who deserves the credit for this unique piece of basketball history? Tim Lewis, Waynesboro.

Hi Tim,


I don't know Coach Baisi, nor have I had the opportunity to watch his teams play. However, I did have the opportunity to visit with Coach Noe, and we discussed what he called his "Mongoose" offense. (By the way, you have a keen memory if you recall that article from many years ago.) I'm not sure if Coach Smith adopted any of his "Four Corners" scheme from Coach Noe's "Mongoose," but I'm sure someone out there will submit a clarification.

Bill,

You mentioned on tonight's broadcast that the Hokies will have five new players join the basketball team for the 2015-16 season. Who are these players? Todd, Virginia Beach.

Todd,

Thank you for listening. The Hokies have two players sitting out this season: guard Seth Allen, who transferred from Maryland, and forward Zach LeDay, who transferred from South Florida. In addition, Virginia Tech signed three players during the early-signing period in November: forward Chris Clarke from Virginia Beach, guard Justin Robinson from Manassas, and forward Kerry Blackshear from Orlando. You can read more about that trio here: <http://www.hokiesports.com/mbasketball/recaps/20141112aaa.html>

If you don't recall Seth's time at Maryland, here are some clips: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GxMCX5Sa-o. And here's Zach in action at USF: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TzsYbjXLGY>. 

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Keeping up *with* Compliance

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

Q: Hey, did you catch Buzz Williams' new argyle sweater that he broke out in the second half of the Hokies' win over Georgia Tech? That thing was quite the fashion statement. Anyway, Adam Smith said he wanted one just like it. Could Buzz give his players a sweater like that without running a-foul of the NCAA sheriff? Thanks, Megan in Blacksburg.

TP: "First of all, it's important to realize that any tangible items—other than apparel and equipment used in practice or competition—given to student-athletes must be classified as 'awards.' Permissible awards given by schools to student-athletes then fall into one of three categories: participation, championship (e.g. ACC regular season, ACC tournament), or special achievement (e.g. MVP, most improved). NCAA regulations place annual monetary limits on each category.

"A sweater would fall into the participation category. If Coach Williams wanted to give a sweater to each team member as an 'award,' his ability to do so would depend on two things: the cost of the sweater, and the total value of awards received—or to be received—in that specific category by his student-athletes during the course of the academic year. The annual cumulative limit for participation awards is \$225 for underclassmen and \$425 for seniors.

"So . . . to finally end a long-winded answer to your question, Coach Williams could do this, provided the cost of the sweater did not exceed NCAA-mandated limits, either by itself, or in combination with other awards given in that category."

Q: As you probably know, two members of the Virginia Tech football recruiting class—Coleman Fox and Zachariah Hoyt—are from nearby Salem, Virginia, roughly an hour away. Could those two drive to Blacksburg after school and participate in spring? They wouldn't be missing any class time at their high school in this scenario. Thanks, Eric in Christiansburg.

TP: "No, they wouldn't be able to because they will not have graduated from high school yet, nor are they enrolled at Virginia Tech and taking classes. We ran into similar questions in the past when Blacksburg High School prospective student-athletes sign letters-of-intent with Virginia Tech. You have to be enrolled and be a full-time student. NCAA regulations do allow incoming student-athletes to enroll in summer school before the fall of their freshman year and participate in team activities."

Q: Can recruits take officials after National Signing Day if they haven't signed an official letter-of-intent? Thanks, Chris in Christiansburg.

TP: "Prospective recruits can take official visits at any time except when there is a dead period. Dead periods occur periodically throughout the calendar year, and during this time, no in-person contact is allowed, even if a prospect happens to visit a campus (though electronic communications are permitted).


"In football, for instance, a dead period began two days before the signing period started this

year (Feb. 2) and ended the day after the signing period began (Feb. 5). After that date, coaches are allowed to bring uncommitted recruits to campus for official visits—though this rarely happens. Most prospects return their letters-of-intent on the first day of the signing period (referred to as 'National Signing Day').

"National Signing Day' isn't the only day on which letters-of-intent can be signed, but merely the first day prospects can sign and submit their letters-of-intent. From the NCAA perspective, there isn't a signing 'day,' but a signing 'period.' This year, that period runs from Feb. 4 through April 1 for football."

Q: I know coaches can't tweet to recruits, but I was wondering if fans could do this. It seems like a way for fans to helping in the recruiting process. Matthew in Lynchburg.

TP: "Technically speaking, tweeting at recruits is a violation of NCAA regulations. As soon as you communicate with a recruit and try to persuade him/her to attend a specific school, you automatically become what is known in NCAA legislation as a 'booster,' and boosters aren't allowed to recruit prospects.

"Everyone understands that this rule is hard (ok, almost impossible) to monitor and enforce, but it's an easy rule to follow. Please let the coaches do the recruiting. In any event, it's highly doubtful that tweeting at recruits has any impact on their final decision." 

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VIRGINIA



CAWLEY BROMLEY

LACROSSE
Cary, North Carolina
by Jimmy Robertson

Cawley Bromley is a senior on the Virginia Tech lacrosse team and has started every game this season. She graduates in May with a degree in human development, focusing on child and adolescent development, and she wants to work with children in some capacity in the future.

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

CB: “I originally went into the major because I wanted to go into elementary education, and that’s the path you take to go into elementary education because Tech doesn’t have that major. Right now, I’m deciding if I want to go to grad school for elementary education. I’m figuring out what I want to do, but elementary education has been my path for the past four years.”

Q: What is it about elementary education that interests you?

CB: “I just love kids. I love working with students. I’m doing a field study right now where I go to Price’s Fork Elementary School [in Blacksburg] four times a week, and I work in the classroom with a teacher and help the students with things they’re struggling with. I work a lot with IEP students [Individualized Education Program for disabled students] and helping them with their academics. I’m in a fifth-grade classroom, and I really like it.”

Q: Has that field study reinforced your decision to major in human development and pursue a career in education?

CB: “It’s definitely reinforced that I want to work with students, or work with kids. I’m not 100 percent sure that I want to be a teacher, but I definitely want to be in a field where I’m working with students and helping people with their problems. I’ve worked a lot one-on-one with IEP students, and it’s just amazing when they have an ‘A-ha’ moment. There’s nothing more rewarding than that.”

Q: Have you done any other internships or field studies in which you’ve worked with children?

CB: “No, but during the summer, the past three summers, I’ve worked for the town of Cary, where I live, and I run a lacrosse camp for boys and girls every week. It’s boys and girls, ages 8 to 13, so I’ve seen a bunch of different ages and how they interact with each other. It was a great experience, and it definitely has helped me when I’ve been in the classroom this year.”


Q: If you weren’t a teacher, what do you think you’d like to do?

CB: “There are always non-profit organizations. I’ve been looking into things right now. I’m not 100 percent sure about what I’m doing, but I’ve always had an interest in guidance counseling. I’d have to go to grad school for that, and the same with elementary education.”

Q: Would you go to graduate school here at Virginia Tech?

CB: “I don’t think so. I think I’d stay in-state and live at home and save some money.”

Q: What is your short-term plan once you graduate from Virginia Tech in May?

CB: “I’m not 100 percent sure, but what I’ve discussed with my parents is to come home for a year and try to find a job. Since I’m not 100 percent sure what I want to go to grad school for, I’m going to take the year and figure that out, and then hopefully go back to school the following year, either full time or part time.” 

Florian Nicoud got a degree from a university in France before coming to Virginia Tech and playing tennis for two years. He will graduate from Tech with a degree in economics this May. He’s been applying to graduate schools, where he wants to get a master’s degree in international business before pursuing a career in the sports industry.

Q: Why did you decide to major in economics?

FN: “I started my college career in France, and I started, at first, in something that was HNFE (human nutrition, foods and exercise) related. But I didn’t like it, so I just switched. I wanted to go more into a business field, and I like economics. The school I went to in France, I studied more economics and management. So I got a degree in France and then I transferred to Virginia Tech because I wanted to keep playing tennis.

“I really like the mathematical part and applying it to economics. You have a general view of what the world looks like. You have to study all the fields related to business, so I’ve done some management classes, some finance classes, some economics classes ... you get a really broad view of the world – and I like it.”

Q: Have you done any internships or field studies? If so, please tell us about those experiences.

FN: “So far, no, I haven’t done any. I’ve worked some tennis camps, but nothing related to economics. I hope to do one this summer, and I’m applying to grad school, so hopefully, I’ll get into a good program and then do an internship.”

Q: So you plan on going to graduate school after you get your undergraduate degree from Virginia Tech. In what subject would you like to get your master’s?

FN: “My plan is to get my master’s in international business. I’m applying to several schools, and the last few weeks, I’ve been very busy. I’ve been doing work as far as getting recommendation letters and a cover letter and working on my resumé. I’m applying to some French programs and some American programs, and seeing where it’s going to lead me.”


Q: Will you be applying to graduate school at Virginia Tech?

FN: “Unfortunately, no. The program isn’t what I want. I’m looking for something that is pretty specialized, and it’s not offered at Virginia Tech. My favorite one is one in France, but I’m also applying to NC State.”

Q: What would be a dream job for you?

FN: “Traveling inside my job. I won’t be able to stay in an office and work all day in an office. I’d like to travel and meet different people and different personalities. My dream would be to work in the skiing area. I love skiing and all that’s ski related, or I’d like to work in the tennis area. I’d like to work in a sports industry.”

Q: Would you like to work in the United States or go some place else?

FN: “It doesn’t matter to me. I’m not stuck to one place. I’ve been used to traveling, and it’s not a problem for me to leave everything. Now with Skype, you can talk to your family a lot, and that’s great because I’m very close to them. But it’s not a problem for me to work in the U.S. or Canada or anywhere. I’m not stuck to one place. I’d like to find a job abroad, somewhere besides France. Maybe in the long run, I’d go back, but right now, I’m willing to discover some new experiences.” 



FLORIAN NICOUD

MEN’S TENNIS
St. Marcellin, France
by Jimmy Robertson

Virginia Tech's

normally strong defense got off to a slow start last year, as injuries to standouts Luther Maddy and Brandon Facyson forced coordinator Bud Foster and his staff to make major adjustments. The Hokies essentially had eight new faces in starting roles, but they played really well down the stretch and finished a respectable 21st nationally in total defense (343.8 ypg). They also ranked in the top 10 nationally in sacks per game (third, 3.69), tackles for a loss per game (third, 8.4) and red zone defense (tied for sixth, 71.4 percent).

Foster returns most of the unit for the 2015 season, though Maddy, Facyson, Ken Ekanem and Kendall Fuller are out or limited for spring practice. He sat down and answered a few questions, as spring practice is set to begin on March 24:

Q: Looking back at last season, your unit really played well the final four games of the season after the BC and Miami losses. What did you do differently that maybe you weren't doing the first part of the season?

BF: "I don't think it was anything we were doing different schematically. You had some guys playing in significant roles for the first time, and the best teacher is experience. The more the kids played, the more comfortable they felt and understood what we were doing with the defenses."

"We gave up too many big plays, particularly early. That was our nemesis. But at the end, we didn't give up as many big plays. If you take away those big plays, we had a heckuva year. It could have been that much better. But we did some really good things, and we grew up a lot. The last three-fourths of the season, there were eight new faces that were playing significant roles from the previous year."

Q: So with most of the defense returning as you head into spring practice, what do you hope to get accomplished this spring? What are the goals?

BF: "Our goals don't change a whole lot. We've got to continue to grow and improve. We've got to develop some depth. We've got to find out who can play and compete at a high level. We do that every spring."

"I'm anxious to see some young kids step up and play, particularly up front. A guy like Melvin Keihn, I'm anxious to see him. With Ken being out, Melvin and Seth Dooley are going to get a lot of reps, and they need a lot of reps. Those are kids that we are excited about. We want to see what Vinny Mihota can bring to the table, and we're excited about Yosh Nijman. At linebacker, Chase Williams had a great year, but I really like what Andrew Motuapuaka did. He really came along. He's going to be the guy in the middle. We need to develop

some depth behind him and Deon Clarke. We've got Carson Lydon at mike [linebacker], and I'm excited about him coming in here, and I think he'll be an athletic mike. I'm anxious to see where Raymon Minor goes. He intrigues me as a big, athletic kid, and we'll see if he fits at the backer spot."

"At the back end, we'll have to find two new safeties. We've had two three-year starters back there [Kyshoen Jarrett and Detrick Bonner], and experience is hard to replace. We've got a lot of people we're going to look at back there to see who can help us."

"So as for goals, we'll need to improve and get some young guys some experience and find out who can play."

Q: Let's talk about the free safety and rover positions. Detrick Bonner started 43 games in his career, while Kyshoen Jarrett started 38. What are your plans for those two spots heading into spring practice?

BF: "We're going to look at Chuck Clark playing our free safety spot, and he'll be battling with Desmond Frye, Anthony Shegog and Der'Woun Greene. We'll probably move those guys around, Chuck should be the guy [at free safety]. I like what he's all about. He's got some experience, but they're all good football players. C.J. Reavis is another guy that I want to watch. C.J. can make plays in space. So those are two positions that I'm going to take a close look at, as far as seeing how we're developing."

Q: There had been some discussions about moving Donovan Riley to either free safety or rover. Do you plan on keeping him at cornerback, and who are some young corners to watch this spring?

BF: "We're going to keep Donovan at cornerback, and he needs to continue to develop and grow and improve. We're moving Chuck, who was one of our corners last year, and with Kendall out, we decided to keep Donovan there. I think that's the best position for him."

"As for those young corners, I'm looking forward to seeing how some of these guys compete. Greg Stroman really came on toward the end of the year. With Kendall being out, he's going to get a lot of reps. You've got Shawn Payne and Terrell Edmunds, and those guys are going to get a lot of work."

"This will be a great time to get an evaluation of young players and then we can determine our nickel guy. That's becoming a very important part of our defense. You saw that last year when we played Kendall, Chuck and Donovan so much together in that package."

Q: You're also losing whip linebacker Derek Di Nardo, who graduated after a terrific senior season. Who are some people to watch in that whip linebacker role?

BF: "We're going to move Ronny Vandyke back to the whip position."

Between our "30" [three defensive linemen] package and what all we do, that whip guy ended up playing a lot [Di Nardo played more than 300 snaps]. Di Nardo had a great senior year."

Continued on page 20

TECH DEFENSE

LOOKING TO CARRY STRONG 2014 ENDING OVER TO SPRING PRACTICE

Defensive coordinator Bud Foster has a veteran group returning and wants to spend the 15 spring practices evaluating younger players and creating depth at certain positions

by Jimmy Robertson



Chuck Clark, who finished third on the team with 73 tackles this past season, will be moved from cornerback to free safety this spring.

“Ronny needs to stay healthy, and we’re going to look at Adonis Alexander there. He’s a mid-year guy [enrolled in January], and he’s a tall, lanky guy that can run. He has great range and knows how to finish. We may start him at safety – we haven’t decided yet, but we like to start them in the back end and move forward when we find out more about them. But Adonis may be our whip or nickel guy.

“Another guy who is intriguing is Holland Fisher, but he’s needs to get some things taken care of off the field when it’s all said and done. I’d love for him to take that next step.”

Q: Andrew Motuapuaka started four games when Williams went down with a knee injury, and he played well, solidifying himself as the mike linebacker of the future. What do you expect to see from him this spring?

BF: “I hope he’s going to take off from where he left off. He’s got great vision. He has some things he needs to work on, but I just like what the kid is about. He’s got speed, and he’s physical. He can run. He’s a good blitz. I think he’s got a chance to be a really good mike linebacker. He’s an instinctive guy. He really did a nice job coming in for Chase last fall. I was encouraged by his performance. He’s only going to get better.

“The only concern I have with Andrew is that he needs to speak up. That’s a take-charge position,

and he’s a quiet kid. But in the game situations last fall, he did a nice job of communicating. I was pleasantly surprised with that. I expect him to take a big step this spring. That’s such a key position for us. It’s a playmaking spot, and when we’ve had a good playmaker there, we’ve been good defensively. He has those capabilities.”

Q: Do you have any concerns about any positions as you’re heading into spring practice?

BF: “I’m still concerned about defensive end. We won’t have Ken this spring, and Dewayne Alford is graduating and is giving up football, so that takes a guy out. We’ve brought in Yosh Nijman, and we have to find out if he’s a defensive end or a defensive tackle. We hope he’s a defensive end. We know what Dadi [Nicolas] can do, and we just want to keep his timing sharp this spring. We want to rep Yosh and Seth Dooley and Melvin Keihn in there, and then you never know who else may move into the mix.”

Q: Arguably the top recruit in the 2015 recruiting class was Tim Settle, a defensive lineman from Manassas, Virginia. Many considered him one of the top defensive line recruits in the country. He’s still in high school, but can he figure into the mix next fall?

BF: “I hope so. Tim’s got to get to the point where he’s in great shape. He’s a dynamic, explosive big man. If he can come in and figure in, we’ll do that. We’ll try to work him in the mix. He’s just got to get in great shape where he can sustain a high level of play.

“That’s the one difference between high school and this level. It’s the consistency of high level of play. If you go three-quarter speed, you’re going to get beat. That’s what young kids have to figure out. Every play is a critical play on defense at this level.

“But I’m excited about Tim. He’s a big athlete with good feet and good explosiveness and change of direction. I’m anxious to get him here.”

Q: Offenses are trending toward more three- and four-receiver sets and spreading the field. Do you expect to use more nickel and other non-traditional packages to combat this?

BF: “You know, everything is matchups. They’re [offenses] always looking for the matchup, and that’s what we want to do. We want to create a matchup that is advantageous for us in the end, or at least a matchup to where we can make it an even battle. Let’s not have a weakness, per se.

“People are running three and four wide receivers. We like to play a lot of matchup zones and man free [all defensive backs are in man coverage except the free safety, who is a “safety valve”] and contest all throws and put pressure on

Andrew Motuapuaka started four games at mike linebacker last season and recorded 45 tackles in those four games.



the quarterback. You start getting guys running with receivers that don’t have the speed, and all of the sudden, they’ve created the mismatch.

“That’s where our nickel defense has come in. We created the 30 package, and we ran that quite a bit, particularly on third down. We’ve been a little exotic out of that, with some pressures and such. We’re able to get in our base defense out of it, too. It’s been a good package for us the last few years, and we’ve been able to develop that a little more as we’ve gone along.”

Q: Another thing that is becoming more prevalent is the running quarterback. You faced a couple of those this past season. Do you expect to see more and more of that as well?

BF: “Yes, and I can tell you, they’re a pain in the tail [laughing]. But you look at it, and Georgia Tech was different because of that guy [Justin Thomas]. BC was the same way [with Tyler Murphy]. Now we’re playing NC State, and that kid [Jacoby Brissett] is really good. Because we load the box up, teams are using their quarterbacks more. You take Pitt. They came out and ran quarterback sweeps against us. They’re just loading up blockers. That’s a credit to our defense because we’re trying to have one more defender than they have blockers.

“But now, offenses are making you play 11-on-11. You can’t have that free safety back there

20 or 30 yards deep. He’s got to be involved in the run game. That’s why you need good speed on the perimeter, so you can matchup right if they play-action pass, or something like that.”

Q: Usually during this time of year, you’ll meet with a coaching staff from another school and exchanges ideas on certain schemes. Do you have any plans to do that this spring?

BF: “We’re going to have Kansas State in [on March 2], and Gregg Williams [assistant with the NFL’s Tennessee Titans] is going to come in. He’s speaking at our coaches’ clinic, but he’s going to come in early, and we’re going to meet. He knows our scheme, and we know his scheme. We’re going to pick his brain and let him talk to us about situations and things of that nature.

“I like having Kansas State coming in because that Big 12 seems to be really wide open from an offensive standpoint. The TCUs, the Baylors, the West Virginias ... they’re all no-huddle and spread the field. I’m curious to talk with them [Kansas State’s staff] about their philosophy and how they handle that, the type of packages they go into a game with and whatnot.

“We’re not going to change what we do, but if we can find something that we can tweak or maybe add something here or there, then we’ll do it. We’re always looking for a little wrinkle to help ourselves.”

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Construction continues on Virginia Tech's new indoor practice facility, as workers from W.M. Jordan Company have finished the framing and the roof of the building and have been hanging precast concrete on the exterior. As can be seen from these photos, workers attached the three observation decks and also started installing glass along the side of the facility.

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 facility to be ready for use in time for the upcoming 2015 football season. 



WILLIAMS

GEARING UP FOR

MAJOR

COMEBACK

by Jimmy Robertson

Marshawn Williams practically jumped into the starting lineup as soon as he set foot on campus, as running backs coach Shane Beamer started him in the Hokies' second game of this past season – one at Ohio State. Williams scored on a short touchdown run in that game, part of a 35-point outburst that lifted the Hokies to a 35-21 victory over the then-No. 8 Buckeyes.

Williams started eight games, missing the Pittsburgh game with an ankle injury. But his season came to an end after he tore his ACL against Duke on Nov. 15. He finished second on the team in rushing with 475 yards and he scored four touchdowns.

Williams underwent surgery in December, but he expects to be back for the season opener against Ohio State. He took some time to answer some questions about his injury, his rehab and his expectations heading into the season:

Q: For starters, how are you feeling?

MW: “I feel good. Every day is different. I don’t know exactly how I’ll feel. But today [Feb. 24], and the past couple of days, I’ve felt good. The weather has been so crazy. Some days, I feel fine. Other days, I’ll feel a little achy. I can tell when it’s about to rain or snow, but it feels fine.”

Q: When the injury occurred, did you know immediately what it was?

MW: “Actually, I didn’t. When I was younger, in rec ball, I hyperextended my knee a couple of times. So when this happened, I’m like, ‘Yeah, it’s just a hyperextension.’ When I was laying there and I realized how fast Mike [Goforth] and Keith [Doolan] had gotten there, I realized it was a little bit more than I thought it was. But when it first happened, it wasn’t something that hurt so bad that I was like, ‘Oh, there’s something wrong.’ I didn’t know what it was until they checked it and told me.”

Q: So what goes through your mind after you get news like that?

MW: “For me, it happened so fast that I ended up laughing all the way up until the next day. I didn’t believe it. I thought I was going to wake up and be able to play in the next game. It was different. I had never been seriously injured before, so that was just different to me. I was a little blown away.”

Q: Were you in a lot of pain in the days after the injury?

MW: “Not so much pain, but sleeping was terrible. It was just different. Just having something in your body that hurts is different, and I had some swelling. I wasn’t in too much pain during the process. Maybe if I tried to get up and didn’t have my brace on, it would buckle. Other than that, I wasn’t in too much pain.”

Q: Was it just a torn ACL or was it a total reconstruction of your knee when you underwent surgery in mid-December?

MW: “I had my ACL reconstructed and my LCL [lateral collateral ligament, which is a ligament on the outer side of the knee] repaired.”

Q: Are you able to do everything in the weight room right now, or do you have to hold off on certain things?

MW: “I’m not able to do anything with my lower body right now. It’s all upper body. But here in the next few weeks, I should be able to get into some of that stuff.” *Continued on page 26*

Marshawn Williams has his sights set on playing in the Hokies’ season opener against Ohio State despite tearing his ACL in November of this past season



Q: Do you think you can make it back for the season opener against Ohio State?

MW: “For me, the sky is the limit. As much work as I put in, that’s what I’m going to get out. I’m working as hard as I can to be ready for Ohio State. That’s my goal. That’s what I’ve put in my head. If I’m not ready, I won’t know until the week of the game. I’m preparing in my head as if I’m playing. I haven’t really struggled with anything rehab-wise. I’m kind of ready to move on and go up another level and kick it up a notch. But they [Tech’s sports medicine staff] told me that probably won’t happen until after spring break.”

Q: What has the sports medicine staff told you as far as a timetable?

MW: “They told me this summer, so that’s right on time with what I’m trying to do. I’m trying to be in game shape by the time we play. For them to clear me in the summer ... that doesn’t leave me a lot of time. I’m going to have to hurry and get in game shape.”

Q: How frustrating has it been? You weren’t even able to go to the bowl game because of the surgery.

MW: “It hurt, just to watch and not being able to do what they [the coaches] brought me here to do. I’ve never really been hurt. Even in the Pitt game, when I hurt my ankle, it was a terrible feeling to not be out there with your team and to not even be on

the sideline. It’s just different. That’s all. I watched every game, though. I’d text Coach [Shane Beamer] after every game and tell him what I thought and how I felt and went from there.”

Q: Do you think you will be nervous or tentative when you come back?

MW: “I think everybody that tears an ACL is a little nervous. It’s all up to me. Whatever I put in is what I’ll get out. If I put in enough work, hopefully, I don’t miss a beat and come back being myself. There’s always that thought, ‘What if it happens again?’ and you’re a little timid.”

Q: Have you talked with someone who has been through the process of rehabbing an ACL to get some insight?

MW: “Well, I’ve talked to Shai [McKenzie, who also tore his ACL this past season] and [Tech linebacker] Sean Huelskamp and Ken [Ekanem, a defensive end who tore his in high school]. They all said it was a process and takes a while. I’m ready for it, just trying to get back.”

Q: You appear to have changed your body over the course of the fall and this winter. It looks like you’ve lost weight. What are you weighing?


MW: “Right now, I’m 218 [was listed at 229 during the season] and trying to go down. I’m on a diet, just trying to stay down. They say the lighter you are, the better your rehab is.

“My brother started the diet with me because I wasn’t able to compete, and my nature is to compete. So we started a competition as to who could lose the most weight. He started this diet, and I’m doing everything he’s doing. I’m winning right now. He’s lost more in the waist than I have. I really want to get down as much as I can to help with my rehab. Then I’ll get back to where they [the coaches] want me to, but put it on in a good way.”

Q: Will you go to spring practices and watch, even though you won’t be able to participate?

MW: “Oh yeah, I’ll definitely be in everything as much as I can. That’s my nature, to be around football, and I wouldn’t feel right to not be around, so everything I’m able to do, I’m going to be there. Hopefully, I’ll be able to put on pads, but I doubt it. That’s up to Mike [Goforth]. ”

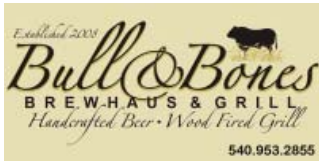
Q: Do you think you can come back and be the same player that you were?

MW: “I think so. I look at Adrian Peterson [an NFL running back who rushed for more than 2,000 yards the season after tearing an ACL]. He had the biggest comeback ever from an ACL. Just watching him and his process, he was really going after it. That makes me want to go faster than I’m able to, and that’s my problem. I want to rush this along as fast as I can, but I can’t. And that’s kind of killing me.” 



30th Annual Hokie Celebration

The Blacksburg Hokie Club and Virginia Tech Athletic Fund would like to thank BTO Yogurt, Bull & Bones Brewhaus & Grill, Custom Catering, West End Market, and Top of the Stairs for their major sponsorship of this year’s Hokie Celebration.



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HOKIES THIRD AT ACC SWIMMING AND DIVING CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Tech men's team, behind six medalists, finished third at the meet, while diver Kaylea Arnett's three medals led the women's team to a third-place finish as well

by Jimmy Robertson

Kaylea Arnett

Neither of the Virginia Tech swimming and diving teams brought home a team championship from the 2015 ACC Swimming and Diving Championships held in Atlanta the final two weeks of February.

But head coach Ned Skinner felt very good about what his men's and women's programs accomplished nonetheless.

And he should. Both finished in the top three of the ACC team standings, making Tech the only ACC school with both programs in the top three.

The Tech men's team, which won the 2014 ACC crown, recorded 1,123 points. NC State, which finished second behind the Hokies a year ago, won the title with 1,331 points, while Louisville came in second with 1,178.5 points. The Hokies won six medals, set six school records and had 13 top-five finishes.

On the women's side, the Hokies claimed eight medals, including three by star diver Kaylea Arnett, and finished the meet with a score of 1,018 points. Virginia won the ACC team championship with a score of 1,308.5, and North Carolina was the runner-up with 1,255. The Hokies edged out fourth-place Louisville, which finished with a score of 918.

"Clearly, our objective for the men was to defend that title and win, and even though we fell short of that goal, I'm proud of the men's fight and determination," Skinner said. "We had a couple of things not go our way, and we just didn't have any margin of error if we wanted to win. We stayed in the meet throughout, and then Louisville passed us. There were four teams in contention, and we were happy to at least get a podium finish and get past UNC.

"I think the women, based on what we saw going into the meet, we thought a third-place finish was rock solid."

The Tech men entered the swimming portion of the men's championships with 267 points. That was because the divers staked the team to that lead after competing a week earlier at the women's championships.

Tech's divers claimed a silver and a bronze medal, and several other high finishes in the three events earned valuable points.

The biggest surprise came from Logan Stevens, a junior from Covington, Kentucky, who had never finished higher than third place in any diving event. But he performed on the big stage, claiming silver in the 3-meter event with a score of 384.75 points.

"He's a great story," Skinner said. "He was a recruited walk-on. He came here for no money. He came here because of Virginia Tech, and he and Ron [Piemonte, Tech's diving coach] have really clicked. He was right there in the hunt to get a bronze, too, in the platform, and he got passed by his teammate, Thomas Shinholser, and finished fourth. It was awesome to see him emerging."

Shinholser, a sophomore from Burtonsville, Maryland, won the bronze medal in the platform event with a score of 370 points, while Stevens finished behind him in fourth. Kyle Butts aided the cause with a fourth-place finish in the 1-meter diving competition, posting a score of 366.55 points, and Shinholser was behind him in eighth with a score of 308.35.

During the swimming portion of the championships, Brandon Fiala and Robert Owen won gold medals for the Hokies.

Fiala, a sophomore from Centreville, Virginia, won the 200 individual medley after swimming a time of 1 minute, 43.97 seconds. Only a few spots behind him, Owen Burns took sixth with a time of 1:45.13.

After placing sixth in the 400 IM at the ACC meet as a freshman last year, Robert Owen won his first gold medal this time, edging an NC State swimmer by less than two-tenths of a second.



In the morning prelims, both Fiala and Burns broke the school record in the 200 IM, but it was Fiala's time that set the new school record at 1:43.73.

Owen, a sophomore from Bridgewater, Massachusetts, won the 400 IM in a thrilling battle with second-place finisher Christian McCurdy of NC State that was dead even through the final 100 yards. Owen stretched to take gold by .13 seconds with an NCAA automatic-qualifying time of 3:41.78. After breaking the school record in the morning prelims, Owen's evening swim broke that record by two seconds in the finals.

"Brandon Fiala has emerged as a superstar and not just because he won an ACC title," Skinner said. "This is a guy who really continues to come into his own. When you get to the top of the conference, that's a big deal.

"The same with Robert Owen. We swept the IMs, which is cool, and those guys are on track. Owen Burns made the finals in everything. He's

such a fighter and has such heart. I thought those three guys really came into their own."

Tech won the bronze medal in the 800 freestyle relay after Burns, Lucas Bureau, Morgan Latimer and Michal Szuba hit the wall in an NCAA A-cut time of 6:21.48. After finishing within the "A" standard, the quartet automatically qualified for the NCAA Championships.

Yet after placing in five relays last year en route to the championship, Tech only placed in the 800 freestyle relay this time around.

"NC State is just so strong in freestyle, which also carries over to their relays," Skinner said. "Last year, when we won, we medaled in all five relays. This year, unfortunately, we only medaled in one. We really need to work on our sprinters and our sprint program, and we need to do that through recruiting and through preparation.

"The way we have done it here is through balance. We're good in diving, we're good in distance freestyle, we're good in IM, we're good

in fly, we're good in sprints ... we just weren't able to score enough points across the board in every event to counter their [the Wolfpack's] sprinting. That's how we did it last year. We just fell a little short in some areas where we have been strong."

On the final day of the competition, Jake Ores, a senior from Loveland, Colorado, won the Hokies' final medal, a silver in the 1,650 freestyle, with a school-record time of 14:57.58. It was his second career medal in this event (bronze, 2014) and his second top-five finish of the week.

"Jake was coming off a great summer, so he set himself up," Skinner said. "We knew he had what it took to have that breakthrough. He made us realize how great he is. He's someone who is going to be in the hunt to have a shot at the Olympic team [in 2016]."

At the women's competition, Arnett, a senior from Spring, Texas, was the top story, as she was named the ACC's Most Valuable Diver for the

Continued on page 30

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fourth straight time. She won the gold medal in the platform event on the final day of the meet – her sixth career gold medal – after posting a score of 295.3 points. Her six career gold medals are the most by a diver in ACC history and the most by any Virginia Tech swimmer or diver.

On the first day of the competition, Arnett captured gold in the 3-meter diving event, finishing with a final score of 369.45 points. It marked her third career medal in the event. She won gold last year as well and took silver as a sophomore in 2013.

On the second day, Arnett took the bronze medal in the 1-meter diving event, scoring 333.45 points. She only trailed first-place finisher Katrina Young of Florida State by four points.

“She’s just unflappable,” Skinner said. “She is one of the most spirited student-athletes I’ve ever coached. She’s happy. She’s calm. The bigger the moment, the looser she is. She just has it. At that extreme level, it doesn’t come along very often. We feed off her, and the swimmers, even though they do totally different things, feel the confidence that she exudes because she does it in such a mild, positive way.”

Tech’s other individual medalists included Klaudia Nazieblo, Emma Villarreal and Fiona Donnelly. Nazieblo, a freshman from Wroclaw,

Poland, won two bronze medals. She finished third in the 200-yard butterfly with a school-record time of 1:55.16 and third in the 100-yard backstroke with a school-record time of 52.53 seconds.

Villareal, a freshman from McGregor, Texas, won a bronze medal in the platform diving event with a score of 279.95 points, while Donnelly, a sophomore from Belper, England, won a bronze in the 400 IM – the first medal of her career. She broke the school record with a time of 4:08.30.

The Hokies’ 400-yard medley relay team also claimed a bronze medal. The group of Nazieblo, Weronika Paluszek, Maggie Gruber and Jessica Hespeler finished with a time of 3:34.75.

Other strong performances came from Mackenzie Stewart, a junior from Port Clinton, Ohio, who finished tied for fourth with Paluszek in the 100 breaststroke and fifth in the 200 breaststroke, and Gruber, a sophomore from Gibsonsia, Pennsylvania, who claimed seventh in the 100 butterfly.

“In particular, on both sides, we were happy with the way our underclassmen are starting to emerge,” Skinner said. “I think that bodes well for the future. They didn’t seem frazzled or nervous.


“I feel like the Hokies have a lot to look forward to in our annual quest to win one of these things – and that’s what we want to do. We want to win

ACC team championships and advance to NCAAs and get as high of a finish as we can. We felt like we swam very fast. It’s just a quick meet now. It’s as good as any meet in the country. It’s as deep as the Big Ten. It’s as fast as the SEC. We stand toe to toe with any conference in our sport. This is the big league.”

Those who qualified now gear up for the upcoming NCAA Championships. The Tech men’s team has finished in the top 20 for three consecutive years, while the women’s team has finished in the top 25 for three straight years.

The path began with the NCAA Zone A Diving Championships held March 9-11 in Buffalo, New York, after the magazine deadline. Most of Tech’s divers qualified for the event.

“They continue to be the best diving program in the conference, if not the country,” Skinner said. “They’re one of the top diving programs in the country. They’re in the top three every year at the NCAA in points scored, and Ron Piemonte is outstanding – as a person, as a Hokie and as a coach of diving.”

The women’s national competition will be the third week of March in Greensboro, North Carolina, while the men’s national competition will be the last weekend of March in Iowa City, Iowa. 

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FINDING SUCCESS IN THE U.S.

Weronika Paluszek was a dominant swimmer in her native country of Poland, and she’s continued finding success during her three years in Blacksburg with the Hokies

by **Marc Mullen**

Two days in sunny and warm Miami, Florida, is probably not the typical precursor to an international student’s first ever days in the United States, especially for one who is enrolling at Virginia Tech in January.

But that is exactly where Weronika Paluszek found herself in late 2012. The newest member of Tech’s swimming and diving team, along with Michal Szuba, a newcomer on the men’s side, arrived in Miami a couple days before the Hokies were going to begin their winter training in the Sunshine State.

The pair, whom both hail from Wroclaw, Poland, took in the sights before meeting with their teammates, doing some training and heading back to Blacksburg to finish off the 2012-13 swimming and diving season.

“I only had one bag actually because we flew directly to Miami because of the training trip,” Paluszek said. “We flew to Miami two days before to see the city, and we spent a couple nights there before the training trip.

“So I had in my bag winter clothes because it was winter in Poland and then we were going to go to Blacksburg, which is going to be cold, too. I had training things because we are on a training trip, and I’m going to need those things and I had summer clothes because we were in Miami for two weeks. That’s what was in my bag. When we got back, my mom sent me three big boxes with clothes and whatever from home, so that’s how I have my closet full right now.”

She may have come to Tech with just a single bag with clothes, but in her three seasons at Tech, she has added some ACC medals and set a couple of school records. She took home gold medals in the 200-yard breaststroke and the 400-yard medley relay and scored a bronze in the 100 breast at the 2013 ACC Championships.

A year later, she was a three-time bronze medal winner in the same three events and went on to be a two-time honorable mention All-American (100 and 200 breast) at the 2014 NCAA meet. This past season, she picked up another bronze in the medley relay and just missed out on medaling in the other two – placing fourth in both the 100 and 200 breast.

She also holds the school records in both the 100 and 200 breaststroke and set the ACC record in the 200 backstroke in 2013 before it was broken last year.

Winning, though, wasn’t new to Paluszek. In Poland, she was the national champion in the 200 breaststroke in both 2011 and 2012, and she also won the national championship in the 100 breaststroke in 2011.

Her transatlantic journey did not stop her success in the pool, but she quickly found out the differences between swimming in her home country and swimming on an American college campus.

First, for anyone who has been to the Christiansburg Aquatic Center – or any collegiate swim meet for that matter – he or she can attest that it is certainly not an individual sport.

“It is more team bonding here in the States, 100 percent for certain,” she said. “Swimming is an individual sport, but not here, because going to ACCs, it’s all about what we can do to make our team as high as possible. In Poland, I had amazing friends, who I spent more than half my life with, but it was me and my race. What I can achieve? Can I win this Polish Nationals or make the cut for the juniors or European Championships?

“That [team building] also caused how the atmosphere is here with the team. Everyone is cheering for each other, and it’s like a family. We have a really amazing program and are led by great coaches, but I think the atmosphere and how we treat each other and how we are with each other is the most important and the most impressive thing. At first, actually, it was kind of annoying when everyone was at practice yelling, ‘Let’s go.’ I’m like, ‘I know I have to swim. You don’t have to do that.’ But now, I’m one of the persons who does it all the time.”

Another struggle Paluszek had to overcome was her limited weight room experience.

“I didn’t lift at all in my life before I got here, so that is a big difference,” she said. “I am getting better. I’m not a heavy lifter, and I don’t think I ever will be. But when I came here, I had no idea what was going on in the weight room and especially since I got here in January in the middle of everything.

“The assistant coaches in the weight room, one of them was always with me and showing me everything. I had troubles with remembering which exercises were which, and on the card, I was putting the Polish translation for the names. And then, in America, you use pounds and we use kilograms, so that was another thing that caused me problems.”

Paluszek was born and raised in Wroclaw, the largest city in western Poland with a population of more than 600,000 citizens – also making it the fourth-largest city in the country. In addition, it is the third-largest educational center in Poland, with more than 135,000 students in 30 colleges.

Continued on page 34

However, at an early age, an idea was put in the back of Paluszek’s mind of going to the United States to further her education. She comes from a sports family, as her mother, Katarzyna, used to teach physical education in school and her dad, Krzysztof, used to be a soccer coach. But it was her dad’s mother, Janina, who was the swimmer.

“When I was younger, I was actually doing a lot of different sports - I did tennis, I really loved horseback riding, and I also did gymnastics. But when I got to the age of 11, I needed to pick something,” Paluszek said. “So I decided to go with swimming because I liked it, and the coaches thought that was what I was going to be good at. My parents never pushed me to it. Even when I was 11, my mother, I remember her telling me that it was my decision and I needed to decide if I wanted it or not, so I just kind of kept going from that.

“My dad always had friends in different sports because of his job, and that was always with me that maybe I would go to States for college because it’s a good opportunity and it’s easier to connect school and sport in States than it is in Poland. It was an idea when I got older, and then I decided I really don’t know what I want to do with my life, and I didn’t want to finish

swimming, so I just decided that I wanted to take a shot and try here, coming to States.”

So Paluszek, along with Szuba, who had been going to school together for almost a decade, started looking into the opportunities available to them in America, and one of the schools they were interested in was Virginia Tech

Involved in the recruiting process here in Blacksburg was Aaron Bell, the Hokies’ associate head coach. Looking back, Paluszek understands the process a little more, but originally, she didn’t know what to make of Bell’s style.

“Aaron was really into everything,” she said. “At the time, it was a little annoying because he would answer the emails in, like, a few hours all the time and asking questions. And if I didn’t answer for today, he would email me again, and now I’m laughing about it, but at the time, I was like, ‘He’s got to step back for a little bit so we can think about it.’

“But now, when I’m here and I know him, I know that was what made me want to come here. It kind of showed me that they [Tech’s coaches] really cared and they wanted us on the team. For one coach, I would send an email, and I wouldn’t get something back for like five days and that kind of showed how much people want you or don’t. So Aaron was really into it, and so we

decided that would be a good school and it was a high level swimming program.”

Ironically, the influx of these two Polish swimmers to the program has yielded a third from the same city in Poland. Freshman Klaudia Nazieblo has joined her countrymen and has already put her mark on the Tech program as well. She set a pair of records and recently took home three bronze medals from the 2015 ACC Championships.

Szuba also has enjoyed success for Tech, as he set school records in the 500, 1000 and 1650 freestyles – all have since been broken – and has earned three bronze medals at the ACC Championships as well.

And if turnabout is fair play, Paluszek is now getting the ire of her coaches and teammates.

“When we are together, we speak Polish,” Paluszek said of her Polish teammates. “And when we are around people, we speak Polish and people get mad, kind of. Ned [Skinner, Tech’s head coach] kind of gets upset a little too when we do, especially now since Klaudia is here. When I talk to her at practice, he gets mad.

“But Michal and I hung out a lot, especially when we first got here. This is totally different from where we are from so we have just gone through this journey together.”



Getting To Know
WERONIKA PALUSZEK

Q: What is the one thing you miss about Poland?

WP: “Besides family and friends, I miss the food. Yes, of course, Polish food. I can’t even find some of those products here. Just everything in America is not natural. It’s processed, and the food here just tastes different. But, of course, I miss all the traditional Polish foods. My grandma asked me like months before what I want her to make me when I get home. But it depends. I can’t really say, but I really like pierogies (think ravioli stuffed with cheese, potato filling, sauerkraut and/or ground meat) and galumpki (stuffed cabbage rolls wrapped around minced pork or beef, onions and rices).”

Q: How much has your English improved since living here?

WP: “I took English as a second language, and I also took German in primary school, but I can’t speak that at all. And, oh yes, it has improved. I didn’t realize when I came here that it was really bad. But now people talk about it all the time, about how I could barely speak English when I got here. I’m not trying to say that it’s super great, but I think it’s gotten so much better, and I feel so much better about it.”

Q: Have you picked up any American fashion styles since you’ve been here?

WP: “I would say that I did not pick it up. I see the differences. I just prefer the European style. In Poland, and generally in Europe, you wouldn’t go to college in sweatpants or flip-flops, and that’s just normal here. I’m walking to class here, and I’ll see people in class in their sweatpants and sweat socks and flip-flops. I don’t know what they just did, but they probably just woke up and just came straight to class from bed. So I don’t really do it, only really to or from practice.”


Q: What is your major, and what are your future plans?

WP: “I’m actually in public relations right now. I came here as undecided, and then I thought communications might work. I was thinking about going into law school when I was at home, but I can’t do it here because it would be so different and wouldn’t make any sense. When I’m done, I want to go back to Poland. So I was looking at journalism and the communications department, but I realized that if I do PR, I would have more options after graduation, and I can still be a journalist with a PR degree. I just thought I wanted to have as many options when I was done, and I thought that was the best for me.”

Q: What was your biggest fear coming to the United States for school?

WP: “I would say that if I had a problem, or if I was having a bad day, who was I going to talk to? Would I be able to pick up the phone and call my parents or my friends? Even with technology, I wasn’t sure. But I Skype with my parents each week, which is good, and I email friends, too. But it wasn’t too bad because the team became my second family, and I’m really glad that I picked Virginia Tech because of the people, the environment. I would never have wanted it any differently.”

Q: You have several pets, but they are back home, is that correct?

WP: “Yes, they are at home. I have two dogs, a German shepherd named Ajax and a St. Bernard named Sonia. Our cats are Barca, and she had a baby, actually two, but the one died. We kept the other and her name is Chelsea.” 

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It was a phenomenon that swept the country last summer and was known simply as the “Ice Bucket Challenge.” The phrase became synonymous with the efforts The ALS Association, as it raised the public’s awareness of the disease through social media platforms and inspired donations to the ALS Association that reached record numbers.

What a simple bucket of ice did last summer may have been on the minds of a few Boston College lacrosse players – coincidentally the Ice Bucket Challenge originated with former BC baseball player Pete Frates, who suffers from ALS – when they came up with a way to bring more awareness to relationship violence through the One Love Foundation. They used the simple process of running as a way to bring about this awareness.

Established for Yeadley Love, the University of Virginia women’s lacrosse player who wore

jersey No. 1 while playing for the Cavaliers and who was tragically killed by her ex-boyfriend just weeks before her graduation, the foundation raises awareness about domestic violence.

“Through the One Love Foundation, Sharon Love, Yeadley’s mother, has been going to different universities and even high schools just talking about the One Love Foundation and domestic violence, relationship violence and prevention,” said Kim Kolarik, current Virginia Tech assistant women’s lacrosse coach and a first-year player with the Cavaliers during Love’s fourth year. “So Boston College had her come speak to its lacrosse team, and it was very inspirational for them.

“One of the girls that plays at Boston College, Covie Stanwick, is really good friends with a bunch of the girls on the UVa women’s team. Also, her brother, Steele Stanwick, played on the men’s lacrosse team at UVa, and he was really good

friends with Yeadley. It was through Sharon speaking and the Stanwicks’ connection to UVa that got this started.

“They had this great idea, doing a ‘Yards for Yeadley’ campaign, and they contacted UVa, and the two of them started it. They were just promoting it through social media, and it spread like wildfire throughout lacrosse websites and teams’ Instagrams and Facebook accounts.”

“Yards for Yeadley,” or known on social media as “#yards4years,” challenged teams to run collectively a million yards over a one-month period in honor of the former lacrosse player. The initiative helped bring teams closer together by training for a purpose, and also, the almost 570 miles ran by each team helped bring awareness to a problem that affects 1 in 5 college females, according to studies conducted by the U.S. Justice Department.

According to an ESPNW.com article written on the campaign, there were more than 150 teams that participated, including the Virginia Tech women’s lacrosse team. Those teams also included high school teams, college teams across all divisions and even some men’s programs.

“I actually saw it on some of my former teammates’ Instagram accounts, and I started chatting with them, and I was like, ‘What’s this about?’” Kolarik said. “And it was just really important for me because you could never stop spreading the word about relationship violence. It’s always going to be there, and people don’t actually realize some of the signs and everything that goes into it.

“And especially with a team like ours because we have 33 girls on the team, and you never know what could be going on with your team, especially if you are a coach. You are not there 24/7. It was really important for me to spread this here at Virginia Tech because Virginia Tech, as a school, has been through so much in other aspects of violence. So to help join this cause was important to me.”

Kolarik said she first reached out to the seniors on the team and asked them if they would be on board with this and asked them if it was something they wanted to do. Without hesitation, they jumped right on it.

The women were responsible for tracking their own yards, and each week, would send their

numbers to Kolarik, who would compile them. The team ended up going beyond the million-yard mark, pushing past 1.3 million yards.

“The lacrosse community is so small. Everyone knows someone, somewhere, and now with social media, everyone was putting it up there and using the hashtag ‘#yards4years,’” Kolarik said. “You could just click on the hashtag and just see all the images out there – all the people, the teams, and everyone just posting pictures to spread the word.”

Tech’s players participated over winter break, and the distance ran came to about 18 miles per player. Almost tripling that number for the Hokies was freshman Tristan McGinley, who ran 96,290 yards by herself over the break in her hometown of Moorestown, New Jersey.

She logged most of her miles on the treadmill or running around an indoor track.

“It was just so easy to me because I wasn’t really running for myself,” she said. “If I was thinking about having to run for myself, then I really wouldn’t want to do it. But this, I was running for a cause and to reach a team goal and bring awareness for Yeadley and her foundation. It just made it so much easier because I’m not running for myself.

“But it was so cool. The whole lacrosse community has a love for lacrosse, and that’s why we’re playing it. But it was really cool how it wasn’t just our team doing it because we have Kim. Or it


just wasn’t a UVa thing. It was a whole lacrosse-wide community thing. We all had this goal, and we didn’t want it for us. We wanted it for her [Love], and we wanted it for the One Love Foundation. But it was cool how we all got to the goal as a team.”

During the holiday break, Tech lacrosse staff was posting pictures of its players running in all sorts of locations on its Instagram page (VT_Lax), with its updated total. There were images of girls on the beach, in the snow, on the turf and on the treadmills, all in an effort to reach a goal and to raise awareness.

“It was cool to see, because it showed that, even though we were all in different parts of the country, we were still working hard to reach the goal,” McGinley said.

This May will mark the five-year anniversary of the tragedy that rocked the UVa lacrosse community, and for Kolarik, it certainly doesn’t seem like that long ago.


“I wear the One Love bracelet on my wrist, and so, she’s always with me, and I’m always thinking about her,” she said. “It really doesn’t seem like it was five years ago. It seems like I was just out there on the lacrosse field playing with her.

“But the takeaway from this is that I hope people just keep supporting the One Love Foundation and its mission to spread awareness of relationship violence. And I hope that people keep celebrating Yeadley Love’s life.” 

Dedicating YARDS for YEARDLEY

The Tech lacrosse team ran more than 1.3 million yards over winter break for the “Yards for Yeadley” initiative, which brings awareness to relationship violence as a way of honoring former Virginia lacrosse player Yeadley Love, who was killed by an ex-boyfriend five years ago

by Marc Mullen




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ACC CHAMPS AGAIN

The Virginia Tech men's track and field team got some clutch performances on the final day and won the program's fifth ACC team crown, including its third indoor title by Jimmy Robertson

While watching his athletes in competition, Dave Cianelli likes to find a remote spot at the venue, preferring to observe in solace and to live out his angst at a distance.

Following his men's team's performance at the 2015 ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships on Feb. 26-28, Cianelli – the director of Tech's track and field and cross country programs – came out of his hiding place, and the normally stoic coach displayed another side, donning a Hokie Bird hat and wearing a smile.

Victors get away with such shenanigans.

Dominating the pole vault competition and getting clutch performances from the middle distance runners and jumper Manuel Ziegler, the Virginia Tech men's track and field squad captured its third ACC indoor title. The Hokies – who finished in fifth place last season at the league's indoor meet – amassed 101 points, besting second-place Florida State by 14.5 points.

The team title marked the school's 20th since joining the ACC for the 2004-05 season and the second this month – wrestling won the league's regular-season dual meet title two weeks prior. Of those 20, nine are by the track and field programs, including five by the men.

“A championship like this doesn't happen by accident,” Cianelli said, only moments before getting a shower courtesy of a couple of his athletes. “It takes a lot of preparation and a lot of thought in building a team that can go into a meet and have a chance to win. You have to go back a year with a recruiting class and the kids on the team that have come so far within a year.

“When I see this, it's a 12-month process. You go in and you let them go. You let them compete, and at the end of the day, you see how it ends up. The way we competed, even if we had finished second, I couldn't have asked for any more. It's very gratifying to see it all come together.”

Tech relied on its pole vaulters, who accounted for nearly a fourth of the Hokies' scoring. Five Tech vaulters scored a total of 25 points, with Chris Uhle leading the way. Uhle claimed a gold medal with a vault of 18 feet, 1.25 inches (5.52 meters).

Tech's Jared Allison finished third, while Brad Johnson came in fourth and James Steck in sixth. Jeffrey Linta claimed eighth place. The top eight finishers in each event score points.

Even more amazing, Tech competed without vaulter Torben Laidig, who won the event last

year. Laidig has missed the indoor season with an injury.

“They've had a really solid season, and I just needed them to perform one more time like they have all season,” pole vault coach Bob Phillips said. “They did that in spades. They came back and jumped really well under a lot of pressure. I was extremely proud of all those guys. It hurt to have Torben out – he was last year's champion in this event – but the other guys really stepped in and filled the void.”

Uhle proved to be the one to beat in the pole vault from his first jump. After passing on the first height, Uhle hit six straight heights on his first attempts. Georgia Tech's Nikita Kirilov stayed even with Uhle until he was forced to leave the competition due to an ankle injury. Uhle's mark matched his career best.

“This is my senior year, and this is what I've been training for for four years,” Uhle said. “To finally have that medal in my hand, it just feels great. Being able to replicate my personal best is just phenomenal.”

Tech's middle distance crew also came up big. Patrick Joseph started the day by winning the mile race, with Neil Gourley finishing third. It

looked as if Duke's Nate McClafferty was going to claim the title with two laps remaining, but on the final lap, Joseph used a tremendous kick to surge ahead of McClafferty and claim the win with a time of 4 minutes, 1.57 seconds. Gourley earned his bronze in a time of 4:03.25, earning Tech a total of 16 points in the event.

The best performance, though, came in the 3,000. With the team race tightening, the Hokies needed strong performances from Thomas Curtin and Darren Barlow, and both came through in a big way.

Curtin, a senior from Leesburg, Virginia, led nearly the entire race, but got passed on the final lap by Syracuse's Martin Hehir, the winner of the 5,000-meter race the previous day. But moments later, Curtin

passed Hehir and held on for the win.

Curtin's time of 7:52.92 was an ACC Championship record.

“I had gone a little easier through some of the earlier laps,” Curtin said. “I knew he was there, but I was just biding my time. I knew if I got him

on the last lap, I'd be able to hold him off. I have a good kick, so I was pretty confident I could get him.”

Barlow finished in fourth place, and the 15 points all but clinched the team title for the Hokies. Middle distance runners such as Stuart Robertson, who finished second behind Hehir in the 5,000; Grant Pollock, who was sixth in the 800-meter race, and the distance medley relay team of Curtin, Vincent Ciattei, Martin Dally and Kevin De Willie, which finished third, all contributed points for the Hokies.

“I'm in awe of their composure,” distance coach Ben Thomas said. “To be able to come into this type of pressure cooker and perform on day 1 and day 2, it's a special group. They're super kids. I couldn't ask for better efforts. If they died, they died going for what we needed to do as a team. You can't ask for more than that as a coach.”

Shortly before Curtin's run to first, Ziegler, a senior from Dresden, Germany, gave the Hokies 10 points with a first-place finish in the triple jump – and also set the ACC and school record. He and Louisville's Ben Williams went head-to-head earlier this season at the Doc Hale Virginia Tech Elite Meet that ended with Williams winning the

event. But Ziegler was able to outjump Williams when it mattered most.

Ziegler's second jump of 54 feet, 1 inch (16.48 meters) was enough to win the competition and claim the school record, but he outdid himself on his fifth jump by hitting a mark of 54 feet, 6 inches (16.61 meters) to break the school and ACC record.

“All that counted was the title,” Ziegler said. “I didn't care about the distance.”

Tech also got points from J.C. Coleman, as the football player decided to try track this winter and ended up finishing fifth in the 60-meter dash. Marek Barta claimed seventh in the shot put, Tomas Kruzliak was seventh in the weight throw, and the 4x400-meter relay team of Prince Owusu, Martin Dally, Chester Hebden and Dante Price finished seventh.

“With the additional teams that have come into the conference, the points have gotten spread out more,” Cianelli said. “It doesn't take quite as much as it used to [to win]. Looking at it, I thought we had a shot, but just like two years ago, I knew we'd

have to have an outstanding meet. It would take as close to a perfect meet as you could get.

“Performances like J.C. Coleman in the 60 and Marek Barta in the shot, those were unexpected.

Continued on page 40



Dave Cianelli, the director of track and field and cross country at Tech, received a shower after his men's team won the ACC title.

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Hanna Green finished second in the 800 at the ACC meet a year ago, but won a gold medal this time, edging Clemson's Natoya Goule at the finish line.

win. On the final straightaway, Green used a powerful kick to edge Clemson's Natoya Goule – who had the nation's best time – by 14 hundredths of a second. Her time of 2:03.43 was an event and school record. Amanda Smith finished fourth for the Hokies.

Sarah Rapp added eight points to the team total when she finished in second in the 3,000 with a time of 9:12.86. Paige Kwartunas claimed fourth in the same event.

Shannon Morton finished fourth in the women's mile with a time of 4:43.48, and the women's distance medley relay finished fifth. The team of Katie

Those aren't the ones that grab the headlines, but those are the ones that make a huge difference in a meet that's close like this."


On the women's side, the Hokies finished in eighth place as a team with 44.5 points. Clemson won the team title with 102 points, followed by Florida State (81) and Notre Dame (74).

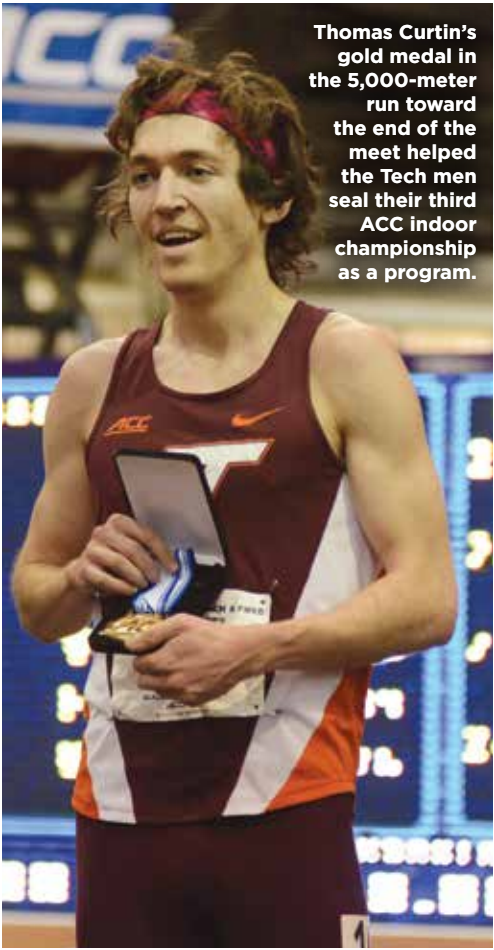
The Hokies' lone victory on the women's side came from Hanna Green, who stormed from behind on the final lap of the 800-meter race to

Kennedy, Nora McKiver, Shalonda Mitchell and Katarina Smiljanec posted a time of 11:22.81.

Shortly after receiving his dousing, Cianelli addressed his athletes, telling them to spend the weekend enjoying what they accomplished before starting to prepare for the NCAA's indoor meet (for those who qualified).

When asked what his celebratory plans included, Cianelli wasted no time in responding.

"Sleep," he said. 




Thomas Curtin's gold medal in the 5,000-meter run toward the end of the meet helped the Tech men seal their third ACC indoor championship as a program.

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Carmen Farmer
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the Hokies,
and now
the lawyer
is making
a name for
herself in
rugby

by
Jimmy
Robertson

After a few years spent going to law school and several years spent practicing law in various capacities along Maryland's Eastern Shore, former Tech softball player Carmen Farmer found herself looking for some way to scratch a competitive itch.

Once a lanky, slick-fielding shortstop for the Hokies more than a decade ago, she tried running, participating in a few half marathons and

grinding out a few triathlons. But she missed the camaraderie associated with a team, so she took a rather extreme approach to remedy that.

She took on the sport of rugby – and has become well known among those who run in that circle.

The spark for rugby was lit in 2012 while in Tanzania with some law school friends who had decided to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. The

seven-day trek to the summit afforded lots of conversation time, which led to the topic of rugby.

“One of the friends on the trip is from Australia,” Farmer said. “And one of the things that got brought up was rugby. I had been trying to find some things to do to stay in shape. I had gotten into triathlons a little bit and half marathons and some of that stuff, but I missed the team environment.

“She mentioned something about rugby, and I didn’t know anything about it. I got to talking to her, and when I got home, I Googled rugby in the area, and the closest team was in Annapolis. It was a club team. The next week, I went to a practice, and it sort of took off from there.”

Farmer admitted that she knew practically nothing about the sport, which, in the simplest terms, is a form of football. There are two forms of rugby – sevens (made up of seven players on each side) and 15s. She went to a Barnes & Noble after she got back from Africa and bought a book entitled “Rugby for Dummies” to sharpen her knowledge of the sport.

As she learned more and practiced more with her club team, the Severn River Women’s Rugby Club, in Annapolis, she became intrigued – and then passionate – about her newfound hobby.

“There was that team culture, which rugby has a distinctive culture surrounding the team and the opposing team,” Farmer said, citing one of the reasons why she likes the sport. “Any time you host a team, you end up providing dinner and drinks to them no matter what, which I thought was interesting.

“Then just the athleticism. I played a lot of sports growing up, and this was one where I could take aspects from each one of those. It was a new challenge. I had never played a contact sport, and I found that interesting and intriguing.

“Also, I liked the strategy. You’re not just out there running into each other. There’s a lot of strategy that goes into it. As I’ve moved up the levels of playing it, it [the strategy] became more and more apparent, and I started to appreciate the nuances.”

Farmer’s club team made it to the 2012 Women’s Division II Club National Championship held in Fort Myers, Florida. Her team lost 8-0 in the championship game, but while there, she caught the eye of a coach for the U.S. national squad.

He handed her his business card.

“I laughed,” Farmer said. “I think I was 31 [years old] at the time and working full time. I think his words to me were something to the effect of, ‘What are your goals for your rugby career?’ and I remember giggling. The concept of a rugby career never crossed my mind.”

Farmer ended up participating in a series of different tryout camps. Roughly 60 players were vying for 26 spots at the beginning of the summer in 2013, and she ultimately earned a spot on

the national team and participated in the 2014 World Cup held last August in Paris, France. The Americans did not place in the event.

Her participation, though, came with a price.

“I fractured my thumb when I was out there,” she said. “I got a taste of the French medical system, which was interesting.”

Rugby sevens will be an Olympic sport for the first time when qualified teams head to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the 2016 Summer Olympics. Farmer could be a candidate for the team, though she is primarily a 15s player.

“I’m a far stretch for that,” she said of the Olympic team. “I’ll be 35 when that rolls around, so probably not.

“I’ve been out [to Colorado at the U.S. Olympic Training Center] and worked out with the Olympic team. They have a base of players that they’re working with, and they just got back from a tournament in Brazil. I haven’t been picked up. It’s [the Olympics] in the sevens form, not 15, and I’m primarily a 15 player. I do play some sevens, but I’m an outside shot for that [the Olympic team]. But on the 15 side, we do have a World Cup in 2017, and that’s loosely on my radar.”

Farmer would like to continue playing, but she also wants to be fair to her day job. She currently works for a small land trust on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, while living in Cambridge, Maryland. The non-profit organization works to protect

rural lands and redevelop existing buildings and infrastructure within towns.

Her work with the non-profit organization allows her some flexibility in terms of scheduling – something she wouldn’t have in private practice. She usually takes vacation days when participating in rugby camps, or a leave of absence, which is what she did to participate in the World Cup last summer.

Farmer hasn’t played since then.

“I took some time off,” she said. “It really is a huge commitment, and you have to juggle that with a full-time job, which most of the athletes do for obvious reasons. Our World Cup team last year had an age range from 19 or 20 up to 36. So it’s quite a spectrum of young women at different places in their lives. So the kids in college, this is a grand adventure, and for some of us, we’re checking in at home to make sure things aren’t falling apart with work and your other obligations.”

Farmer is married, but has no children. She usually gets back to Blacksburg once or twice a year for a football game or a softball game, and she came back this past fall to watch the Hokies play Boston College. That marked her first trip back in a couple of years.

Farmer often went to Tech softball games when the Hokies visited College Park to play Maryland. But the Terrapins’ move to the Big Ten eliminated that series.

“I was disappointed to see Maryland leave the ACC,” Farmer said. “I’d usually go to the games when they [the Hokies] came up to College Park. That still doesn’t seem right for them to be playing Big Ten teams.”

Farmer plans on coming to Blacksburg later this spring for a softball reunion, which offers the opportunity to catch up with some of her old teammates. On one of her previous visits to Blacksburg, she snuck onto the softball field at night and walked around, reliving old times.

“I do miss it,” she said. “A couple of years ago, I snuck out on the field at night and just wondered around and reminisced. I do miss it. I miss being on those teams because you go through a lot together.

“I had an opportunity to play in Italy [professionally] one summer with Shanel Garofalo, but I ended up not doing it because I had a summer internship with a law firm. When I graduated, I said I would never play again. I didn’t have any opportunities to play in the States professionally, and I was really focusing on going to law school and moving on to the next chapter in my life. I haven’t played competitively since.”

She certainly found a unique way to fulfill her competitive desires. Rugby has afforded her many opportunities, from being part of a team to playing a sport to traveling all over the world.

For sure, she’s enjoyed postgraduate success – on and off the field. 

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Jim Thompson knew something was amiss.

Virginia Tech's longtime men's tennis coach had watched Sebastien Jacques destroy opponents from his No. 6 spot in the lineup for three years, but during the 2010-11 season, he witnessed a completely different player, one who struggled to beat, and often lost to, the most mediocre of opposition.

"I thought it was motivation ... his senior year, he doesn't care as much any more, he's going to play No. 6 again probably," Thompson said. "I kept thinking, 'Man, c'mon, just try.'"

As it turned out, Jacques was trying. His body, though, refused to cooperate.

After conducting a series of tests, both here in the United States and in his home country of Canada, doctors finally located the problem for the former Tech tennis player, who graduated in 2011 with a degree in marketing and returned to his home of Magog in the province of Quebec. They found a pineal cystic tumor on his brain, and that was creating pressure within his head, leaving him feeling fatigued and taking away his concentration and focus.

That diagnosis, however, only marked the first step of what turned out to be a four-year odyssey.

Doctors in Canada refused to operate to remove the cyst. They deemed a procedure too risky, and they weren't totally sold on a removal being the panacea of the problems. That left Jacques searching for other options.

Continued on page 46



**HOKIE
NATION**

*does its part
to help former
Tech tennis player
in need*

by Jimmy Robertson

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“In Canada, they don’t have enough experience with how to remove the cyst,” Thompson said. “But in the U.S., there are maybe six to 10 doctors who do a lot of these surgeries and get good results, and almost all the patients present these same type of symptoms and problems that Seb has had.

“He got to the point where he needed to try and get it removed because he had no quality of life. He couldn’t have worked a job because the energy level wasn’t there to do it. He was just lying around most of the day.”

Jacques, 26, went online to seek help, and in 2013, he found a surgeon in Santa Monica, California, named Dr. Daniel Kelly, who performs these types of surgeries annually. But then came the next problem – how to pay for it? The surgery costs more than \$80,000.

He tried to go through the governmental process in Canada – the Canadian government runs the healthcare system – but that yielded nothing, as doctors refused to sign off on the risky procedure. That left Jacques in a situation where he needed to raise the money on his own.

Jacques established a profile page on YouCaring.com, a free website that allows people in need to raise money. He shared it on his social media platforms (e.g. Facebook), and the tennis community responded.

So, too, did Hokie Nation. A story about his

journey appeared in The Roanoke Times on Jan. 26, and not long thereafter, Jacques raised the \$80,000 he needed.

“Tennis Canada helped him a little. Three guys really helped him a lot, and then he raised the additional himself,” Thompson said. “It was awesome to see the people who didn’t know him or didn’t know much about him who gave to it. It was like, ‘Hey, you’re a Hokie. You’re part of our family.’ It was awesome to see that. I thought he was going to struggle to raise it and we would have to help him with that, but he was able to raise it pretty quickly.”

Jacques and his parents flew out to California, and Dr. Kelly performed the surgery, which took more than three hours, at the Providence Saint John’s Health Center on Feb. 12. He was scheduled to be there for three weeks and hoped to be home in mid-March.

“He has to heal from the surgery, but two little things that he’s said so far is that he was always chewing gum because he had this metallic taste in his mouth. He said the day after the surgery that he didn’t have that taste any more,” Thompson said. “That was a good sign. He also thought he had better strength in his hands already.”

Thompson flew to California the day before Jacques’ surgery to be with him and his parents. He spent the better part of two days there before taking a red-eye flight back to Virginia.

“It was important for me to be out there for his family and for him and our relationship,” Thompson said. “We have a great relationship. It meant a lot to go and be there with him. I knew it wasn’t going to be easy for him.”


Jacques’ doctors have forbidden the use of any electronic devices, citing complete rest as the best thing for his brain. But Thompson gets text updates from Jacques’ parents, and Jacques already is up and walking around.

Doctors remain optimistic about a full recovery for Jacques, according to Thompson.

“Hopefully he has the ability to go out and pursue whatever he wants to pursue,” Thompson said. “He was a very bright student here, and he’s going to have options in the business world. If he heals enough and wants to teach tennis, he’ll have options there as well.

“It’ll be fun for me to see what he decides to do. It won’t surprise me if he decides to help other people. He’s already brought attention that healthcare in Canada wasn’t able to do this, so I think he could become a spokesman for that in some type of way.

“This was a four-year process for him. That’s a lot of your life.”

Now, thanks to an American doctor, the American health care system and the generous support of so many, Jacques has many more years to spread his message. 

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