

inside

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HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication
of Virginia Tech Athletics

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

VT

2015-16

THOMAS CURTIN

is *Inside HOKIESPORTS'*
ATHLETE OF THE YEAR
after winning three
ACC gold medals
and earning three
All-America honors
in track and field
and cross country



WHAT'S INSIDE:
FRANK BEAMER
keeping busy
since retiring
in January



page 38

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inside HOKIESPORTS

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contents

Hokie Club News | 2

News & Notes | 8
Changes announced for Inside Hokie Sports

From the Editor's Desk | 9
Monteiro's great NCAA run leaves him contemplating
pro future

Behind the Mic — Jon Laaser | 10
After a busy first year, Tech's Voice wants to get back
in shape

Compliance | 12

NCAA Track and Championships | 14
Eight earn All-America honors, including seven men

Top 10 of 2015-16 | 16
Beamer going out a winner tops the list

Athlete of the Year | 18
Thomas Curtin's dominance as a runner led to him
being the magazine's Athlete of the Year

2015-16 Sport-by-Sport Athletes of the Year | 20
A breakdown of each individual sport's Athlete
of the Year

IHS Extra — Beamer Q&A | 38
Former Tech football coach has been busy since
hanging up his whistle after the bowl game

IHS Extra — Tech hires new lacrosse coach | 40
John Sung comes to Blacksburg from Winthrop

IHS Extra — Owens talks trip to Thailand | 42
Volleyball standout uses trip to gain experience
for future career working on exotic animals



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HOKIES' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2015-16

The following two pages have been dedicated to the Hokies' great showing academically for 2015-16, which can be attributed to their hard work, to the dedication of the coaching staffs and the Student-Athlete Academic Support Services office, and to the contributions of donors, who give the athletics department the resources needed to help these student-athletes be successful in all phases. (Disclaimer: most academic honors for spring sports have not been announced yet.)

SKELTON AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN ATHLETICS

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

Lindsey Owens, volleyball
Kevin Cianfarini, track and field and cross country



NCAA POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

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

Ashley Meier, women's soccer



CAPITAL ONE ACADEMIC ALL-DISTRICT III SELECTIONS

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

Jordan Coburn, women's soccer
Ashley Meier, women's soccer



NCAA PUBLIC RECOGNITION AWARDS

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

Men's golf

WEAVER-JAMES-CORRIGAN AWARD

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

Carol Kahoun, women's tennis
Kylie McGoldrick, softball
Ashley Meier, women's soccer



ACC SCHOLAR ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

(The ACC Scholar-Athlete of the Year awards were established in September of 2007 to be awarded annually to the top junior or senior student-athlete in his/her respective sports. Candidates for the awards must have maintained a 3.0 grade-point average for their careers, as well as a 3.0 for each of the last two semesters.)



Brandon Fiala, men's swimming and diving

ALL-ACC ACADEMIC TEAMS

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

BASKETBALL
Men
Jalen Hudson
Devin Wilson
Women
Vanessa Panousis
Regan Magarity

Darren Barlow
Daniel Jaskowak
Brent Musselman
Women
Lauren Berman
Katie Kennedy
Abigail Motley

Augie Conte
Brandon Facyson
Eric Gallo
MEN'S SOCCER
Daniel Lauretano
WOMEN'S SOCCER
Jordan Coburn
Ashley Meier
Murielle Tiernan

SWIMMING AND DIVING
Men
Brandon Fiala
Ben Schiesl
Zach Switzer
Logan Stevens
Michal Szuba
Women
Jessica Hespeler

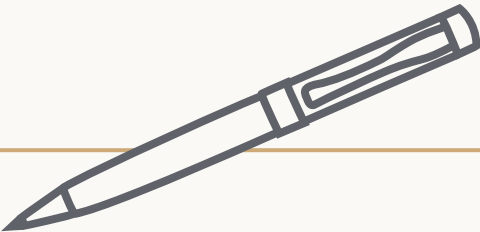
Maggie Gruber
Weronika Paluszek
INDOOR TRACK AND FIELD
Men
Jared Bane
Darren Barlow
Vincent Ciattei
Thomas Curtin

Daniel Jaskowak
Torben Laidig
James Steck
Women
Hanna Green
Erica Hjerpe
WRESTLING
Solomon Chishko
Jared Haught

David McFadden
Zack Zavatsky
VOLLEYBALL
Lindsey Owens
Rhegan Mitchell

CROSS COUNTRY
Men
Thomas Curtin

FOOTBALL
Chuck Clark



INSIDE THE NUMBERS

59 percent of student-athletes earned a 3.0 GPA or better this spring

53 percent of student-athletes maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better

171 student-athletes made the Dean's List (3.4 GPA or better) this spring

21 student-athletes earned a 4.0 this spring

4 student-athletes maintain a cumulative GPA of 4.0

The average team GPA for this spring was **3.14**
The average cumulative team GPA is **3.09**

15 teams achieved a 3.0 GPA or better this spring

15 teams maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better





TECH STUDENT-ATHLETES KNOW THE VALUE OF THEIR SCHOLARSHIPS— AND APPRECIATE THE ONES PROVIDING THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THOSE

by Jimmy Robertson

Ken Ekanem is set to go into the fall as a starter at one of the defensive end spots for the Virginia Tech football team. He already has been a two-year starter, with nearly 100 career tackles, including 24 for a loss, and 14 career sacks. He already has earned All-ACC honors once in his career and he will receive his degree in management, with a concentration in entrepreneurship, innovation and technology management, this May.

Hokie Nation helped him do all those things. Donors to the Hokie Club's Annual Fund—the account that pays for the tuition, fees, and room and board for all of the school's 479 scholarship athletes—has provided Ekanem's scholarship. Others contributed to capital campaigns designed to help pay for the facilities that house the services that he has used to become a quality student and athlete. Some participated in the 110% HOKIE Campaign to help pay for his "cost of attendance," which provides student-athletes with a little extra money to cover personal expenses.

And arguably no student-athlete at Virginia Tech has taken more advantage of his scholarship and other opportunities than Ekanem. He will gladly tell you so.

"I'm very appreciative," he said. "I don't pay room and board. All of that is covered. It's a lot less stress on my family and me. I have all the books I need. I have all the tools I need to succeed in school and on the field. Everything is right here for me."

Ekanem tore the ACL in his knee while playing in the state championship game his senior season at Centreville High School in Northern Virginia. Some schools backed off, but not Virginia Tech. Two days after the injury occurred, Tech assistant coaches Bud Foster and Charley Wiles traveled to Ekanem's home to insure the scholarship offer remained intact.

Ekanem signed a letter-of-intent with Tech, but he needed more than a scholarship to become the player and person whom he wanted to become. He needed Tech's sports medicine an strength and condition staffs to help him overcome his injury. He needed the Hokies' nutrition staff, as he gained weight because he couldn't work out and the nutrition staff helped him lose 15 pounds. He needed the help of the Student-Athlete Academic Support Services staff to keep him on track academically while he took a redshirt season once he arrived at Tech.

"Tutoring was big for me," he admitted. "My freshman and sophomore years, I was taking some science classes and I don't like science. They [the SAASS staff] set me up with some tutors and that helped me. I got my schedule right and got my work ethic right. I was a decent student in high school, but you can't be a decent student and succeed at Tech. So they really helped me develop into a better student."

The end result is that Virginia Tech donors have helped Ekanem be who and what he wanted to be. What they wanted him to be. What they want all student-athletes at Virginia Tech to be.

Yet the price of continuing to do that keeps rising. The athletics department is a self-supporting auxiliary of the university and thus receives no state funding. It operates solely on donations and revenue

from ticket sales, advertising contracts, and apparel contracts. Each tuition hike by the university forces department officials to ask for even more contributions to the Hokie Club's Annual Fund to cover the scholarship investments in its student-athletes.

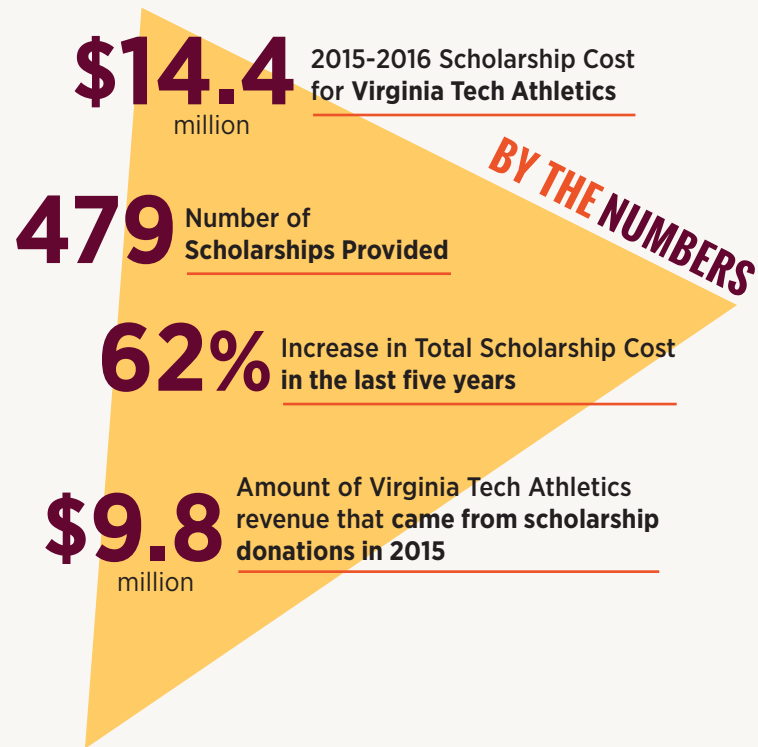
In the past five years, that price tag has increased by 62 percent. The athletics department is expected to spend approximately \$14.4 million on scholarships for the 2015-16 academic year. However, scholarship donations for 2015 came in at \$9.8 million, which has resulted in a significant shortfall, even when combined with funds from scholarship endowments.

The final dollar figures for all ACC schools' annual fund contributions for 2015 were not available, but in 2014, Tech's annual fund contributions ranked 11th out of 13 ACC schools' annual fund contributions (Notre Dame's and Boston College's numbers are not made public).

Beginning in 2017, football and men's basketball season ticket holders seated in designated "scholarship sections" throughout Lane Stadium and Cassell Coliseum will be asked to contribute a minimum per-seat scholarship gift each year to secure a priority location for season tickets for football and/or men's basketball. Gift amounts will vary based on location within the stadium/coliseum.

The Hokie Club also is introducing a new and easier to understand priority point program and annual giving benefits chart that will present donors with additional benefits based upon their giving level, including (but not limited to) parking, exclusive event invitations, and the ability to purchase postseason tickets.

The Hokie Scholarship Fund program will officially launch in 2017. All donors who wish to be eligible for annual benefits are asked to



make their gift to the Hokie Scholarship Fund by the March 31, 2017 giving deadline. Donors then will be ranked based upon their priority points for a complete reseating of Lane Stadium, which will occur in May of 2017. All donors who wish to be eligible for benefits related only to men's basketball will be asked to make their gift by June 30, 2017, for a complete reseating of Cassell Coliseum.

Tech fans should never discount how much their donations mean to student-athletes. They don't need Babcock or Bill Lansden, senior associate AD of development and the executive director of the Hokie Club, to tell them. They need only to listen to the student-athletes themselves or read their comments. They are the ones telling them.

Like football player Sam Rogers. "I have a friend who is not a player and he's paying all this money," Rogers said. "Here I am, I don't have to worry about computers or books or any of that. As you get older, you have an appreciation for it. I had an appreciation because I came here as a walk-on, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't appreciate it more now because I understand what it means and what other people have to do."

Or women's basketball player Taijah Campbell. "I never imagined that someone like me, coming from where I came from, would be here on scholarship," she said. "I get super emotional thinking of how grateful I am, and I never thought I would have this opportunity. That there are people who would do this for people who come from many different backgrounds is amazing."

Pretty much any student-athlete at Virginia Tech will reiterate the exact same thing. They love Virginia Tech, they love the opportunities that they receive, and they're appreciative of the ones who provide those.

Going forward, athletics department officials want to continue providing those opportunities. They know that the need for additional revenue from donors to support scholarships is real. They readily admit that.

But they also know this—the impact of that revenue is immeasurable.

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VIRGINIA TECH FOOTBALL
STUDENT-ATHLETE

KEN
EKANEM

Year	Redshirt Senior
Major	Management
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Cost of Attendance Gap	\$3,411
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*Reflects projected 2016-2017 scholarship costs and additional expenses.



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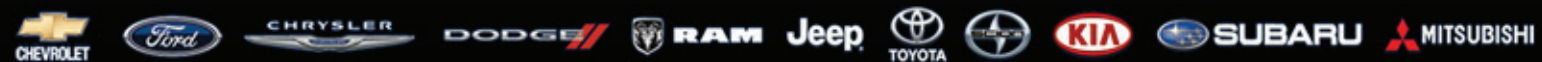
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Changes planned for Inside Hokie Sports

Since 1985, the Virginia Tech Athletics Department has produced an official departmental publication, beginning with the Hokie Huddler and continuing to the current Inside Hokie Sports magazine. The format, the design, and the goals of the publication keep evolving in an ever-changing landscape of how consumers receive their news content. With that in mind, the athletics department is announcing changes to the publication starting with the 2016-17 academic year. Plans call for the publication to remain a 48-page, full-color magazine, with the goal of providing content on all 22 of the Hokies' varsity sports. Some of the content will be familiar to readers — columns from Jimmy Robertson and Jon Laaser, Hokie Club news, in-depth features on student-athletes, features on former Tech athletes (e.g. "Where Are They Now?"), and season previews — while other forms of new content will be the direct result of football and basketball season ticket holder comments in past years. Subscribers will receive a full color printed edition of Inside Hokie Sports six times per year, as will Hokie Club members as a benefit of their membership. With the number of issues of the magazine reduced from 11 issues to six, the staff plans to stagger these issues throughout the academic year, with the first one—the annual football preview—coming out in early August and the final issue, a wrap-up issue of the year, coming out in mid-June. The staff also will make an enhanced online version of each issue available on the athletics department's website, hokiesports.com, for free. Once printed copies are received, the magazine will be posted on hokiesports.com for all to enjoy and share. Those who currently

subscribe to the online version may contact the Inside Hokie Sports staff to receive a prorated refund for issues beginning in August. The online version will be packaged in an easy-to-use, interactive format using FlippingBook software. This format allows the staff to incorporate videos, photo galleries, an ability to enlarge photos, insert active links, an ability to download and to print the magazine, and more. Readers also can click on the ads and be taken directly to an advertiser's home page for those interested in that particular product. The impetus behind the changes were multiple. First, this increases the staff's ability to provide more free content on hokiesports.com throughout the year. The strategy calls for more written features that also incorporate video elements. Second, it brings the magazine more in line with how today's generation gets its news (e.g., digitally), while also keeping the printed publication intact for those who prefer that format. Finally, the posting of the magazine on hokiesports.com allows the department to use its social media platforms to promote to audiences who receive the majority of their information via social media. Rest assured, Hokie Club members will continue to receive the print version of the magazine, along with an improved online multimedia version. Also, those not in the Hokie Club may purchase a subscription to the print version for \$37.95—the same price as in previous years—though the department encourages those people to join the Hokie Club as well to support student-athletes as they compete and prepare themselves for the future. Those who have questions, comments, or concerns are more than welcome to contact Jimmy Robertson at jrob@vt.edu. VT



editor's desk | *by Jimmy Robertson*

Monteiro concludes great career – and now faces big decision

Most people make their summer plans in late winter or early spring. Working professionals schedule vacations, college graduates decide on start dates for their employers ... everyone makes plans for the best three-plus months of the year. Joao Monteiro is no exception. Or so he thought. Most of Hokie Nation isn't familiar with Monteiro, as most of them start focusing on the football team this time of year. This column, though, is taking a different route, spotlighting an engaging young man and Tech tennis superstar who deserves attention. To borrow a phrase from Star Trek, Monteiro boldly went where no Tech men's tennis player had gone before, advancing to the final four at the NCAA Men's Tennis Singles Championships held in Tulsa, Oklahoma in May. He served and volleyed his way past four nationally ranked opponents in doing so, including the defending national champion. Monteiro's career ended with a three-set loss to a young man from UCLA who went on to win the national championship. He became just the third All-American in the history of Tech's program—a fitting end for the Portugal native who came across the ocean, learned a new culture, and developed into one of the school's all-time best. "When I came here, I didn't know what college sports was about," Monteiro said. "I thought it would be chill and not much

work. But I come here and there is a lot of passion about it [sports] and I had really good coaching. I just improved so much over three and a half years. I went from not playing in the lineup to playing at the top of the lineup and having success. "When you're in a small town, you feel so much more appreciated than when you are in a big town. A lot of people know you and congratulate you. They're proud to be around you because they know you work a lot." Before the tournament, Monteiro had his future mapped. Most athletes harbor aspirations of playing professionally, but not Monteiro. He locked in employment with a company in Virginia Beach, with plans to put his degree in economics to good use. He felt grateful for the opportunity, knowing that sluggish economies abroad would make for difficulties in pursuing a career. But his run at the NCAAs left him with second thoughts. Beating the No. 4 and No. 8 ranked players nationally and falling to the national champion in a close match tend to do that. Not just those victories, but others as well. He recorded 15 victories over nationally ranked opponents this season and played well in ACC matches. Now he's wondering if he shouldn't attempt a professional tennis career. "A lot of questions appear in your head about whether you want to work or you want to continue playing the sport that you've been playing for 17 or 18 years," he said.

"I'm playing the best tennis I've ever played in my life and I think I could still do some interesting stuff on the tennis court. "I don't know what's going to happen next. I've committed and I'm supposed to start working. That's the original plan and that's what's in my head right now. Playing professionally has come out of nowhere, so we'll see." Monteiro understands the difficulties of a potential attempt. Players don't just declare their intentions and start playing in the U.S. Open or Wimbledon. They need to pay their dues, which means often playing in non-descript tournaments that pay little in winnings. The process often means going into debt or finding a financial backer willing to risk his/her money on a player's potential for greatness. That worries Monteiro. He knows a top-100 ranking will not happen quickly. "You're not going to be up there in the next two or three months," he said. "You've got fight at the beginning. You've got to grind it out in tournaments in the middle of nowhere getting \$150 and spending \$500. You're going to lose money. It's just a question of whether you want to go for it or not." His parents prefer he not, complicating matters, while he leans toward going for it. He took a risk in coming to the U.S. to play collegiately and that paid off. But the risks this time are greater. Most people, even most of his classmates, have their summers planned. He resides in limbo. But he's extremely bright and he'll make the right decision, with Hokie Nation fully behind him. The question is what will it be and when? Summer is full swing. The clock is ticking. VT

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behind the mic | with Jon Laaser

Running for my life

My entire life, I was that guy—the guy who could eat anything and not gain weight, ever. Fast food for virtually every meal in high school and college? Sure, no problem. I didn’t have the faintest idea as to what it meant to take care of my body. I didn’t need to think about it, so I never did. When I embarked on my career in broadcasting and baseball, my eating habits only worsened. Ballpark food is phenomenal, but not when consumed every night for six consecutive months. Snacking on overnight bus rides isn’t all that helpful to general health either apparently.

However, for the first few years of my career, it didn’t matter. I still looked the same and felt the same. And then Richmond happened, which coincidentally was about the same time my body realized I wasn’t 21 any more.

Starting the franchise in Richmond was stressful ... no, make that frantic. We essentially took an abandoned ballpark and a non-existent franchise and gave it life in seven months. It was fun, to be sure, but it took a toll. Staff members had to be fully committed to 14-hour days, meals at their desks, and so on. We succeeded in having everything ready for opening day. We failed at paying any mind to the toll that the stress and the schedule took on our bodies.

That was in 2010. I was 30 years old at the start of the year. I felt at least 40 by the end of the season. Yet still, I changed nothing about my lifestyle. By the end of the 2011 season, I was still a relatively skinny person, with one large exception — my stomach.

One day around the holidays that year, I looked in the mirror and had one of those “Holy cow, I’m old and out of shape” moments. My eyes were baggy and my clothes were not. I always had been athletic earlier in life. As the seasons changed, so did my sport of choice. I played everything. I wasn’t great at any of them, but my natural hand-eye coordination allowed me to be competent in all of them. Like everything that you don’t keep up with, though, my athleticism had slipped away. I realized that, although I had worked in sports for almost a decade, I couldn’t remember the last time I

had thrown a ball or picked up a racquet. I was out of shape and sliding dangerously toward middle-aged mediocrity. And this, I knew, was just the beginning.

Naturally, I overreacted. Brenden Porter, who was our director of tickets and a good friend, told me he was planning on starting the P90x workout program. It wasn’t for beginners, supposedly, but I didn’t care. I wanted in! I hadn’t done more than a few random minutes on an elliptical machine in years. I remember setting out with the singular goal of looking decent in a dress shirt.

The first few days were rough! There was the emotional realization of how far I had let things erode combined with the physical pain that left me immobilized on the couch for an entire day.

But we fought through. We weren’t the type of people who carefully planned things out. We charged into it. I hurt everything — my shoulders, my knees, and my back. But we continued.

One day in the middle of the program, Brenden suggested that we go for a run in addition to our workout. If you can, I can. It was a turning point in my life.

I had been known to mock runners in the past. I didn’t get it. Run for fun ... that is just insane, I thought. And I wasn’t good at it either. Endurance was certainly not my strong suit. Stopping to walk every half mile or so was embarrassing. I am an athlete!

But I also discovered that our runs had a calming effect on me. I was prone to lengthy stretches of a good mood when we would return. Going farther each day was a tangible and obtainable goal — and it didn’t matter where you were. With my ridiculous travel schedule, a lack of a workout facility on the road was always a hindrance, but I could run anywhere. I became enamored with running on the road. It was a great way to experience the cities we visited. Areas with a scenic trail became my favorite destinations.

I had heard about a “runner’s high” and I now began to experience them. I did my best thinking and strategizing while running. Always a person who struggled with anxiety, I found my problems



Jon Laaser (right), seen here with friend and fellow co-worker Kyle Pilling, hopes to do a better job of balancing work and exercise in year No. 2 as the voice of Virginia Tech athletics.

didn’t seem as large while I was on a run. I went all in. I got all the goofy-looking clothes I had previously sneered at. I had special shoes — which I wore out and replaced.

I participated in my first 5K near the end of that 2011 season and enjoyed the comradery and the cause. I have run in many since, including the 3.2 for 32 here at Tech.

There was a problem. My knees couldn’t take the pounding and neither could my back. I routinely would wake up in the middle of night in fierce pain in either of those two places and then I would run the next day anyway. It was my salvation, my happy place, and I was addicted.

Eventually, I learned how to minimize the pain and I kept on running. For the next three years, I was fairly diligent. I wasn’t disciplined enough to stretch out much farther than five miles per day, but that was enough. It kept my life in balance. Hectic travel, stress, long hours ... balance.

When I got the text that they were releasing my hiring here at Tech, I was, in fact, running. I was two and half miles from my office and needed to get back in a hurry. It was 100 degrees. I nearly passed out sprinting back to the ballpark.

My life was a sprint for the next few months. Everything was new, including Blacksburg, which I soon would discover offered the natural type of running terrain I couldn’t even imagine in Richmond.

Running once again would allow me to maintain my sanity, as I steamrolled toward the beginning of football season. I explored campus, the Duck Pond, the Huckleberry Trail, and everywhere else my first few weeks here.

Then I stopped. It may as well have been 2010 again. Consumed with doing a perfect job, I resorted to my old lifestyle. I ate poorly. I worked too much. I rationalized it with my professional challenges. It is my biggest regret from my first year in Blacksburg. I carried those unhealthy habits right through basketball season, and by the time I returned from Provo, Utah with the men’s basketball team after the NIT, I was once again out of shape. Not surprisingly, I was more edgy and anxious than I had been in a few years.

The difference from a couple of months ago and 2010 is that this time I knew what I needed. I needed to start running again! And so I did. May was a good month, but June will be better. And so on, with the chief objective of sticking with it through the athletics calendar this year. As it was when I first started, it has been a struggle.

So if you live in Blacksburg, you most likely will see me running this summer. Two things to know if you do. Yes, I am probably hurting physically. But more importantly, I’m headed in the right direction again.

Alright Hokies, have a great summer... gotta run for now!

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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 some 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: What did you think of the NCAA's decision to overturn the ban satellite football camps? That allows Virginia Tech to conduct camps outside of its campus in places like Richmond and the Tidewater area. Thanks, Sandy in Christiansburg.

TP: "To recap the situation: This spring, the NCAA Division I Council had adopted a proposal—submitted by the ACC—limiting the location of camps conducted by Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) programs to their own campus or at facilities regularly used for practice or competition. In addition, the proposal mandated that coaches and non-coaching staff members with responsibilities specific to football could only be employed at their school's camps, and not at camps held by other entities.

"However, in late April, the NCAA Board of Directors reversed that decision, and


requested the Council to conduct a review of the entire FBS recruiting process. ACC athletics directors had already prepared for this possibility, and once the reversal occurred, the ACC rule prohibiting coaches from working camps outside a 50-mile radius from their school was immediately rescinded. This aligns ACC regulations regarding camps with NCAA regulations.

"The action by the Board of Directors (on which 20 of the 24 members are college presidents), while not unprecedented, was unusual in that it appeared to be in response to pressure from unspecified influential individuals and groups, some with possible political connections (yes, conspiracy theories . . .).

"I can't say that the ACC football coaches were happy with the reversal, but at least all FBS programs are operating under the same rules now, which was not the case previously."

Q: I'm aware that the NCAA gives schools a certain period of time to respond to any alleged violations, but is there any way a school can get an extension on this? Thanks, Corey in Blacksburg.

TP: "When the NCAA completes an investigation of a school, it sends that school a letter called 'Notice of Allegations,' which informs the school of alleged violations. The school then has 90 days to respond to that letter.

"To answer your question, yes, the NCAA often grants 30-day extensions as part of the process. Often, these extensions come about because a third party is involved—maybe a previous coach now at another school is involved. However, this extension does not change the Notice of Allegations." 

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8 TRACK ATHLETES EARN ALL-AMERICA HONORS AT NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Torben Laidig, Thomas Curtin, and Marek Barta guided the men's squad to a top-10 finish — the program's third in six years by Jimmy Robertson

Eight of the 10 Virginia Tech track athletes who qualified for the 2016 NCAA Division I Track and Field Championships earned All-America honors, including seven men, as the Tech men's squad finished in eighth place at the meet held at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon.

The eighth-place finish marked the third-highest finish by the men's program at the NCAA's outdoor meet. The Hokies now have finished in the top 10 at the meet in three of the past six years.

"Finishing in the top 10 was definitely the highlight of the meet," Tech director of track and field and cross country Dave Cianelli said. "Torben [Laidig] had a good meet on the first day. Marek Barta getting third was huge and then Tommy [Curtin] ran absolutely fantastic. Finishing in the top 10 was our goal and I'm glad we were able to do that."

Torben Laidig, Thomas Curtin, and Marek Barta paced the efforts, as all three earned first-team All-America nods—the top eight finishers in each event are first-team All-Americans, with the next eight earning

second-team nods.

Laidig recorded the squad's highest finish, coming in second in the pole vault. He came within a half of a meter of Tennessee's Jake Blankenship in the battle for the gold medal.

The redshirt sophomore from Schwabish Hall, Germany cleared his first three heights on the first attempt and he ended up with a best vault of 5.55 meters, or 18 feet, 2.5 inches. Blankenship won the gold with a best vault of 5.60 meters.

"When it came to the final jump, of course, I wanted to win it, but [Tennessee's] Jake Blankenship came out on top," Laidig said. "Being only a sophomore, I'm really excited about what is to come."

Laidig's second-place finish tied for the best finish in the pole vault for a Tech vaulter at an NCAA meet. Brian Mondschein and Yavgeniy Olhovskiy claimed silver in 2005 and in 2008, respectively.

Brad Johnson also earned All-America honors for the Hokies in the pole vault, garnering second-team honors after tying for 12th place. His best vault was 5.15 meters.

Chris Uhle, the ACC outdoor champion in the event, came in 17th, while Deakin Volz came up short of the first mark and did not place.

"Today was a little bittersweet," Tech pole vault coach Bob Phillips said after the event. "It was awesome to watch Torben compete so well and grab the silver medal. The other guys [Brad Johnson, Chris Uhle, and Deakin Volz] were ready to jump high, too, but we just didn't make the right adjustments."

"Overall, it was an amazing year for the vaulters. I am extremely proud of what the whole group accomplished this year and I'm excited about some even bigger possibilities for next year."

Meanwhile, Curtin closed his career in fine fashion, finishing fourth in the 5,000-meter race with a career-best time of 13 minutes, 27.64 seconds. The redshirt senior from Leesburg, Virginia led early and stayed with the lead pack for the entire race. He was eighth with roughly four laps to go, but made up four spots in that span to earn his sixth career All-America honor (five in track, one in cross country).

"It's been an amazing journey for Tommy," Tech head cross country and distance coach Ben Thomas said. "From not winning a high school state title to being a six-time All-American and competing against arguably one of the toughest 5k fields in NCAA history ... It's such a storybook ending and I can't really ask for more"

"He definitely laid it all out there. He's meant so much to our program. I'm so proud of him and I'm really going to miss him."

Barta's performance came as a surprise, as the sophomore from Havirov, Czech Republic earned All-America honors for the first time. He finished third in the discus, with his best toss being one of 60.96 meters, or 200 feet.

"Marek was in the first flight, with some really poor conditions for discus with the swirling wind and some rain," Tech associate head coach and throws coach Greg Jack said. "For him to settle down and win that flight, then have over an hour until his first throw in the final ... He composed himself and settled down for the final with improved technique and you see the result."

2016 VIRGINIA TECH OUTDOOR TRACK ALL-AMERICANS

Torben Laidig (*first team, pole vault*)

Tommy Curtin (*first team, 5,000*)

Marek Barta (*first team, discus*)

Brad Johnson (*second team, pole vault*)

Neil Gourley (*second team, 1,500*)

Patrick Joseph (*second team, 800*)

Tomas Kruzliak (*second team, hammer throw*)

Sabine Kopplin (*second team, javelin*)

In addition to Johnson, three other Hokies earned second-team All-America honors—Neil Gourley, Patrick Joseph, and Tomas Kruzliak.

Gourley came in 13th in the 1,500-meter run, missing the finals of the event by 11 hundredths of a second. He set a personal-



Sabine Kopplin finished 14th in the javelin in the final event of her career and that finish enabled her to secure her third All-America honor.

best with a time of 3:41.33, but James Randon of Yale got the final qualifying spot with a time of 3:41.22.

Joseph competed in the 800 and finished 16th. He ran a time of 1:48.57 in the preliminaries, but came more than two seconds short of La Salle's Chris Sanders, who nabbed the last qualifying spot for the finals with a time of 1:46.52.

Kruzliak took the lead in flight one of the hammer throw with a 68.27-meter toss (223 feet, 11 inches). He improved to 68.32 meters (224 feet, 11 inches) to clinch the second-place position at the conclusion of the flight. That mark would be his best throw, however, and he wound up 10th—and tops among ACC competitors in the hammer throw.

Matija Muhar also competed for the Tech men's squad and finished 19th in the javelin. The ACC champion's best throw was 69.53 meters (228 feet, 1 inch).

On the women's side, the Hokies' Sabine Kopplin finished her career by earning second-

team All-America honors after coming in 14th in the javelin—the third All-America honor of her career. She recorded a season-best throw of 49.15 meters (161 feet, 3 inches) on her first toss and then one-upped herself on her final throw with a 49.90-meter mark (163 feet, 8 inches).

Kopplin, the bronze medalist at the ACC outdoor meet, was the second-highest finisher among ACC competitors. Wake Forest's Jessie Merckle, the gold medalist at the ACC meet, came in 10th.

In a surprise, the Hokies' Hanna Green did not qualify for the finals in the 800-meter run. Green, who finished second in the 800 at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships, led from the start in her preliminary heat, but was tripped up and fell out of the lead position. She wound up 19th overall with a time of 2:06.73.

The NCAA Championships conclude the season for the track programs and also the seasons for all of Tech's athletics teams.



Torben Laidig and Thomas Curtin (right) earned All-America honors in their respective events at the 2016 NCAA Division I Track and Field Championships held in Eugene, Oregon in mid-June.



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Beamer goes out with a win

Roughly six weeks after announcing his plans to retire at the end of the season after 29 years as the head football coach, Frank Beamer went out in proper fashion, as the Hokies survived a wild 55-52 affair against Tulsa in the Independence Bowl held Dec. 26 in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Tech set school bowl records for total offense (598 yards) and points, but defensive end Dadi Nicolas made the biggest play, sacking Tulsa quarterback Dane Evans on fourth down on Tulsa's final drive to preserve the win.

Beamer finished his career with 280 coaching victories, including 238 at Tech. The win also marked the 11th bowl win for Beamer, who won three of his final four bowl games.

Tech wrestlers finish program-best fourth at NCAA Championships

The Tech wrestling team saw six wrestlers earn All-America honors and that propelled the Hokies to a program-best fourth-place finish at the NCAA Wrestling Championships held March 17-19 at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

Nick Brascetta (157) and Zach Epperly (174) finished third in their respective weight classes and Ty Walz (heavyweight) came in fourth. Solomon Chishko (sixth place at 141), David McFadden (sixth place at 165), and Jared Haught (sixth place at 197) also earned All-America honors.

Tech's previous best finish at the national meet was eighth in 2014. The fourth-place finish also marked the best showing ever by an ACC team, topping North Carolina's fifth-place finish in 1982.

Tech men claim another ACC track title

The Tech men's track and field team used four gold medals and five silver ones en route to winning the 2016 ACC Outdoor Track and Field Championships on May 13-15 in convincing fashion. The Hokies scored 129 points, easily outdistancing NC State, which had 93.

Thomas Curtin won both the 10,000- and 5,000-meter runs, accounting for 20 team points. He has now won seven ACC titles in track and field and cross country and he became just the ninth person in ACC history to win both of those respective events at the same ACC meet. Chris Uhle won the pole vault and freshman Matija Muhar won the javelin. Jaka Muhar (javelin), Neil Gourley (1,500), Patrick Joseph (800), Marek Barta (discus), and Torben Laidig (pole vault) all won silver medals.

The Tech men's track and field team has won at least one ACC indoor or outdoor title in five of the past six years.

Monteiro's run at NCAA Tennis Championships

Joao Monteiro made Tech history at the 2016 NCAA Men's Tennis Singles Championships, becoming the first player in program history to advance to the NCAA semifinals.

Ranked 14th going into the event, Monteiro recorded wins over No. 41 Nick Crystal of Southern Cal and No. 48 Or Ram-Harel of Tulsa in the first two rounds and then he pulled off a

stunner, upsetting defending national champion and No. 8-ranked Ryan Shane of Virginia 1-6, 7-5, 6-2 to advance to the quarterfinals.

In the quarterfinals, he beat No. 4 Aleks Vukic of Illinois 6-3, 5-7 and 7-6 (3) to make it to the semifinals. Monteiro's run ended with a 2-6, 6-3, 3-6 loss to UCLA's Mackenzie McDonald, who would go on to win the national championship.

Monteiro, though, became the first Tech tennis player to make it to the quarterfinals since Oliver Mayo in 1996. He also earned All-America honors, becoming the third player in program history to do so.

Curtin wins ACC cross country crown

Tech runner Thomas Curtin became just the second Hokie ever to win an ACC cross country title (Will Mulherin, 2012), besting a 134-runner field at the ACC Cross Country Championships on Oct. 30.

Curtin stayed near the front during the entire race, going back and forth among a pack of five runners. Syracuse's Justyn Knight edged past Curtin with roughly 200 meters left before Curtin used a swift kick in the final 100 meters to pass Knight and cross the finish line in a time of 23 minutes, 23 seconds, beating Knight by 1.4 seconds. His time set a new course record.



Curtin would go on to become an All-American in cross country, finishing 22nd overall at the NCAA Championships.

Fusinato beats No. 1-ranked tennis player in nation

The Tech women's tennis team enjoyed another tremendous season, one capped by a second consecutive NCAA berth. Arguably the biggest moment of the season came when Francesca Fusinato beat Clemson's Joana Eidukonyte on Jan. 28. Eidukonyte came into the match listed as the No. 1-ranked tennis player in collegiate tennis.

Fusinato edged Eidukonyte 7-5 in the first set and then put things away with a 6-2 win in the second set. Fusinato's win marked the first ever win by a Tech women's tennis player against a No. 1-ranked opponent in the Hokies' history.

Fiala named MVP at ACC Swimming and Diving Championships

Brandon Fiala went into the 2016 ACC Swimming and Diving Championships with high expectations—and exceeded them. He was named the conference's Most Valuable Swimmer after winning three individual medals at the meet, including two gold medals.

Fiala secured gold medals in the 200 breaststroke, setting a new ACC and school record with a time of 1 minute, 52.87 seconds. He also won a gold medal in the 200 individual medley and a silver medal in the 100 breaststroke.

Fiala became the first Tech men's swimmer in program history to earn the ACC's Most Valuable Swimmer honor. He would go on to earn All-America honors in three events at the NCAA Division I Men's Swimming and Diving Championships, becoming the first Tech men's swimmer to do that as well. He came in tied for fourth in the 100 breaststroke, fifth in the 200 breaststroke, and eighth in the 200 IM at that meet.

Tech men's hoops downs No. 4 Virginia

The Tech men's basketball squad entered ACC play with an 8-5 record overall and opened conference play with a home win over NC State. The Hokies' 10th win was a surprise, as they knocked off then-No. 4 Virginia 70-68 at Virginia Tech Carilion Court on Jan. 4. That enabled the Hokies to start 2-0 in league play for just the second time since joining the ACC.

Tech shot 57.7 percent in the second half en route to the win. Seth Allen hit a free throw with 8.1 seconds remaining and then Zach LeDay blocked a UVA shot with less than a second to all but preserve the win.

LeDay scored 18 of his 22 points in the second half, hitting 7 of 10 from the floor. Justin Bibbs scored 16 points, hitting four 3-pointers.

Hokie women's hoops stun No. 8 Tennessee

Vanessa Panousis scored 21 points to lift the Hokies to a shocking victory over then- No. 8 Tennessee 57-43 in Knoxville, Tennessee on Dec. 6.

Panousis canned five 3-pointers and made all six of her free-throw attempts. Tech also got 13 points from Regan Magarity, and on the other end of the floor, the Hokies forced 17 turnovers and held Tennessee to 30.9 percent shooting.

The win marked the first for the Hokies over the Lady Vols in program history. It also snapped Tennessee's home win-streak of 45 against unranked teams.

Softball squad makes history with win over No. 6 JMU

Maggie Tyler pitched a six-hitter and struck out eight and Breanna Davenport drove in both runs to lift the Hokies to a 2-1 win over then-No. 6 James Madison on April 6.

JMU marked the highest-ranked opponent ever beaten by the Hokies at Tech Softball Park. The Dukes also marked the highest ranked opponent beaten by Tech in eight years.

Davenport's two-run single in the second held up for Tech. JMU scored a run in the third, but couldn't score again against Tyler, who allowed three runners the remainder of the game.

TECH'S TOP 10 OF 2015-16

Here are the top 10 moments of the 2015-16 academic year as compiled by the magazine staff, with help from several in the strategic communications office by Jimmy Robertson



INSIDE
HOKIESPORTS
ATHLETE
OF THE YEAR
VT
2015-16



THOMAS CURTIN R-SR.
LEESBURG, VIRGINIA
MEN'S TRACK AND FIELD/MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

Tech fans received a fairly good indication of the type of year that Tommy Curtin was going to have back in mid-October.

At the NCAA Pre-National cross country meet, Curtin jumped out to an early lead and won, beating the best runners in the country, including Oregon's Ed Cheserek, the two-time defending national champion at the time.

That marked the start of a terrific senior season for Curtin, who went on to win three ACC gold medals in track and field and cross country and earn three All-America nods. For those reasons, Curtin is the 2015-16 Inside Hokie Sports' Athlete of the Year.

Curtin becomes the first distance runner to be named the magazine's Athlete of the Year since the publication started doing this in 1995. Other former winners include Cornell Brown (football), Jim Druckenmiller (football), Katie Ollendick (women's track), Corey Moore (football), André Davis (football), Lee Suggs (football), Bryant Matthews (men's basketball), Kevin Jones (football), Queen Harrison (women's track), Dorotea Habazin (women's track), Marcel Lomnický (men's track), Spyridon Jullien (men's track), Angela Tincher (softball), Alexander Ziegler (men's track), Erick Green (men's basketball), Devin Carter (wrestling), and Irena Sediva (women's track).

Curtin won the ACC cross country title in thrilling fashion at Apalachee Regional Park in Tallahassee, Florida last October, edging Syracuse's Justyn Knight by less than two seconds. He led for much of the race before Knight passed him with around 200 meters left. But Curtin kicked pass Knight in the final stretch to claim the gold medal in a course-record time of 23 minutes, 23 seconds.

At the NCAA Cross Country Championships, Curtin battled a foot injury, but finished 22nd, earning All-America honors in cross country for the first time. He won three races during the cross country season.

During the indoor track season, Curtin finished second in the 5,000-meter run at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships held in Boston, as Knight beat him by half of a stride. At the NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Championships held in Birmingham, Alabama, Curtin finished second in the 5,000, with Cheserek beating him to win the gold medal. Still, Curtin earned All-America honors during the indoor season for the third time.

Curtin saved the best part of his year for the outdoor season. He won the ACC titles in both the 5,000-meter and 10,000-meter runs, accumulating 20 points toward the Hokies' team total. Behind him, the Tech men went on to win the ACC outdoor title for the second time in program history.

At the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships held in Eugene, Oregon in mid-June, Curtin came in fourth in the 5,000 with a time of 13:27.64—eclipsing his career best by six seconds. He earned All-America honors during the outdoor season for the second time.

For his career, Curtin earned All-America honors six times—the most by a male distance runner in the Tech program's history. He also departs as the school record holder (both indoor and outdoor) in the 5,000. VT

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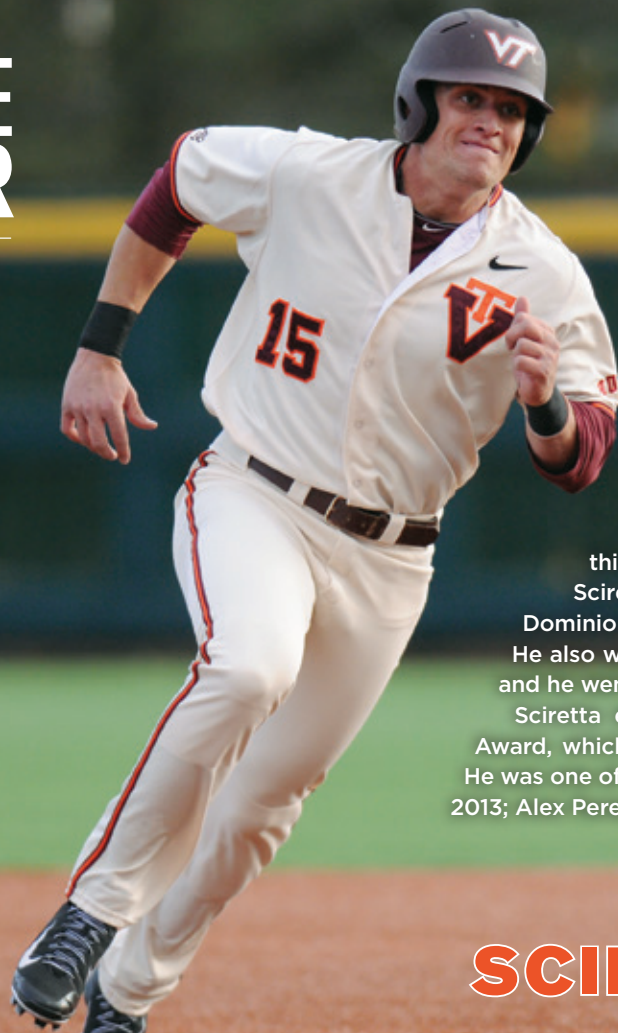
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ATHLETE OF THE YEAR VT BASEBALL



Phil Sciretta enjoyed arguably his best season in a Virginia Tech uniform, leading the squad or sharing for team-high honors in numerous categories. The first baseman stood as Tech's most consistent offensive threat.

Sciretta was one of just two players (Ryan Tufts) to start all 55 games this season for the Hokies. He led the team in hits (69), at-bats (219), and total bases (91) and tied for the team lead in RBIs with 37. He was second on the squad in batting average (.315), and runs (39), and he hit three homers, 11 doubles, and a triple, part of the reason why he recorded a .416 slugging percentage this past season. He also led the team with 21 multi-hit games this season.

Sciretta's best game came in the Hokies' 22-1 win over Old Dominion on Feb. 27 in which he went 5-for-6, with seven RBIs. He also went 2-for-4 with three RBIs in an 8-4 loss at Louisville and he went 3-for-5 in a 9-2 victory over Alcorn State.

Sciretta ended up being a semifinalist for the Gregg Olson Award, which annually goes to the "breakout player of the year." He was one of 43 semifinalists and just the third Hokie (Devin Burke, 2013; Alex Perez, 2015) to be named a semifinalist for the award. VT

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ATHLETE OF THE YEAR VT SOFTBALL



**MAGGIE
TYLER** SR.
POQUOSON, VIRGINIA

The Virginia Tech softball team just missed on making the NCAA regionals and no one could blame Tyler, who played a primary role in getting the Hokies into the discussion.

A first-team All-ACC selection and a first-team All-Mid-Atlantic Region choice by the National Fastpitch Coaches Association, Tyler went 23-18 this past season, with a 2.49 ERA. In 242 innings, she allowed just 223 hits, while striking out 245 and walking just 80. She also recorded 10 shutouts, including a no-hitter against Boston College on March 18. She walked one and struck out six in the Hokies' 4-0 win.

Tyler's best performance, though, arguably came against then-No. 6 James Madison on April 6. She pitched a six-hitter, allowing a run and striking out eight in Tech's 2-1 upset victory over the Dukes. She was named the ACC Pitcher of the Week following that game—one of three occasions in which she received the league's top weekly honor.

Tyler led the ACC in strikeouts, ranked second in innings pitched, second in appearances (49), and fourth in wins. Her 10 shutouts ranked tied for fourth nationally. VT

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Zach LeDay came to Virginia Tech having averaged 4.1 points per game during his first two seasons at USF. This past season, he blew those numbers out of the water.

Leading a Tech squad that received an NIT berth, LeDay averaged 15.5 points and 7.9 rebounds per game—both team highs. He scored in double figures in 29 of the Hokies' 35 games and he registered double figures in rebounds in 13 games. He finished with a team-best 12 double-doubles.

LeDay arguably played his best basketball down the stretch. Tech won seven of its final nine games and LeDay scored in double figures in eight of those games. During that nine-game stretch, he averaged 16.3 points and 7.6 boards and shot 53 percent from the floor.

LeDay shot 47.8 percent from the floor and 76.2 percent from the free-throw

line on the season and he finished with 58 blocked shots—a total that ranks seventh on the Hokies' single-season list. Five of those blocked shots came in Tech's ACC Tournament win over Florida State in which he set a school record for blocked shots in an ACC Tournament contest.

Following the season, LeDay received honorable mention All-ACC honors by both the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association and the league's coaches.

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR MEN'S BASKETBALL



ZACH LEDAY
R-JR.
DALLAS, TEXAS

HANNAH YOUNG
SR.
NEWCASTLE, AUSTRALIA



ATHLETE OF THE YEAR WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Hannah Young's senior season was her best one by far and her play helped lead the Hokies to the postseason for the first time since 2007.

Young started all 32 games and she averaged a career-best 10.3 points per game (second on the team). She also averaged 4.5 rebounds, shot a career-best 35 percent from the floor, and shot a career-best 36.8 percent from beyond the 3-point arc. Young's 74 3-pointers led the team and accounted for the majority of her team-best 111 field goals. Those 74 3-pointers also were the most by a senior in Tech history. Young's best performance came in the Hokies' win over Coppin State when she scored a career-high 23 points and hit a Cassell Coliseum-record six 3-pointers. She scored 22 points in Tech's loss at North Carolina, which marked her career-best performance in an ACC game.



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LAUREN BERMAN

FR. FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

Lauren Berman's first season in Blacksburg was a tremendous success, as she was arguably the Hokies' most consistent runner this past fall. She stood as the lone Hokie to record four top-50 finishes in the five meets in which she competed.

Her best performance came when she placed 10th at the Virginia Tech Alumni Invite with a time of 22 minutes, 0.96 seconds. She finished 25th at the Princeton Invite with a time of 21:41.4 and she recorded a personal-best time of 21:16.9 at the NCAA Pre-National event in Louisville, where she came in 125th.

At the ACC Championships held in Tallahassee, Florida, Berman finished 43rd with a time of 21:28.8 and she closed out the season with a 45th-place performance at the NCAA Southeast Regional held outside of Charlottesville.

Berman wasn't the top finisher for Tech at any meet this past fall. Yet her consistency gives Tech's staff hope for even better results from her in the future. 



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ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

FOOTBALL

ISAIAH FORD


SO. JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

Several Virginia Tech football players had tremendous seasons, but none put up the numbers that Ford did in his second year in Blacksburg.

Ford set Tech single-season records for receptions (75), touchdown receptions (11), and receiving yardage (1,164). He became the first Tech player ever to surpass 1,000 yards in receiving for a season.

Ford recorded at least 100 yards receiving in four of the Hokies' games, including the final three games of the season. He had 155 yards in the Hokies' overtime loss to North Carolina, 121 in the regular-season finale at Virginia, and a Tech bowl-record 227 against Tulsa in the Hokies' 55-52 Independence Bowl win. His 12 receptions in that game also were a bowl record and one shy of the school record.

Following the regular season, Ford earned first-team All-ACC honors by both the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association and by the league's coaches. He was the lone Hokie to be named to the first team by both groups.

Ford goes into his junior season needing just 54 catches and 1,011 yards to break Jarrett Boykin's records for career receptions (184) and yardage (2,884). He needs just six touchdown receptions to break Antonio Freeman's career record of 22 set from 1991-94. 



ATHLETE OF THE YEAR VT MEN'S GOLF

Joey Lane surprised nearly everyone with an outstanding junior season in which he recorded two top-five finishes and three top-10 finishes. In contrast, only one other Tech golfer — Maclain Huge — recorded a top-10 finish this season for the Hokies.

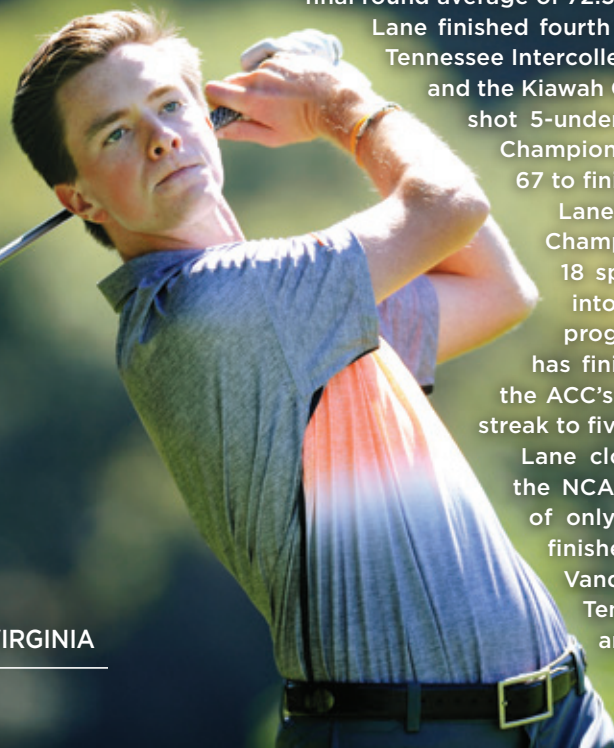
Lane led Tech with a 72.23 stroke average. He also recorded the lowest round on the team (67, ACC Championship) and his final round average of 72.55 led the squad.

Lane finished fourth in two tournaments — the Bank of Tennessee Intercollegiate in which he shot 5-under-par and the Kiawah Classic by Aramark in which he also shot 5-under. He finished seventh at the ACC Championship, shooting rounds of 74, 71, and 67 to finish at 4-under.

Lane's 67 in the final round of the ACC Championship enabled him to improve 18 spots from where he resided going into the round. He continued a program streak in which a Tech golfer has finished in the top 10 individually at the ACC's annual event, as he extended that streak to five straight seasons.

Lane closed his season by qualifying for the NCAA regionals as an individual — one of only 45 nationally to do so — and he finished 55th at a regional held at the Vanderbilt Legends Club in Franklin, Tennessee. He shot rounds of 73, 72, and 74 on the par-72 course. VT

JOEY LANE JR.
GREAT FALLS, VIRGINIA



This past fall, the Virginia Tech women's golf team teed off its inaugural season as a program, and as expected, Amanda Hollandsworth paced the Hokies.

Hollandsworth led the Hokies in nearly every statistical category, including average (75.27) and low round (69). She shared for the team lead in rounds played (30) and rounds under par (7).

Hollandsworth's best performance came at the 3M Augusta Invitational in which she finished tied for seventh after shooting rounds of 71, 69, and 75. She shot rounds of 75, 73, and 73 in the season-opening Lady Paladin Invitational to finish in a tie for 10th place. She also shot a 69 in the final round at the Florida State Matchup en route to finishing tied for 39th.

Hollandsworth came in tied for 33rd in her first ACC Championship after shooting scores of 78, 73, and 76. Behind her, the Hokies finished in 12th in the team race.

On the season, Hollandsworth recorded eight top-50 finishes. VT

AMANDA HOLLANDSWORTH R-FR.
FLOYD, VIRGINIA



ATHLETE OF THE YEAR VT WOMEN'S GOLF



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GO Hokies!

Meghan Macera was arguably the most consistent performer on the Tech lacrosse team this past season, as she ranked second on the team in goals scored (28) and points (32) and first on the team in game-winning goals (2), ground balls (42), and draw controls (57).

Macera, a defender who started all 18 games, set a career high with 28 goals and tied a career high with four assists. She scored at least two goals in nine games this season and at least two points in 10.

Macera's best game came on April 16 against then-No. 15 Boston College. She tallied half of the Hokies' goals in a 15-10 defeat. The five goals represented a career high. She also scored three goals in Tech's loss against then-No. 4 Syracuse.

Macera finished her career ranked in the top five in several categories. She was third on the school's list for career draw controls (195), fourth in career ground balls (129), and fourth in caused turnovers (80). 

MEGHAN MACERA | SR.
WESTMINSTER, MARYLAND

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR LACROSSE




Hanna Green's 2015-16 season ended in disappointment at the 2016 NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships when she did not qualify for the finals of the 800-meter run, but the leader of the Tech women's track and field and cross country programs had a great year nonetheless.

Green nearly won her first national title, finishing second in the 800 at the 2016 NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Championships held in Birmingham, Alabama in March. She led the race from the start, but Oregon's Raevyn Rogers kicked past Green in the final 100 meters to win the national title in a time of 2 minutes, 4.68 seconds. Green claimed silver with a time of 2:05.90 and earned her third All-America honor.

Green won two gold medals at the ACC's meets this past year. She won the 800 at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships held in Boston in late February, dusting the field in a time of 2:04.76. She won by more than a second over Duke's Anima Banks, and in the process, defended her 2015 title.

She continued her success during the outdoor season. At the ACC Outdoor Track and Field Championships held in Tallahassee, Florida in mid-May, she claimed the gold medal in the 800 again, though it didn't come easily. She led for the entire race, but fended off Banks at the finish line, winning in a time of 2:02.45—five-hundredths of a second ahead of Banks. That time qualified Green for the Olympic Trials.

Green also recorded two top-25 finishes for the Hokies' during the cross country season in the fall. She competed in four events before a foot injury shelved her for the final two meets.

Green returns for her senior season, and if she earns All-America nods during the indoor and outdoor season next year, she would become just the fifth female in the Tech track and field program's history to register at least five All-America honors in a career. 

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR WOMEN'S TRACK



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MERLIN BAUS SO. BOCHUM, GERMANY

The Virginia Tech men's soccer team scored 21 goals this past season and Merlin Baus accounted for nearly 20 percent of those.

The Germany native enjoyed a banner sophomore season, leading the Hokies in goals, assists, and total points. His five goals were two more than his nearest teammate and his five assists were three more. He started all 15 games in which he played.

Baus' best performance came early in the season in the Hokies' 5-1 win over Cincinnati when he finished with a goal and two assists. He also had a goal and an assist in Tech's 3-1 win over then-No. 10 Xavier.

Three of Baus' goals came on penalty kicks, which led the team. In addition, he registered one game-winning goal, which came in the Hokies' 4-1 win over Delaware.

Baus was the lone Hokie recognized for his play following the season, as the Virginia Sports Information Directors (VaSID) placed him on its all-state second team.

Baus goes into his junior season with eight career goals and has started all 31 games in which he has played.



ATHLETE OF THE YEAR MEN'S SOCCER

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR WOMEN'S SOCCER

MURIELLE TIERNAN JR. ASHBURN, VIRGINIA



There were any number of worthy candidates on the women's soccer squad for this distinction. Ashley Meier earned first-team All-ACC honors and Jordan Coburn earned a spot on the third team.

But Murielle Tiernan received the nod after being named a third-team All-American by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America for her performances this past season. She became just the second All-American in program history, joining former player Jazmine Reeves.

Like Meier, Tiernan was a first-team All-ACC choice. She finished tied for second in the ACC in goals scored with 14 and

she finished fourth in the league in total points (31). Her eight game-winning goals led the league and ranked fourth nationally.

Tiernan scored two goals in Tech wins over both Indiana and Wake Forest. Her best performance, though, arguably came against Cincinnati in the NCAA tournament when she tallied a goal and an assist in the Hokies' 4-0 win.

Tiernan's season enabled her to break the school record for career goals (39), points (92), multiple-goal games (7), and game-winning goals (18). With another season remaining, she could entrench herself firmly in the record books for years to come.

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ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

**MEN'S
SWIMMING
AND DIVING**




**BRANDON
FIALA** JR.
CENTREVILLE, VIRGINIA

Virginia Tech swimmer Brandon Fiala was in the discussion for Inside Hokie Sports' Athlete of the Year honor after a magical season in the pool this past season for Ned Skinner's men's team.

Fiala earned first-team All-America honors in the 200-yard individual medley, the 100 breaststroke, and the 200 breaststroke at the NCAA Championships in March. His fourth-place finish in the 100 breaststroke tied for the highest finish ever by a Virginia Tech swimmer at the NCAA Championships.

Fiala was even more impressive at the ACC Championships, where he earned the league's Most Valuable Men's Swimmer honor. He became the first Tech male swimmer to receive the award.

Fiala set two meet records to go with his three medals, including two gold medals and one silver medal. He won a gold medal in the 200-yard breaststroke, setting a meet record with a time of 1 minute, 52.87 seconds. He also won a gold medal in the 200 individual medley (1:42.26) and he nearly brought home a third gold, losing in the 100 breaststroke (52.28 seconds) by a hundredth of a second. He set a meet record in the 100 breaststroke in the preliminary round with a time of 51.86 seconds.

Things have been going swimmingly for Fiala outside of the pool, too. In late April, the ACC named him the league's Men's Swimming and Diving Scholar-Athlete of the Year for his work in the classroom. 


The Virginia Tech women's swimming and diving team finished in fifth place at the ACC Championships and tied for 25th place at the NCAA Championships. The squad's performance at the NCAA meet marked the program's fourth top-25 performance in the past five years.

A lot of that success came about because of the performance and leadership of Nazieblo. The young lady from Poland earned All-America honors in the 200-yard butterfly event at the NCAA Championships, finishing in seventh place with a time of 1 minute, 53.77 seconds. She earned honorable mention All-America status in this same event as a freshman.

Nazieblo also earned honorable mention All-America honors as a member of the 400 medley relay team

that finished 14th overall with a time of 3:33.48. Weronika Paluszek, Maggie Gruber, and Jessica Hespeler were a part of that relay team, and in this event, Nazieblo led off and swam a split time of 52.21 seconds, which was a new school record.

At the ACC Championships, Nazieblo won a silver medal in the 200 butterfly, completing the event in a time of 1:55.30. She also earned a silver medal in the 400 individual medley, swimming that race in 4:07.63. In addition, she participated in four relay events that scored points for the Hokies.

Nazieblo already owns four school records (100 backstroke, 200 backstroke, 200 butterfly, and the 400 IM). With the pace in which she's progressing, she could own several more by the time she departs in two years. 



**KLAUDIA
NAZIEBLO** SO.
WROCLAW, POLAND

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

**WOMEN'S
SWIMMING
AND DIVING**

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR V7 MEN'S TENNIS



JOAO MONTEIRO


SR.
PORTO, PORTUGAL

Monteiro made Virginia Tech men's tennis history in his final season in Blacksburg, advancing to the semifinals of the NCAA Division I Men's Singles Championships held in late May in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He became the first Tech player in program history to make it to the final four of the event.

Monteiro won his first two matches and then knocked off defending national champion and No. 8-ranked Ryan Shane of Virginia 1-6, 7-5 and 6-2 to advance to the Elite Eight. He followed his victory over Shane by beating No. 4-ranked Aleks Vukic of Illinois 6-3, 5-7 and 7-6 (3) to make it to the national semifinals. His run ended with a 2-6, 6-3, 3-6 loss to UCLA's Mackenzie McDonald, who would go on to win the national championship.

Monteiro earned All-America honors, becoming just the program's third All-American (Oliver Mayo and Aaron Marchetti) and the first since Marchetti earned the honor in 1999.

Behind Monteiro—who also was a first-team All-ACC selection—the Hokies advanced to the NCAA Championships as a team for the 10th consecutive season. Tech recorded a 4-3 win over Kentucky before losing 4-2 to Ohio State in the second round.

Monteiro finished his season with a 38-13 record, including a 15-11 mark against nationally ranked opponents. He went 16-7 while playing in the Hokies' No. 1 spot and he recorded a 6-5 record against ACC opponents. In doubles action, he teamed with his partners to win 24 of 35 matches. 

FRANCESCA FUSINATO

JR.
FELTRE, BELLUNO, ITALY


For the second straight season, the Virginia Tech women's tennis team qualified for the NCAA Championships, and for the second consecutive season, Fusinato's play had a lot to do with that.

Fusinato again led the Hokies, earning second-team All-ACC honors for the second straight year. She was the lone Hokie to be ranked in the top 100 nationally, coming in at No. 60 in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association's final women's singles poll.

Fusinato made national headlines when she knocked off Clemson's Joana Eidukonyte, who was the No. 1- ranked collegiate women's tennis player, in a match held at the Burrows-Burleson Tennis Center on Jan. 28. Fusinato won in straight sets — 7-5 and 6-2 — and was named the ACC's Player of the Week following the win.

She also recorded a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Johnisse Renaud of Georgia Tech, who was ranked No. 30 nationally at the time. Behind Fusinato's big victory, the Hokies scored a 4-3 upset of the then-No. 16 Yellow Jackets.

Fusinato went just 12-12 overall this season, but played 22 of her 24 matches in the No. 1 spot, facing the opponent's top player in nearly every match.

Fusinato also competed in doubles for the Hokies and she and her partners went 10-10 this season. 



ATHLETE OF THE YEAR V7 WOMEN'S TENNIS



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TY
WALZ R-JR.
CLEVELAND, OHIO

ATHLETE
OF THE
YEAR
VT
WRESTLING

Several Virginia Tech wrestlers enjoyed fabulous seasons, as the program saw six earn All-America honors at the NCAA Wrestling Championships. But Ty Walz was ranked among the top five heavyweights at the beginning of the season—and he stayed there.

Walz went 23-2 during the regular season, including a 16-1 record in dual-meet action and a 4-1 mark against ACC competition. Three of his wins came via major decision and one came from a technical fall. He won the heavyweight title at the prestigious Cliff Keen tournament in Las Vegas.

Walz advanced to the heavyweight title match at the ACC Championships, where he lost to NC State's Nick Gwiazdowski 5-2. Gwiazdowski won two national championships in his career.

At the NCAA Championships, Walz won his first three matches to secure All-America honors for the second straight year. He lost in the semifinals to Ohio State's Kyle Snyder, who later won the national championship. Walz ultimately finished in fourth place at heavyweight.

Walz enters his senior season with 78 wins and a chance to become the third three-time All-American in the program's history (Devin Carter and Nick Brascetta).



Lindsey Owens is establishing herself as one of the best volleyball players in school history after yet again putting up impressive numbers. She made the All-ACC team for the third straight season, having made the All-Freshman Team her first season at Tech and then earning first-team honors as a sophomore. This past season, she was a second-team choice for the Hokies, who finished 19-13 overall, 10-10 in league play.

Owens led the Hokies with 400 kills, averaging 3.33 per set to rank ninth in the ACC. She recorded double-figure kill totals

in 23 of the Hokies' 32 matches. She also finished with 343 digs and 63 blocks. She had 16 double-doubles (kills and digs) this past season as well.

Owens also takes care of business off the court. She received the Skelton Award for Academic Excellence in Athletics—the top honor handed out by the Tech athletics department—for her work in the classroom and she also earned a spot on the ACC's All-Academic Volleyball Team for the second straight year.

LINDSEY
OWENS JR.
ORLANDO, FLORIDA

ATHLETE
OF THE
YEAR
VT
VOLLEYBALL



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For the first time in more than three decades, Frank Beamer has not spent a spring playing host to recruits, overseeing offseason workouts, leading spring practices, or conducting coaching clinics. Now retired, Beamer has no alarm clock, no commute, and basically, no problems.

Beamer misses parts of his old job, but he spends more of his time living an old saying—“Don’t cry because it’s over; smile because it happened.” The legendary former football coach answered a few questions about what all he has been doing since the season ended.

Q: So to start off, how is retirement?

FB: “Well, it’s actually been busy. I’ve done quite a bit of traveling and speaking. Some of it has been for corporations and some of it has been for football clinics. Between that and trying to keep up with the grandkids [he and wife Cheryl have four of them and one on the way], that’s actually kept me busy.”

Q: I had heard that you had been speaking at several different places. What sort of engagements are these?

FB: “I’ve spoke at a lot of coaching clinics and I recently spoke to Amway Corporation down in Charlotte. I’m looking to do more of that type of thing.”

Q: So what has your message been when speaking to these groups?

FB: “As far as the football clinics, I’ve been to Michigan, Alabama, and West Point, and at those, I talk about the kicking game. I try to give them some specific things. For example, I’d share how we would try to do a punt return. I don’t just talk about my philosophy. I also try to give things that they can take back and maybe they can use those things to help them, if they’re interested in it.

“Then with the Amway one, I spoke about leadership and things that I think are important as far as being a leader and trying to stay on top. Everyone’s trying to stay on top of something. For me, it was in the coaching world and being successful in the Atlantic Coast Conference. But for other people, it’s just being on top day to day in their jobs. Whether it’s a job or your personal life, there are things you need to do to stay on top.”

Q: That’s not all you’ve been doing. I know you went to New York City with a group representing Virginia Tech.

FB: “Yeah, hold on, let me get my calendar.”

Q: Coach, you’re retired. You shouldn’t need a calendar.

FB: [Laughing] “Yeah, I know. I’ve been busy. I went up to New York for the Pamplin College of Business and a ‘Hokies on Wall Street’ type of thing. I was in Roanoke the other morning with BB&T for their yearly meeting.

RETIRED ... BUT BUSY

Former Tech football coach Frank Beamer retired at the conclusion of the 2015 season, ending a 29-year run at the school and a 35-year coaching career. But instead of taking naps and playing golf, Blacksburg’s beloved figure has been rather busy the past six months

by Jimmy Robertson

I went to Maryland for a Hokie Club meeting a couple of weeks ago. I got an award down in Jacksonville, Florida. The bowl association [Football Bowl Association] gave me an award [Champion’s Award]. They have an award for people who have been kind to the bowl system. I also spoke at my high school baccalaureate service the other day. So I’ve been busy.”

Q: Have you taken time to reflect on your career and all your accomplishments?

FB: “I’ve thought about it. As I look at it now, I don’t look at it as, ‘OK, I don’t have this or I don’t have that or I’m not going to do this.’ I look at it as that I was fortunate to stay 29 years in one place and that place is one that means a lot to me and my family. I’ve had several people in my family get their degrees from Virginia Tech. I think more in terms of how lucky can a guy be in that you’ve been able to do this for 29 years at one place. You know as well as I do that staying one place in the coaching business is not an easy thing to do.”

Q: I know that you always enjoyed spring practice because you enjoyed teaching and working with the younger players. How much did you miss it this past spring?

FB: “You miss being with the players and being with the coaches. You’re right. I always liked spring practice. It was a time to teach and it wasn’t as pressure-packed as it becomes in the fall when you’re always getting ready for a game. But again, rather than think about what I’m missing, I’m counting my blessings and thinking about how lucky I was — and how lucky I am now. I’ve got some different projects that excite me. I’ve got some grandkids that are great to be around. So I think more in terms of how fortunate I’ve been.”

Q: How much have you talked with new coach Justin Fuente?

FB: “We’ve talked a few times and his wife has

talked to my wife. I think Tech made a great choice. I really like him and Cheryl really likes his wife. I find him to be a great fit for Virginia Tech and the way Virginia Tech is and I think he likes what Virginia Tech is all about, so I think Whit [Babcock, Tech’s AD] and Dr. [Timothy] Sands [Tech’s president] made a great choice.”

Q: Coach Fuente elected not to keep your son Shane on the staff. Has that made things awkward between you and Coach Fuente, or is that simply part of the coaching profession?

FB: “That’s just part of the deal. The new guy coming in has guys he wants to bring with him. I don’t think awkward is the word. I respect whom Coach Fuente wanted to bring in and Shane was fortunate in that Georgia was a school that he really liked. That was even before it [his getting an assistant coaching position there] happened, and sure enough, he was able to do that [get a job there] It worked out great all the way around.”

Q: I know you’re keeping tabs on Shane and his career and have been down there a few times. How is he doing? He was respected around here as much as you were.

FB: “He’s doing well. He’s been out recruiting [in May] and I think Georgia is a great opportunity for him. He needed to get away and be at some other places. He’s been fortunate. He’s been at Georgia Tech, Tennessee, Mississippi State, South Carolina, and now at Georgia — and of course, Virginia Tech. He’s been with some good people and at some good places to get a good background in the coaching world. I’m proud of what he’s done. He’s a very detailed guy and I think he’s good at what he does.”

Q: Hokie Nation has been impressed with your acting skills after watching a couple

of football season ticket videos recently. You’re aware of this, right?

FB: [Laughing] “I have fun with it. Anything I can do to help Virginia Tech, I’m going to do. Virginia Tech has been so good to me. I’m not sure I’m a natural at it [acting], but I like it, to be honest with you. Yeah, I’m glad to help any way I can.”

Q: Have you heard from a lot of coaches and former coaches in the six months since the season ended, people maybe congratulating you on a great career?

FB: “Oh yes, I’ve heard from quite a few. I get phone calls and text messages. I went to Hawaii for our last Nike trip and they had a presentation over there. I got to see a lot of the old guys at that thing. It’s been a busy time, but a good time.”


Q: I thought you were going to play a lot of golf in your retirement. I get the feeling there hasn’t been a lot of golf played this spring.

FB: [Laughing] “There hasn’t been much golf so far. I’m getting ready to get into golf here real soon.”

Q: So what do you and Cheryl have planned for this summer and fall?

FB: “We’re going to split our time between Blacksburg and the lake [Lake Oconee in Georgia]. Then this fall, I’ve been working on my schedule as far as what games I’m going to attend at Virginia Tech and what games we’re going to try and see at Georgia. It’s going to be a busy fall and an interesting fall.”

Q: Looking back, have you had any fleeting moments of regret about your decision to retire?

FB: “No, no, not at all. I feel very thankful that I was able to stay in this place and be here for 29 years. I have no regrets. I did it for a long time and I was ready to move on and feel good. I look forward to the future.” 

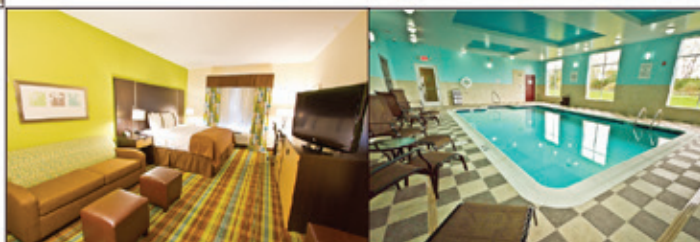
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SUNG TASKED WITH LEADING TECH LACROSSE PROGRAM

John Sung comes to Tech after a successful stint at Winthrop and has built programs into NCAA participants at two previous stops
by Jimmy Robertson

John Sung got his degree in communications, but the man certainly knows quite a bit about construction.

Not necessarily the type that involves hammers, nails, steel beams, and heavy equipment, but rather, he specializes in the athletics type—and that specialty landed him the position as the head coach of the Virginia Tech women’s lacrosse team.

Virginia Tech Director of Athletics Whit Babcock officially announced the move on May 27, naming Sung as the replacement for Megan Burkner, who resigned on May 9 after six seasons as the Hokies’ head coach.

“We are very pleased to welcome Coach Sung and his family to Virginia Tech,” Babcock said in the official release announcing Sung’s hiring. “Coach Sung has distinguished himself by building several lacrosse programs at various levels and quickly making them competitive and successful. We are excited that he has embraced the challenge and opportunity of leading our women’s lacrosse program, which competes in the nation’s toughest conference, the ACC.”

Sung came to Tech from Winthrop University, where he established the women’s lacrosse program at the Big South Conference

school in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Winthrop added women’s lacrosse as a varsity sport in 2011 and began competition in 2013.

In 2015, under Sung’s guidance, Winthrop went 17-4 and qualified for the NCAA Tournament after winning both the Big South regular-season and tournament titles. This past spring, Winthrop went 20-3, again winning the Big South regular-season and tournament championships and advancing to another NCAA Tournament. Penn State ended the Eagles’ season with a 16-6 victory in the first round and went on to make it to the Final Four.

The 2015 and 2016 Big South Coach of the Year, Sung currently chairs the NCAA Division I Lacrosse Committee and also serves on the U.S. Lacrosse Convention Education Committee. His 2015 squad set Big South single-season records for points, goals (314), free-position goals (67), shots (633), shots on goal (459), ground balls (384), draw controls (312), and caused turnovers (213).

This past season, Winthrop scored 301 goals, including 58 free-position goals. The Eagles set Big South single-season marks for shots (662), ground balls (434), and caused turnovers (266).

“Throughout our search process, it became

evident the level of respect that Coach Sung has earned among his peers in the lacrosse community as an innovator, a motivator, a recruiter, and a mentor of student-athletes,” Babcock said in the release.

Sung went 54-26 during his time at Winthrop. Prior to that, he began his career as a head coach at Adrian College, a Division III school in Michigan. He started that program as well and compiled a 46-19 overall record during his time there. His 2011 squad started the season 1-4 before registering 15 consecutive victories to earn a berth in the NCAA Division III Tournament. After posting a 6-7 overall record in its first season in 2008, the squad went 10-4 in 2009, 14-3 in 2010, and 16-5 in 2011.

Sung inherits a rebuilding situation at Tech. The Hokies haven’t won an ACC game since 2012 and only have three conference wins since the school joined the league for the 2004-05 season. He becomes the program’s fourth head coach in that same time frame.

“I’m excited to meet our team and begin recruiting for Virginia Tech,” Sung said in the release. “The introduction of the 90-second shot clock will give us the opportunity to play at a faster tempo and we’ll look to use that rule to our advantage. My wife, Tina, and our

family are excited about moving to Blacksburg and embracing this opportunity to join Hokie Nation.”

Before beginning the program at Adrian College, Sung spent five years as the assistant women’s club lacrosse coach at the University of Michigan, setting the groundwork for that program to become a varsity sport competing in the Big Ten. The Wolverines accumulated a 93-22 record during his tenure.

A longtime trainer of goalies, Sung has held various coaching positions with Birmingham Seaholm High School and the Detroit Lacrosse Club. He has been the assistant director of the Great Lakes Women’s Lacrosse Camp since 1997. In addition to his work at various levels in the lacrosse community, Sung possesses a wealth of sales and management experience in the private sector.

Sung served as the starting goalkeeper of the Oakland University lacrosse team in 1997 and 1998 and was also a two-year captain. In addition, he played on two International Cup U16 championship teams (1993 and 1994). He completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in communications from Oakland in 2007.

Married to his wife, Tina, Sung also has three stepsons, Darek, Devin, and Zachary, and a daughter, Abby. 

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Lindsey Owens has played in nearly 100 volleyball matches in her three years as a scholarship-athlete at Virginia Tech. She has taken on many of the best volleyball players in the nation. Now a veteran and a three-time All-ACC selection, she rarely gets nervous or intimidated on the court.

Yet hours before hopping onto a flight at New York's La Guardia Airport to fly practically halfway around the world, she came across the rare feeling of apprehension.

"I'm kind of getting a little nervous," she said, roughly 12 hours before takeoff. "It's crazy that I'm going across the world and I don't know anybody. But I'm really excited, too."

Tech's volleyball standout flew 16 hours to Hong Kong and then took a short flight to Thailand, where she spent more than two weeks in late May and early June participating in a Loop Abroad summer program designed for students who love animals. Owens, who is pursuing a degree in biology and plans on graduating in December, wants to become a veterinarian in the future.

Addam and Jane Stine established Loop Abroad in 2009 and oversee its operations. The summer programs within Loop Abroad take place in Chiang Mai, Thailand — a city in the northern part of the country — while the winter programs are offered in Australia. Traveling abroad offers meaningful experiences in and of themselves and the programs within Loop Abroad provide hands-on opportunities for those wishing to pursue careers in ecology, conservation, veterinary medicine, and other related fields.

Owens found out about Loop Abroad from Virginia Tech, though Loop Abroad is not affiliated with the university.

"I found out through our listserv through the biology department at Tech," she said. "You have to send in an application with an essay and then you have to be accepted. Then you're in the program once you're accepted."

"You had the option to receive college credit. You would have had to go through that process at your university, but I have already completed the credits that it [the summer program] would have counted for, so I didn't really need the credits. I just applied for the experience."

Tech's volleyball head coach, Chris Riley, wrote a letter on her behalf, and Danny White, Tech's assistant athletics director for student-athlete development, helped her with the application. It

came as no surprise to those who know her that Loop Abroad officials accepted her into the summer program.

The experience, though, came with a price tag. Tuition for the program runs nearly \$3,900, according to the Loop Abroad website — and that doesn't include the airfare. Owens' scholarship only covers courses sponsored by Virginia Tech.

But Tech athletics department officials, particularly White, have been navigating the NCAA maze to find a way to help offset some of Owens' costs for the trip.

"It's all really complicated," she said. "So we're still in the process of working through that."

Owens left on May 28, arriving in Chiang Mai on Memorial Day — Thailand is 11 hours ahead of the U.S.'s Eastern Standard Time. She met up with an assortment of students from around the U.S. who were participating in the same program.

That group ended up being split into two smaller crowds.

"One group was at the Elephant Nature Park, which is like a rescue and rehabilitation center for elephants, for one week and you're doing work there," Owens said. "You help out and do chores. You also shadow the on-staff vets there and learn veterinary techniques for large exotic animals, like elephants."

"Then we switched with the other group and went into the city. We did work on stray dogs and cats. It's like a shelter and it's also a wild cat reserve, so it has large exotic animals like lions, tigers, and panthers. We learned a lot and gained a little experience."

Owens — who said they had a couple of days built in to see the city and the sights — already had experience working with animals before she took the trip. She once worked during the summer at a small animal clinic in her hometown of Orlando, Florida, and she also shadowed an equine veterinarian over a summer, learning how to treat horses. While in this role, she helped the equine veterinarian diagnose and treat an ill zebra — her closest experience to working with an exotic animal.

That is really her passion — working with unusual, and yet fascinating, rare animals. She came to Tech unsure of her academic pursuits, but when she decided to choose biology as a major at Tech, she selected it with this goal in mind.

"I had always loved animals," she said. "But I didn't want to do typical small companion animals, like pets. I have worked in a small

Continued on page 44

TRIP ABROAD HELPS OWENS PREPARE FOR FUTURE

Tech volleyball standout Lindsey Owens recently spent two weeks in Thailand as part of a veterinary medicine program that will help prepare her for a future career as a veterinarian working with exotic animals
by Jimmy Robertson

Photo courtesy of Lindsey Owens



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TRIP ABROAD

Continued
from page 43

animal clinic before. It's a good job and I enjoyed it because those animals are cute, but I wanted to do more unique things. I also wanted to get the chance to travel. That would be the ideal situation, where I'd get to travel for my work and get to see a lot of animals and interact with a lot of animals that other people don't get to interact with."

Owens returned to the U.S. in mid-June and plans on spending the remainder of her summer working out and honing her volleyball skills in preparation for the upcoming fall. In December, she will be one of the rare student-athletes who graduates in three and a half years.

She plans on remaining in Blacksburg next spring and then applying to veterinary schools in the summer, with Tech's nationally acclaimed vet school among the desired choices. In fact, both Tech and the University of Florida—one of her other choices—rank among the top 20 veterinary schools nationally according to U.S. News & World Report.

"I'll apply to other vet schools besides Tech," she said. "Since I'm from Florida, my best chance of getting in would be at the University of Florida. But I'll apply here and at a couple of others. Florida is appealing because I would be paying in-state tuition, but I'll go anywhere I can get in."

Owens shouldn't have a problem getting accepted into any vet school, given her impeccable grades and her work experiences. In February, she earned a spot on the All-ACC Academic Team for volleyball for the third consecutive year, and in April, she received the coveted Skelton Award for Academic Excellence in Athletics—the top honor handed out by the Tech athletics department. A \$5,000 scholarship came with winning that award, so Owens can use that money to pay a portion of her vet school tuition.

Once she gets accepted into vet school and enrolls within a certain tract, she'll spend the next four years studying, doing research, and getting hands-on opportunities working with and treating sick and injured animals. It seems like a daunting task, especially for a Division I student-athlete who enjoyed little free time during her career. Many in her shoes look forward to joining the workforce, starting a career, and securing an income

instead of doing more studying and research for another four years.


But much like she does on the volleyball court, she looks forward to the challenge.

"I feel like finding a job is more daunting than being in school for another four years," she said. "I'm excited to learn everything, and when I come out, I'll get a job, so there will be a little structure."

Once she graduates from vet school, she plans on pursuing her dream. The plans aren't specific, but there is time.

"I'd like to eventually work at a reserve in a state, especially in Florida," Owens said. "I'd love to live there again. I'd love to travel, maybe go to Africa and do some work there because there are a lot of reserves there."

"I'd also like to get in the conservation research side of things and help prevent animals from going extinct. That's long, long term once I have a lot of experience under my feet, but that's definitely a dream goal of mine."

She lived a dream by going to Thailand for two weeks, experiencing a foreign culture, and more importantly, learning about a topic that inspires her. She only hopes that's the start of an exciting future. 



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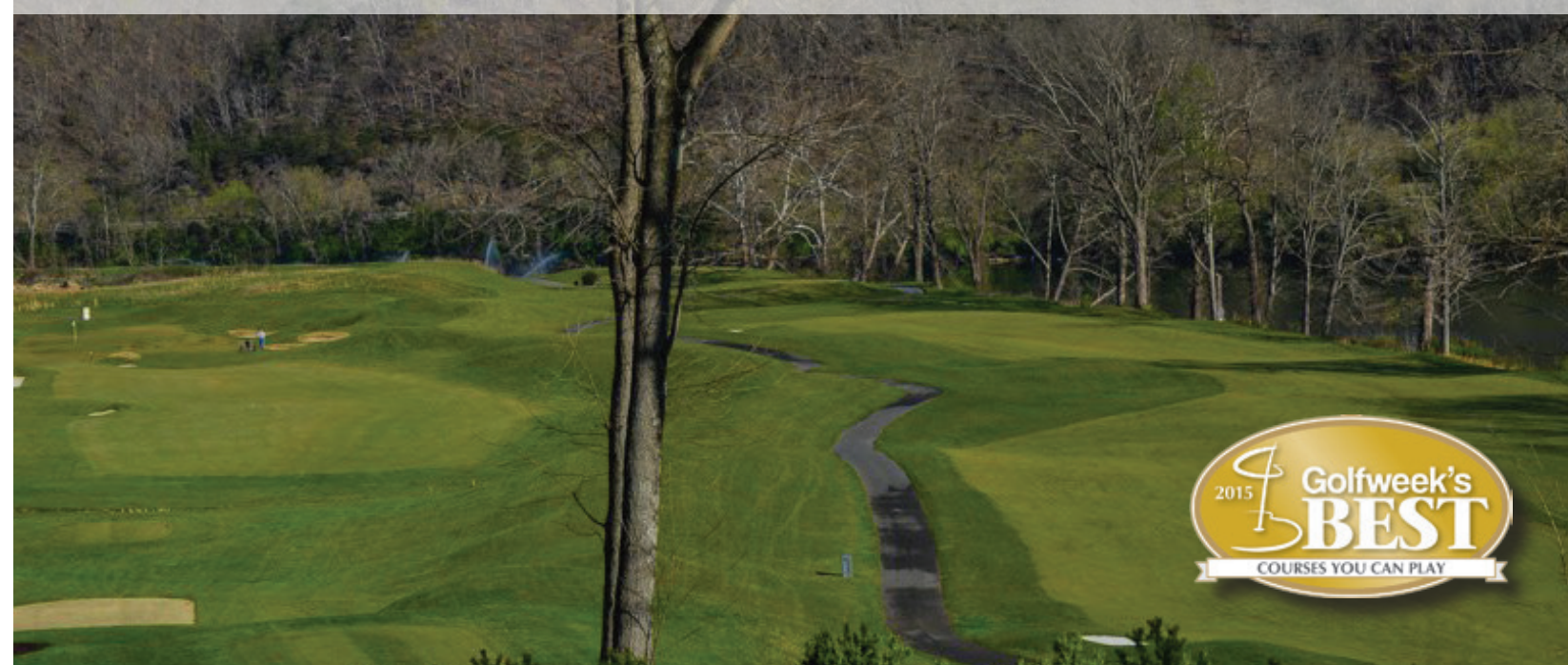


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