

inside

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HOKIESPORTS

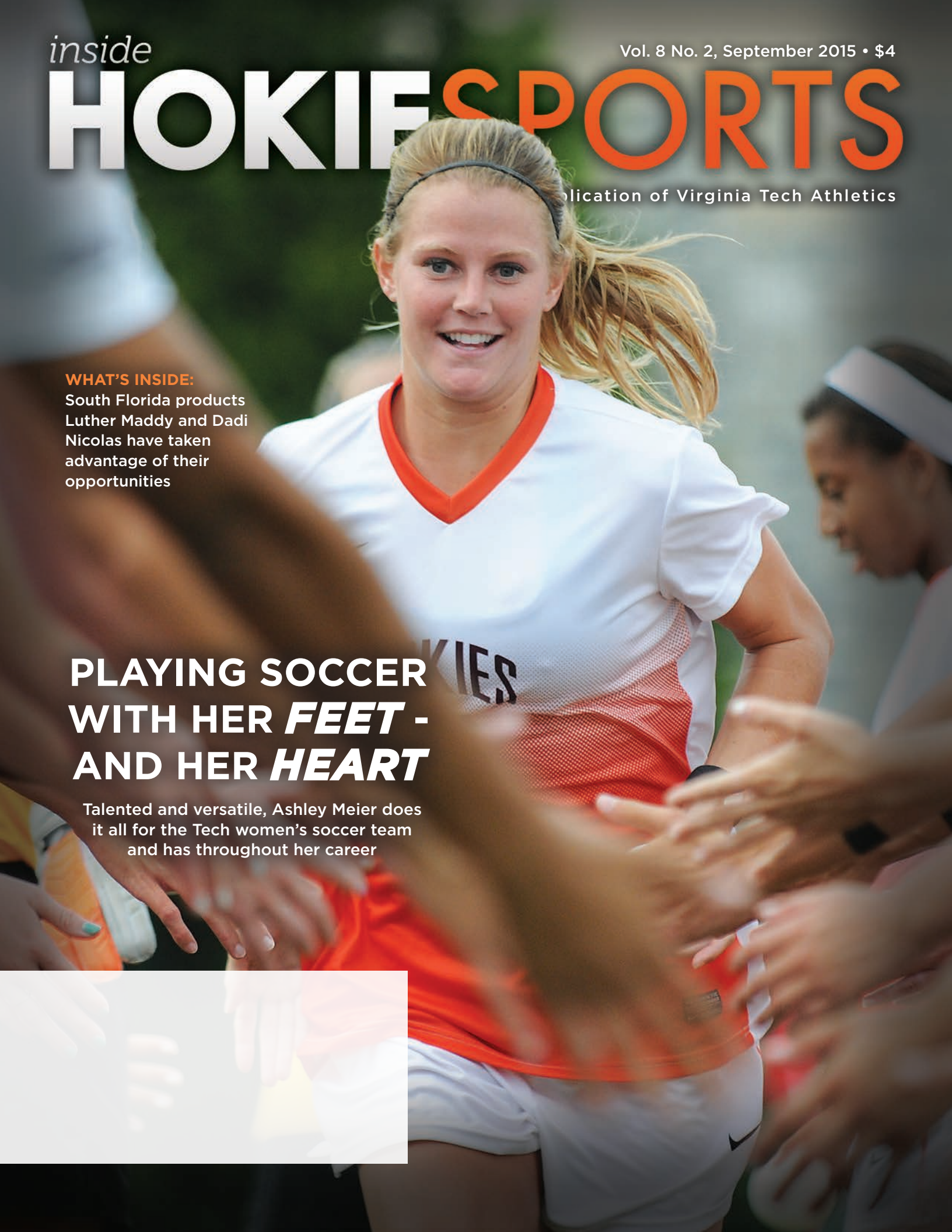
Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

WHAT'S INSIDE:

South Florida products
Luther Maddy and Dadi
Nicolas have taken
advantage of their
opportunities

PLAYING SOCCER WITH HER *FEET* - AND HER *HEART*

Talented and versatile, Ashley Meier does
it all for the Tech women's soccer team
and has throughout her career



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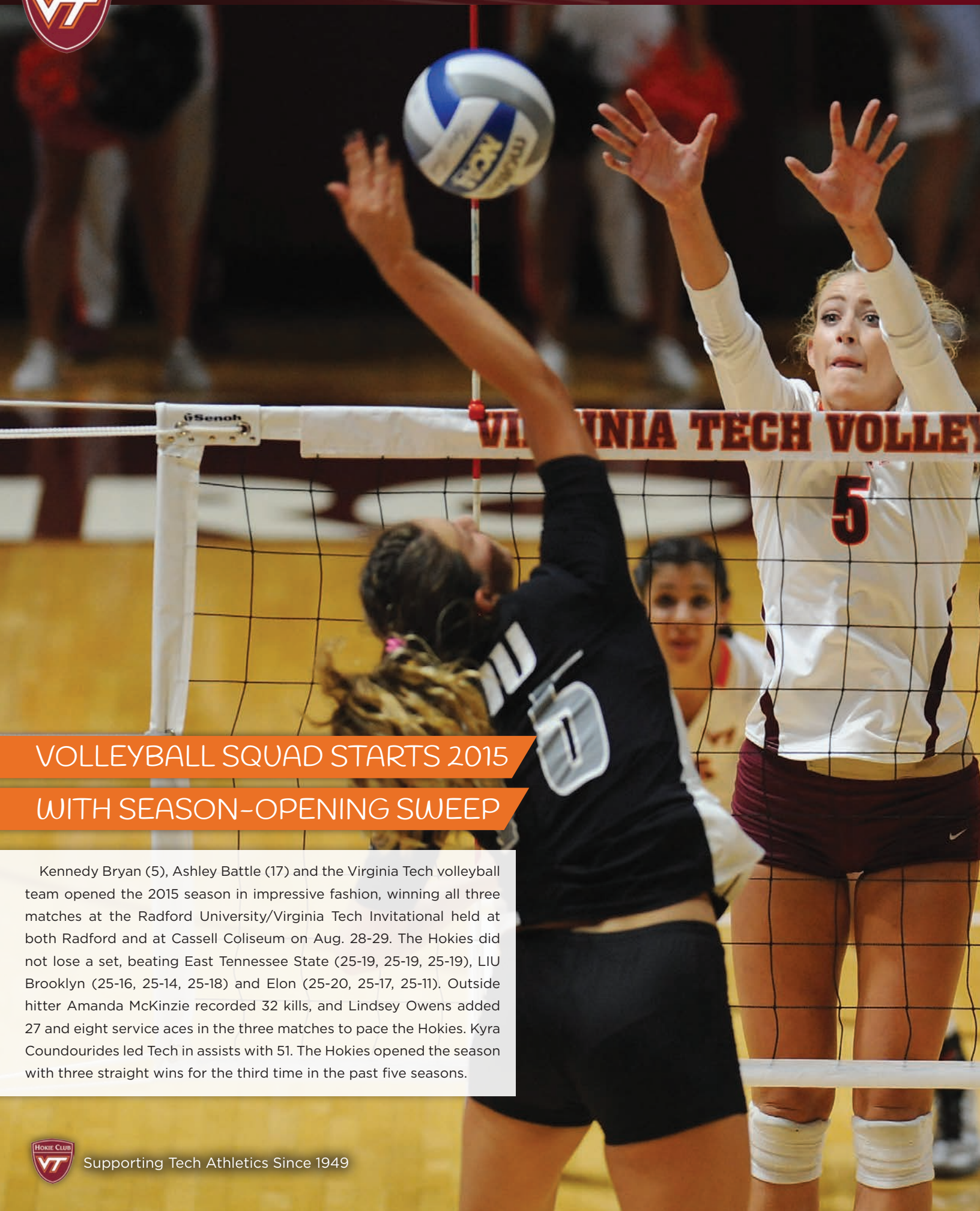
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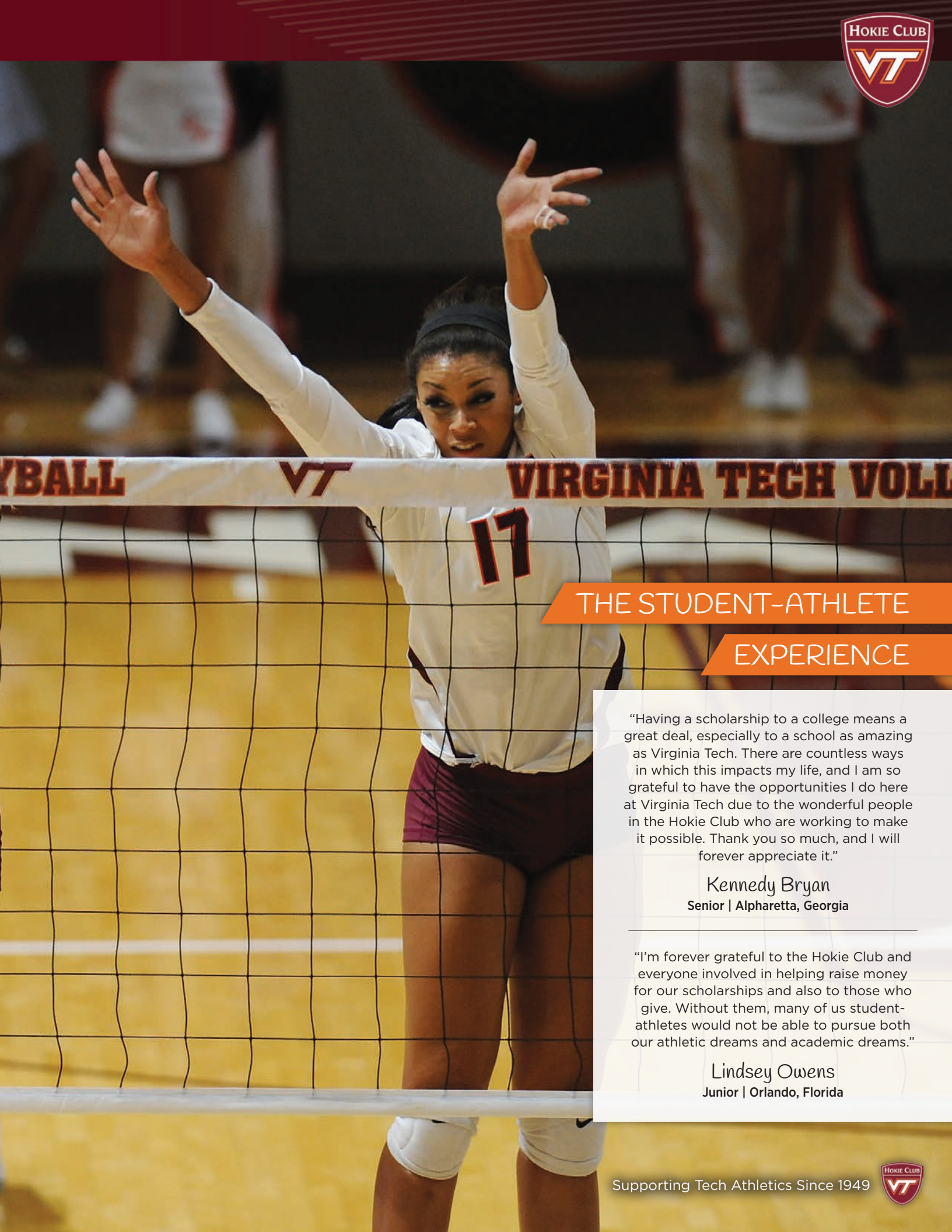
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VOLLEYBALL SQUAD STARTS 2015 WITH SEASON-OPENING SWEEP

Kennedy Bryan (5), Ashley Battle (17) and the Virginia Tech volleyball team opened the 2015 season in impressive fashion, winning all three matches at the Radford University/Virginia Tech Invitational held at both Radford and at Cassell Coliseum on Aug. 28-29. The Hokies did not lose a set, beating East Tennessee State (25-19, 25-19, 25-19), LIU Brooklyn (25-16, 25-14, 25-18) and Elon (25-20, 25-17, 25-11). Outside hitter Amanda McKinzie recorded 32 kills, and Lindsey Owens added 27 and eight service aces in the three matches to pace the Hokies. Kyra Coundourides led Tech in assists with 51. The Hokies opened the season with three straight wins for the third time in the past five seasons.





THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"Having a scholarship to a college means a great deal, especially to a school as amazing as Virginia Tech. There are countless ways in which this impacts my life, and I am so grateful to have the opportunities I do here at Virginia Tech due to the wonderful people in the Hokie Club who are working to make it possible. Thank you so much, and I will forever appreciate it."

Kennedy Bryan
Senior | Alpharetta, Georgia

"I'm forever grateful to the Hokie Club and everyone involved in helping raise money for our scholarships and also to those who give. Without them, many of us student-athletes would not be able to pursue both our athletic dreams and academic dreams."

Lindsey Owens
Junior | Orlando, Florida





The Donor File

Matthew Ogburn

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL:

Diamond Hokie

CURRENTLY RESIDES:

Roanoke, Virginia

GRADUATION YEAR: 2004 (B.S. in finance;
B.A. in political science)

FAMILY: Dorian (wife), Frank (Puppy – doubt it is
difficult to figure out where the name came from!)



Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...

A: A committed, loyal fan of Virginia Tech. A Hokie is: a venerable leader in the boardroom, dynamic teacher in the classroom, gifted author, lauded attorney, exceptional parent, Marching Virginian, world-class physician, ground-breaking engineer, decorated veteran, and most commonly, a fan ready to support their team without compromise on game day. We are easily spotted on fall Saturdays wearing the colors of the changing leaves. Let's Go ... Hokies!

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

A: My blood type is Chicago maroon. I'm fortunate to have been raised in a family steeply rooted in Virginia Tech tradition. I grew up in Lane Stadium, Cassell Coliseum, Burruss Hall, Pamplin, and on the Drillfield at Virginia Tech. We are proud VPI alumni, and I look forward to passing the tradition forward to my children.

Q: What motivates you to give back to help Virginia Tech athletics?

A: "Ut Prosim" (That I may serve) is an appropriate university motto that truly reflects the spirit of Virginia Tech and the ever-present culture of accountability. To that end, I believe it is appropriate to support the university, as well as the Athletic Fund, in the manner that makes the most sense for alumni and fans. The Hokie Club has benefited from extraordinary contributions financially,

and, more importantly, in the form of "Sweat Equity" over the years. I hope to serve VPI in the future by continuing my support of the Hokie Club and the larger university as a whole – financially and otherwise.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech football player is ...

A: Frank Beamer. Coach Beamer is the archetype of a Virginia Tech football player. On the field, his gritty, significant contributions as a cornerback helped lead the Hokies to the Liberty Bowl in 1966 and 1968. Later, Coach Beamer capitalized on his opportunity as head coach by leading his alma mater to 231 victories, 22 bowl games, three BIG EAST championships, four ACC championships, and a berth in the national championship. His approach to the game forced the media to create a brand now known as, "Beamerball."

Coach Beamer's greatest contribution to the Virginia Tech community has been his impact on the lives of countless young men by stressing the importance of character, conviction, academic success and loyalty. His commitment to the university was never more evident than during the tragedy of 2007. Coach Beamer ushered in a new era of Virginia Tech football that provided visibility for the university on the national stage in a manner unprecedented.

Frank Beamer is a gridiron icon, coaching legend and a better man.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech student-athlete from another sport is ...

A: Adrian "Ace" Custis. Ace was an exemplary student-athlete both on and off the court. His leadership was evident on the NIT championship and NCAA squads alike. Today, he is proving to be an excellent addition to the NCAA coaching ranks and is surely making an impact on the lives of the young men he coaches. Ace's inclusion in the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame and the retiring of his jersey speak to his exceptional accomplishments, and his commitment to the motto, "Ut Prosim."

Q: My favorite Virginia Tech sports are ...

A: I support all VPI&SU athletics. Certainly, football is king in Blacksburg. Gameday is a tradition – a gathering of like-minded, rowdy and passionate individuals. Jim Weaver's legacy provided a strategic, fiscally sound foundation for our other athletics programs as well. We continue to realize exceptional growth in our Olympic sports programs, as evidenced by the recent accomplishments of the women's soccer and wrestling programs, and the addition of women's golf to the ACC. As well, the Hokie Nation is, "a-Buzz" over the near-term potential of our men's basketball program. I'm confident that Whit Babcock and the VPI athletics department are working to secure a successful future for the young men and women donning maroon and orange in ACC competition.



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Tech baseball center named in honor of Jim Weaver

The Virginia Tech baseball hitting facility has been renamed in honor of former Tech AD Jim Weaver, who passed away in July. The university and athletics department made the announcement jointly on Sept. 1.

Weaver served as the AD at Tech from 1997-2013 before announcing in November of 2013 that he planned on retiring at the end of the calendar year because of health reasons. Among many of his accomplishments, particularly in the area of facilities, was the construction of the hitting facility, which sits next to Rector Field House and just beyond the left-field foul pole at English Field, Tech's baseball home.

Completed in 2009, the 8,000-square foot facility now will be called the "James C.

Weaver Baseball Center." The facility includes four batting cages enclosed by netting and three instructional video labs. The netting can be raised to expose an area nearly the size of a normal infield, allowing for the opportunity to field and throw.

"To be able to train and develop our student-athletes in a facility named in honor of Jim Weaver is an absolute honor and privilege for our coaching staff and players," said Tech head baseball coach Patrick Mason, who was named by Weaver as Tech's head baseball coach in the summer of 2013. "The James C. Weaver Baseball Center is the best indoor facility in the ACC, and it is only fitting that it will now, forever, be named for the man who helped build it."

Five true freshmen play vs. OSU

Five true freshmen – fullback Steven Peoples, backer Tremaine Edmunds, offensive lineman Yosuah Nijman and defensive backs Mook Reynolds and Adonis Alexander – saw action in the Hokies' season-opening loss to Ohio State. Three other true freshmen, quarterback Dwayne Lawson, defensive back Jahque Alleyne and mike linebacker Carson Lydon, made the dress squad, but did not play.

In the past three-plus seasons, Tech's staff has played 35 true freshmen, including the five who played against the Buckeyes. The coaches played 11 true freshmen in both 2014 and in 2013 and eight in 2012.

Former football coach passes away

Former Virginia Tech head football coach Charlie Coffey passed away at his home in Shelbyville, Tennessee on Aug. 31 at the age of 81.

Coffey, who had been battling health issues for quite some time, spent three seasons as the head coach at Tech from 1971-73 and compiled a 12-20-1 overall record. His best season came in 1972 when the Hokies went 6-4-1.


Coffey, along with offensive coordinator Dan Henning, installed a potent passing attack when he arrived in Blacksburg, taking

advantage of the talents of players like quarterback Don Strock and tight end Mike Burnop, who now serves as the color analyst on the Virginia Tech/IMG Sports Network. Strock led the nation in passing in 1972 with 3,243 yards, and he still holds numerous school records, including completions in a game (34), yards passing in a game (527) and in a season (3,243), and yards per game average for a season (294.8) and a career (207.2).

In 1971, Burnop caught a school-record 46 passes for 558 yards. His single-season

receptions record lasted for more than three decades and is still a school record for tight ends.

After his final season at Tech in 1973, Coffey entered the private sector, working in the trucking industry. In 1981, he founded Nationwide Express, a trucking company, and his two sons run the business today.

Coffey leaves behind a wife, Mai, and four children – Suzanne Mielke, Cindi Johnson, Mike Coffey and David Coffey. He also leaves behind 10 grandchildren and one great grandchild. 

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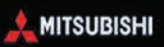
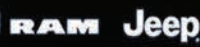
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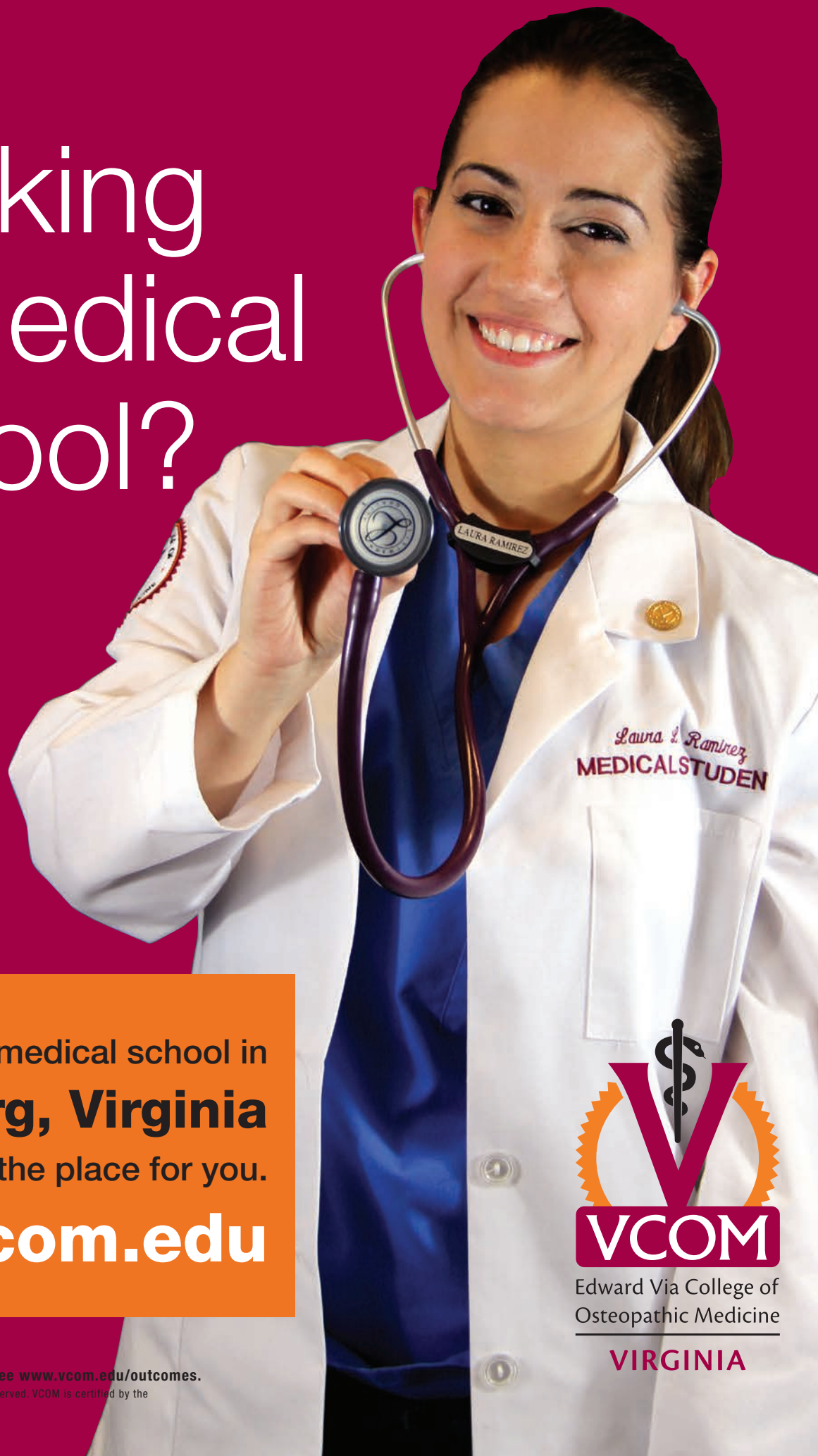
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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Former Tech great Grimm embarks on coaching career here in Blacksburg

The 2015 college football season has kicked off, ending America's eight-month nightmare. But no one was happier to see the season kick off more than Cody Grimm.

Prior to Tech's season-opening game against Ohio State, Grimm hadn't seen a game at Lane Stadium in nearly six years. That seems hard to believe on several levels – a.) that he never got back for at least one game; and b.) that he departed six years ago.

In fact, the last game Grimm saw at Lane Stadium, he actually played in it. On Senior Day in 2009, one of Tech's most popular players went out in style, tying an NCAA record with three forced fumbles in the Hokies' 38-10 win over NC State. His career ended with a six-tackle performance in Tech's 37-14 drubbing of Tennessee in the Chick-fil-A Bowl – arguably the Hokies' most impressive bowl win.

Now Grimm, after four mostly painful seasons of trying to make a go of it in the NFL, is back, working as a graduate assistant under defensive coordinator Bud Foster while taking classes for a master's in education, curriculum and instruction.

"I had been in Tampa, and I got cut before the 2013 season," said Grimm, who was a seventh-round pick of the Buccaneers in the 2010 NFL Draft. "I was on IR [injured reserve] every year, so that didn't really help. I broke my leg my rookie year and then tore my knee up my second year and then pulled my hamstring my third year.

"I was hoping to get picked back up. I talked with other teams. A couple of teams called me during the season, saying that they might bring me in for workouts and asking me if I was still working out – stuff like that.

"But nothing ever came of it, so the following year, I had a couple of workouts. I worked out with the Bears, and I went to mini camp with the Panthers. Nothing came of that. Once that was over, I realized that I wasn't going to play in the NFL any more. That door closed on me, but I wanted to do something with football, so I decided to get into coaching."

Coaching seemed like the natural evolution in Grimm's career. After all, his father, Russ, coached for more than 20 years in the NFL, and his older brother, Chad, serves as the defensive quality control assistant for the Washington Redskins.

Cody graduated with a degree in apparel, housing and resource management, but football is in the family's blood. He gave thought to following Chad and getting into NFL coaching, but decided to return to his college home.

"I could have done the NFL, but most of the NFL stuff was training camp, volunteer type of stuff," he said. "I decided I wanted to go somewhere where I could go for a whole season and learn more.

"There was an opportunity here, and I thought it was the best move. I'm familiar with the coaches and the area, which is nice. Really, it was a no brainer, if I wanted to do college.

There was no place better than coming back to Blacksburg. I already knew the defense. Coach Beamer's resumé speaks for itself, as well as Bud. I figured I could learn a lot here, and I feel comfortable. I still had some friends here. So it made sense."

Grimm helps with the scout team that runs the opposing team's plays against Tech's defense in practice each week. He also helps out on special teams, something near and dear to him, as he got his start on special teams.

It all seems like humbling work for a guy who earned first-team All-ACC honors and once played in the NFL. But Grimm has never displayed an ego, and the players respect him because of that NFL background.

"It's been good," he said. "It's different. I like it. You hear about how long the hours are and that type of stuff, but I really enjoy it. I enjoy the other coaches, and the days go by fast. You're here a long time, but they keep it fun, and you learn a lot as well."

Given his family's track record, Grimm's future in coaching appears to be a bright one. He knows the game, and he played it well. But he knows he needs to learn how to motivate young players to get them to perform at their best.

He's just started down this road – but it's been a smooth journey so far, and he hopes it's a long one.

"I always envisioned getting into coaching," he said. "When I had the opportunity to play, obviously, that's better.

"But coaching is second best." 



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behind the mic | with Jon Laaser

The QB and the Broadcaster – similarities and big differences; learning the Tech playbook on the fly

“It just kind of all came fast. I didn’t step on campus until the last day of May, and workouts and classes started two days later. I didn’t really know anybody outside of Coach [Scot] Loeffler, Coach [Frank] Beamer and a couple of guys on the team. And then trying to compete for the [quarterback] job and learn the offense ... and school, it all comes at you at once, and it was a little bit overwhelming at first. I was just trying to do the little things, like make it from my apartment to the practice facility without getting lost and figuring out a place to eat lunch. I was just trying to do the little things ... just keep chopping wood every day.” – Michael Brewer

I’ve heard Michael Brewer recount his early days in Blacksburg several times, and as I’ve continued to experience more things, meet more people, and grow more comfortable with my surroundings, I couldn’t help but notice similarities in the timeframe we both operated in terms of learning the Virginia Tech playbook. However, his playbook was different than mine. While Michael was attempting to learn the names of his teammates, as well as Loeffler’s complex offense, I needed to immerse myself in the Tech community. My goal was to learn the proud traditions and history of not only athletics, but the institution and area as well. I planned to circle back to the names of his teammates.

Many have compassionately asked along the way how I have been settling in and if there

was anything they could do to lend a hand. I thought those folks might enjoy journeying through the last two months with me, as, like Brewer, I prepared for my first season as a Hokie. What follows is not a complete chronological timeline, but I have highlighted some of the more significant moments. I have also attempted to interpret my emotions along the way as candidly as possible.

On Wednesday, June 17, I received the text message that changed my life. A lengthy process had concluded. I knew that. And on that Wednesday, I was anxiously awaiting word as to whether I would be given the opportunity of a lifetime. However, I wasn’t simply sitting around. I was still calling games for the Richmond Flying Squirrels, and that day’s game was a matinee affair in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. In the ninth inning, the text came from Chris Ferris at IMG. “Great game today ... call me when you have a minute to talk” it said. The game couldn’t end fast enough. Following the game, I called Chris. The news was good. My dream had come true.

From that moment, the challenges I envisioned became a reality. I needed a transition plan, and more than that, an immersion plan.

The news broke six days later on June 23. In between, I had informed Todd “Parney” Parnell, the vice president of the Squirrels, that I would be leaving. He was a big part of making the dream a reality. We were emotional.

Texts, tweets, calls and Facebook messages



Michael Brewer’s season took an unfortunate turn when he broke his collarbone against Ohio State. He will miss at least the next month, possibly two, before returning.

flooded in, as did appearance requests. Brandon Forbis from IMG sent me an email with a list of events, and at the bottom, joked “don’t worry; you’ll have time to prep for Ohio State.”

On July 9, I called my last game at The Diamond. The crowd gave me a standing ovation after the game. I cried. On July 13, I called my final game for the Squirrels in Trenton, New Jersey. They honored me on the video board on the road. I cried again. I said “so long for now” to a lot of brothers that day.

On July 17, I drove a U-Haul to Blacksburg. I don’t remember when I packed up my house. I was jittery. There wasn’t going to be much time to unpack or settle in. On July 18, I drove

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the U-Haul back to Richmond and attended Virginia Tech night at The Diamond with Bud Foster. It was my first introduction to the Tech football program. Bud couldn't have been more welcoming, but said, "You need to learn the history." I planned to.

On July 19, I returned to Blacksburg. On July 20, Andrew Allegretta, Mike Burnop and I drove to Pinehurst, North Carolina, for ACC Media Kickoff. I was the new guy. Mike was not. Watching him work a room of old friends was my first lesson. It was incredible. Interviewing Frank Beamer for the first time was as well. I thought I knew how remarkable of a man and coach he was. I didn't.

On July 20, we drove back to Blacksburg. A Hokie Club kickoff dinner tour waited. On July 21, I attended the Roanoke Valley Hokie Club dinner. Mike did the heavy lifting that night, handling emcee duties. I gave brief introductory remarks. The Hokies there seemed protective of me. I was amazed.

On July 21, I returned to Richmond. I was by far the least distinguished member of the traveling party on the university plane. I couldn't help realizing how much better my travel arrangements were than the week before. I threw my first interception at that dinner, referring to "Virginia Tech University." The Hokies there told me I did a great job. The

mistake gnawed at me. I imagined that Brewer could relate.

On July 22, we repeated the trip, this time to Virginia Beach. On the plane, I talked vision with Bill Lansden, the new executive director of the Hokie Club. The collective energy of the people in the traveling party was invigorating.

That blitz was just the beginning, though. In the weeks that followed, I visited Hillsville with both Coach Beamers. I played golf with Shane. I attended radio affiliate parties, a few more Hokie Club dinners and emceed a pair of picnics. I repelled with the Corps of Cadets and lived to tell about it. With Andrew and Mike, we formulated the new "Virginia Tech Sports Today" and revamped the set and template for "Tech Talk Live." I visited IMG headquarters in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, for orientation.

If it sounds like a lot, it was. If it all sounds awesome, it was. But, as I recount the somewhat hectic schedule, I now realize that it so dramatically pales in comparison to what Brewer was faced with last year – and in many ways, this year as well.

Here are the more than significant differences. Brewer gamely guided the Hokies through his first season at the helm almost entirely on grit. He then spent the entire offseason working diligently to become an even

more confident, poised and knowledgeable leader of the team.

In fact, the amount of work he put in would boggle most minds. And he put in that work, as all athletes do, with the knowledge that injury may interrupt the progress. That is one very large concern I don't have to deal with.

My first broadcast came and went, and it was every bit as thrilling as I could have hoped. All the work, if you can call it that, was more than worth it. But it ended with sadness. Not for a loss to the Buckeyes, but because that injury to Brewer happened.

The Hokies will rally. They will rebound. That we know. But it was a great reminder to me as to how much is put on the line in between the lines, and how fortunate I am to have the chance to describe it. You can certainly chronicle what occurs from the booth, but for all the things that gave me anxiety heading into the game, I was fairly sure I would emerge from it in one piece.

As Mike said when Brewer went down, "There goes one tough hombre." Indeed. But rest assured, he will put in the work – again – and will be back. He's too tough to know any other way. It will be an honor to be there to call it, as it has been trying to learn the playbook, partially with his help.

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Keeping up *with* Compliance

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

Q: I read a story on hokiesports.com about the APR recently. What exactly is that, and what are the penalties if your APR isn't good? Thanks. - Donna from Willis.

TP: "The Academic Progress Rate (APR) holds institutions accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes through a team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each academic term. It was created as part of a comprehensive academic reform movement within NCAA Division I more than a decade ago.

"The APR is a term-by-term calculation of the eligibility and retention of all student-athletes. A score of 1,000 means every student-athlete on that team remained eligible and returned to school. You begin losing points for students who are not eligible to compete and/or do not remain at the school. Scores are determined through a four-year rolling average, so that a single outlier year will not disproportionately impact a school's standing.

"The minimum APR for a program to

achieve and remain eligible for postseason competition is 930. Other penalties can be imposed, including contest reductions and practice limitations.


"Virginia Tech has consistently posted strong APR numbers since the implementation of this measurement. None of our sport programs are currently in danger of sanctions related to APR."

Q: I was reading a story in USA Today about a situation at Troy in which an assistant coach had a telephone conversation with a potential transfer before receiving permission from the potential transfer's school. When an athlete requests a release, how long does it take for the athletics department to give him one? -April in Blacksburg.

TP: "So the process goes like this: a student-athlete must request permission to contact other schools about a transfer. Requests can be formal or informal, in writing or oral. Many occur during discussions between a

student-athlete and a coach or administrator. But the specific NCAA rules about requesting permission to contact only apply if an athlete makes a written request for permission to contact another school.

"Once a student-athlete makes a written request for permission to contact other schools, an NCAA Division I school has seven business days to grant or deny the request. If the request is denied, the school must notify the athlete in writing and offer a hearing with a group that does not include any athletics department staff members. If a hearing is requested, the school has 15 business days to complete the hearing and provide the results to the athlete. If the school misses either deadline, permission is automatically granted.

"In most cases, athletics departments approve student-athlete requests to communicate with other schools, though sometimes limits are imposed (e.g. a student-athlete is permitted to communicate with any school outside of the his/her current school's conference)." 



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JUAN CAMPOS

TRACK & FIELD
Sterling, Virginia

by Jimmy Robertson

*A member of the cross country and track and field teams, **Juan Campos** runs cross country, and in track, he competes in the middle distance races. He plans on graduating in December with a degree in civil engineering and also next May with a master's degree in civil engineering.*

Q: You originally declared physics as your major. Why did you change to civil engineering?

JC: "I loved physics ... I still do. I'm still a physics nerd. I wanted to be an astrophysicist. That was the original idea. I loved black hole theory and all that stuff. I liked outer space and all those concepts. Then, when I got here, I went through a full year of physics, and I realized that they were always going to stay concepts. They were never going to be able to be visualized. The most you can get are models of what could be. You could never see or touch anything. So I realized that I wanted to do something more tangible and hands on."

"I then decided on civil engineering. You get to see something being built. My dad is also a civil engineer, and he pushed me toward that. When I mentioned that, he was all over it. He was excited about that."

Q: You need two classes to graduate, but you're also working on your master's in civil engineering. Why did you decide to pursue that?

JC: "It was mostly because of an internship I did last summer, when I was working for a homebuilder in Northern Virginia. I realized I understood all the plans, all the drawings and the paperwork behind it [a project]. But once I got out in the field, I didn't know what was going on because the whole time I had been looking at it from behind a computer screen. I could figure it out from behind the computer screen. But once you got in the real world and things are actually being built, sometimes a project doesn't go according to what you have on the computer screen."

"So I wanted to get a grasp on that and be able to understand that better. I decided to do the construction management master's. It lets you get a better grasp of what exactly is happening in the real world."

"Not only that, I redshirted my first year [in cross country and indoor track], so this gives me the opportunity to finish running. I'm doing it [his master's] in one year – it's a one-year, no-thesis master's. I get to learn everything in one year and finish my running and then be in the real world."

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

JC: "I've done three internships. The summer after my sophomore year, I did a geotechnical engineering internship with GeoConcepts Engineering [in Ashburn, Virginia], which mainly consisted of the day-to-day tasks. We had to do testing of soils and things of that nature. I was out in the field more. It was a day-to-day review of everything you were doing."


"My second internship was with a house builder, Van Metre Homes [in Stone Ridge, Virginia], and that was overseeing the actual construction of projects. Then this past summer, I worked for a design firm [Timmons Group in Ashburn, Virginia], which is making the plans that are going to be used for the construction and the day-to-day stuff on a project. I didn't plan it this way, but it turned out to be a progression each year where I started at the bottom and moved one step up each time. I got to see the whole construction project, every little aspect along the way."

"I think it all helped me with which of the processes I wanted to go into once I got a job because engineering is so broad. I could have gone into each one of the three categories and plenty more, but each one is different from the next. You're completing one goal in the end, but you have different parts of it. That helped me view which aspect I wanted to get into personally."

Q: And which aspect is that?

JC: "Design, probably. I like the overall picture and doing each one of those [project] lines, and it comes out to an amazing structure. The idea of seeing something from the beginning to the end is super neat."

Q: What are your plans once you graduate next spring?

JC: "I'll probably move back to Northern Virginia and figure out which company I want to work for. The company I worked for this summer [Timmons Group] was great, and I learned a lot. I love them a lot, but I don't want to narrow it down just yet. I want to see what's out there first. They wanted me to stay instead of coming back to school and finishing. They wanted me to go to the NOVA campus and finish my undergrad and not worry about the master's. They were like, 'Stay here. Don't worry about it.' I'm like, 'No, I've got to finish.' But it was nice of them." 

A member of the Tech women's soccer squad, **Courtney Stutts** saw action in 10 matches last season for the Hokies as a defender. She is scheduled to graduate next May with a degree in finance and plans on becoming a certified financial planner.

Q: Why did you decide to major in finance?

CS: "My dad and my mom were both in the banking/finance world. My dad worked at Bank of America, and my mom is a certified financial planner (CFP), which is what I want to be. Within finance, I'm pursuing the CFP track, which deals with personal finance and helping people with retirement and life planning ... things like that. I remember growing up that my mom and my dad were able to go to all my sporting events. When I realized a lot of kids didn't have their parents there, I asked my mom how she was able to come and other parents weren't, and she said, 'Well, at this stage in my life with what I do, I can have my own flexible schedule.' So I grew up around money and banking, and when I found out that about her, I thought that was interesting."

Q: What about certified financial planning intrigues you?

CS: "One thing about financial planning is that it's such a personal connection that you make. Through my two internships and getting into client meetings, I've seen that, yes, you're taking care of their finances and their family, but your clients also turn into your friends. It's really, really personal. You're invested in their lives, and I like that. It's very engaging rather than the other side of banking and investing."

Q: Finance is one of the most demanding majors. How have you been able to balance academics and soccer?

CS: "It's been tough, that's for sure. I've always enjoyed academics, and playing sports all my life, I've had to learn to balance it. The tutors here have been great, and my academic advisor has been really, really helpful in finding internships and motivating me. He has a military background, which isn't exactly like sports, but I feel like I have a good connection with him because he sees the long-term goal and picture. When I have a question, I always go to him. I go to Lane [Stadium, home of the Student-Athlete Academic Support Services Office] a lot, and I love what I'm learning. That makes it easy to open a book sometimes and be on the bus and turn on the light when everyone else is sleeping."


Q: What internships have you done, and what did you learn?

CS: "The summers before my sophomore and junior years, I worked at Lincoln Financial Group in Charlotte, and I shadowed a woman named Kaye Miller. She was a personal financial planner, but she worked more with the insurance side of things. This past summer, I loved my internship at Carroll Financial, which is an independent firm, and they're also in Charlotte. I worked under an advisor and his team all summer. There were other smaller teams within the firm that I could shadow and see how they work with their clients and how they do their meetings. I loved it! I learned so much."

"This internship was more personal financial planning instead of just selling insurance, which is also helping people. But this is more managing their assets and having a personal connection and impacting their lives. You're helping them save and helping their kids, which I really enjoyed seeing. Being in client meetings and seeing how some of the advisors have such good relationships was awesome. I think that's what I'd eventually want."

Q: What are your future plans?

CS: "Hopefully, I'll find a job. I've got an interest offer from Carroll that I will look into. I'm going to look at bigger banks to see if I want the big scene or the small scene. I'll graduate in May and take my CFP exam either in late July or early November. Most people take a crash course in the summer or fall. You learn a lot while you're in school, but you want to bring it all back together, so the course helps you get ready for the exam."

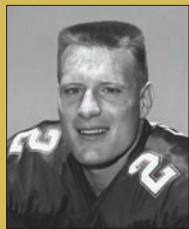
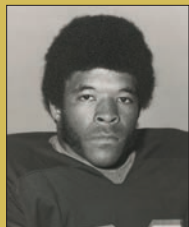
"Hopefully, I'll pass the exam in the fall or late summer. Then you need three years of work experience before you become a full-time advisor. Theoretically, at 25 or 26, I could be advising people, but obviously that takes a lot of trust for someone to trust someone who is so young. Maybe I can shadow an advisor or associate advisor and learn their client base and start working with them and making connections with their children or grandchildren around my age that I could actually help." 



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WOMEN'S SOCCER
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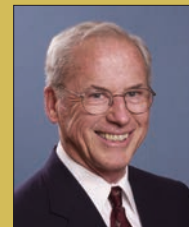
by Jimmy Robertson



HALL of FAME

Three football players, a wrestler, a team physician and a track standout comprise the 2015 class

by Jimmy Robertson



Earlier this summer, **Bryan Randall**, on the road with his Arena Football League team, received a phone call from his father, Edgar, who informed him of a letter from Virginia Tech that had arrived at the Randall's home in Williamsburg, Virginia.

"I've got some good news and some bad news," Edgar told him. "The good news is that you're going to be inducted into the Virginia Tech Hall of Fame. The bad news is that it's Sept. 11, the day before you're getting married."

Randall, who was always a quick learner, made a shrewd decision, listening to his wife and ensuring that, as long as he does exactly that, he will be blissfully married for a long time. He missed the Hall of Fame festivities on the evening before the Tech-Furman game and the recognition at halftime of the game.



"I ran through about 100 difference scenarios," Randall said. "I thought about driving back here [to Williamsburg] after the dinner, I thought about flying ... everything. It was just too much, and she didn't really want me to go. It was a tough decision, but I decided not to go."

"I hated that I missed it. I was up there last year the weekend that Lee Suggs was inducted, and André Davis was up there – and

he had been inducted [in 2012]. They were both telling me that I was going to join them some day. I'm extremely honored to be a part of such a distinguished group of people. It's very humbling."

Randall was one of six inducted as part of the 2015 class. The others included football standouts Roscoe Coles and Will Furrer, track star April Byrd Mosley, wrestling great Sean Gray and former team physician Dr. Duane Lagan. The new inductees bring the total number enshrined to 181. The Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame, which is located at the south end of the Cassell Coliseum ambulatory, was established in 1982.

Randall probably headlines the group. He played as a true freshman, and as a sophomore, he won the starting job and went on to enjoy a record-setting career. During his second year, he threw for 2,134 yards and 12 touchdowns, with 11 interceptions, and helped guide the Hokies to a win over Air Force in the Diamond Walnut San Francisco Bowl.

In 2003, Randall started all 13 games, throwing for 1,996 yards and 15 touchdowns, with 10 interceptions. His best game that season came in the Hokies' loss to California in the Insight Bowl when he threw for 398 yards and four touchdowns. He also ran for a score.

Randall's final season was his most memorable, as he led the Hokies to a 10-2 regular-season record and the ACC championship. In the regular-season finale, he threw a fourth-quarter touchdown pass to Eddie Royal against Miami to help Tech clinch the ACC crown.

"That was probably my most memorable moment," Randall said. "There was so much on the line – a BCS bowl, the ACC championship. To win it was an outstanding feeling. It was

the icing on the cake."

Randall was named the ACC Player of the Year after throwing for 2,264 yards, with 21 touchdowns and nine interceptions, and he also rushed for more than 500 yards. His career ended with a 16-13 loss to then-No. 3 and unbeaten Auburn in the Sugar Bowl. He accounted for 344 yards of total offense in that game, and he finished as the school's all-time leader in total offense (8,034), career touchdown passes (48) and career passing yards (6,489). He still ranks second in touchdown passes, while ranking third in both total yardage and passing yards.

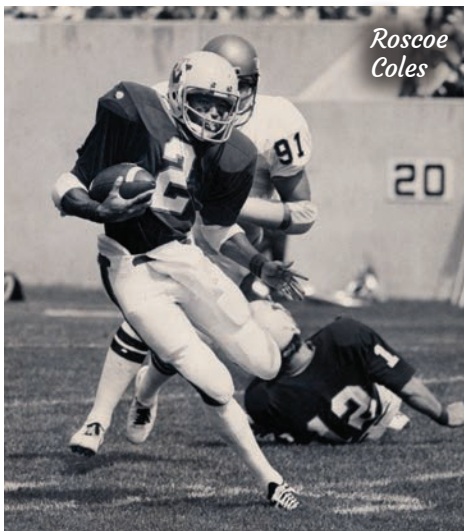
Tech fans, though, rarely talk numbers when they talk about Randall. They talk about his character and how he always took time to sign autographs, smile for photos and high-five young children. For those reasons, he endeared himself to Hokie Nation, and many consider him their favorite player even though he graduated more than 10 years ago.

"That makes you feel good," he said. "There are so many good players, good guys, that have accomplished so much more than I have, and it's amazing how the fans have shown me the love that they have. It's really increased more since I left."

"It really wasn't anything special that I was doing. It was just me being me. I tried to carry myself every day as a person that people would respect. So it makes me feel good to hear people say nice things about me even today. That's special, and I don't take that for granted."

Today, Randall plays for the Philadelphia Soul in the Arena Football League. During the offseasons, he has worked in the pro shop at Fords Colony Country Club in his hometown of Williamsburg, and he also has worked for Edgewood Company, a moving company.

To understand just how good of a tailback **Roscoe Coles** was during his career at Tech, one needs to consider this: he played at Tech nearly 40 years ago and his name still is featured prominently in the Hokies' record books today.



Roscoe Coles

Not many expected that when Coles arrived in Blacksburg out of Bayside High School in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He stood 5-foot-9, and while he went on several recruiting visits, he found himself in the shadows of a couple of his high school teammates.

"Both of those guys had the profile of a big-time football player. I didn't have the profile in terms of size, but I had the profile in terms of speed," Coles said. "To be honest, when I went on visits with those guys, they were given the red-carpet treatment in those days. I felt a little slighted.

"When I went to Tech, I felt like I was at home. It was a different feeling than what I had experienced before. There was a new coach and a new staff, and when you have that, you have an opportunity to come in and prove yourself. I always thought I could play, and that I could play anywhere with anybody on any given day. That's the way I played. Tech afforded me that opportunity, and I made good of it."

Coles always wanted to go into the military – his father was in the military – and Tech's ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] offered him that option as well. The combination of football, military opportunities and a quality education were too good for him to turn down.

His arrival worked out well for Tech, too, as Coles established himself as one of the school's best running backs. He was just the second Tech running back ever to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season, and he did so twice, breaking the school record both times.

As a freshman in 1975, he amassed 1,045 yards rushing and 10 touchdowns, breaking Phil Rogers' single-season mark of 1,036 yards set in 1973. The next season, he rushed for 1,119 yards and nine touchdowns, again breaking the school record. He earned

honorable mention All-America honors after both of those seasons.

During his final season, Coles rushed for 672 yards and four scores. He led the team in rushing all three years.

One of Coles' most memorable moments came in 1975 when he scored on an 89-yard run that lifted the Hokies to a 23-16 win over Auburn at Jordan-Hare Stadium. That run still ranks as the second-longest run in school history.

"Auburn has had a great history of having great teams," he said. "Going to Auburn and playing them in Auburn and beating them in Auburn with the group of guys we had, and then having a run of that magnitude, it's not something that happens every day."

Another memorable moment came in 1976 when he rushed for a school-record 214 yards in the Hokies' 35-31 loss to Tulsa, a single-game total that still ranks fifth in school history.

"We lost to them in the last second of the game," he said. "We probably should have won that one. But Tulsa was ranked ninth in the nation in rush defense. As you talk about these things, they pop back up because it's not something you think about all the time. It gets me excited to think about those things. They may not mean a lot to many people, but they mean a lot to me. Those were great days."

Coles finished his career with 3,459 yards rushing on 656 carries. His career rushing record stood for 26 years until Kevin Jones broke it during the 2003 season, and it still ranks third on the list today. His single-season rushing mark of 1,119 yards stood for three years until Cyrus Lawrence eclipsed it in 1980 (1,221 yards).

After he graduated in 1978 with a degree in distributive education, Coles served in the military from 1978-86, achieving the rank of captain. He then worked in the corporate world for four years before embarking on a career in education, including stints as a teacher, head football coach, head track coach and assistant principal, all at the high school level.

Today, Coles is an assistant principal at Enterprise Academy, an alternative school in Newport News, Virginia. He took over on July 1 after spending 10 years as an assistant principal of operations at Heritage High School. He and his wife, who have put four of their five children through college (and their youngest one is a sophomore in college), live in Chesapeake, Virginia.

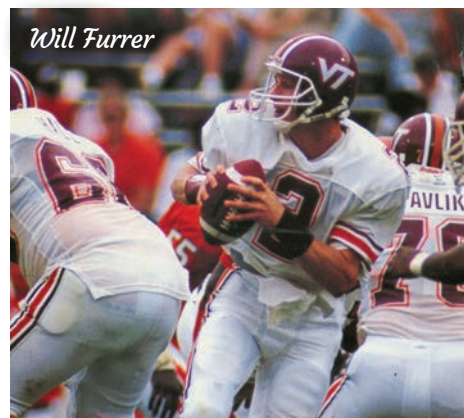
Most former players express at least a little modicum of surprise when discussing the meteoric rise of Virginia Tech football over the past 20 years. But **Will Furrer** isn't one of those.

He's not really all that surprised to see where the Hokies rank among the nation's college football hierarchy.

"Yes, based on the quality of people," he said when asked if he ever expected the Hokies

to be among the elite programs nationally. "While you're there, you don't know how great the people are that you're there with, so that makes it a little hard to imagine. One thing Virginia Tech has always had is the character of the people that were there and how hard they were playing and how tight the team was.

"In hindsight, when I look back at the quality of the people, the program is exactly where it should be. But while you're there, it's hard to imagine the program we have today."



Will Furrer

The Pullman, Washington native played a role in helping build the foundation as a quarterback in current head coach Frank Beamer's first recruiting class. He went on to become a four-year starter, putting up record-breaking numbers during a career that spanned from 1988-91.

Furrer earned the starting job as a freshman in 1988, and he led the Hokies in passing, throwing for 1,384 yards and six touchdowns. As a sophomore, he started the first four games, but in the Hokies' 23-0 win over Temple, he tore ligaments in his knee and missed the remainder of the season. Still, he led the team in passing, throwing for 589 yards, with three touchdowns and three interceptions.

Furrer bounced back as a junior in 1990, throwing for 2,122 yards, with 19 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. The Hokies went 6-5 that season and ended the year with a 38-13 blowout of rival Virginia on ESPN. Furrer threw for 254 yards and three touchdowns in that game.

He cited his first collegiate game, which happened at Clemson's "Death Valley" [a 40-7 loss] and this Virginia game as his two most memorable moments.

"It was one of those 60-minute windows when you remember every single play," Furrer said of the Virginia game. "I still remember calling a timeout and changing a play to put Greg Daniels in position to be one-on-one with a corner and throwing a touchdown to him [a 33-yard play]. I remember handing the ball off to Vaughn Hebron in the second half and letting him score a touchdown [on a 9-yard run]. I remember making a check and throwing a touchdown to Nick Cullen [a 29-yard play]. You remember those games as if they were yesterday. That was quite a moment because

it really changed the recruiting landscape for Blacksburg.”

During his final season, he threw for 1,820 yards, with 15 touchdowns and 16 interceptions. He injured a knee in the Hokies’ win over Akron that year and missed the final two games of his collegiate career.

In fact, Furrer missed nine games in his career. But he still went down as the school’s record holder in career touchdown passes (43), completions (494), attempts (920) and completion percentage (53.7). His 5,915 yards ranked second only behind former signal caller Don Strock.

“Injuries are a part of it,” Furrer said. “It’s not if you get injured, but when you get injured, and then how you handle it. It’s unfortunate that those things happened and the timing of them. Again, learning how to overcome those is what we’re called to do. I wish they hadn’t happened, and I think our fortunes would have been different if they hadn’t.

“Even when I got injured, that also created some of the great moments. Cam Young went up and played nearly a perfect game at West Virginia [a 12-10 Tech win in 1989]. What it demonstrated at that time was that no matter who was on the field, the fans, university and players were going to give 100 percent. That’s what I really like about the school. No one has been bigger than the program. No one is bigger than the university.”

Furrer’s career passing records lasted quite a while before ultimately being broken. His completions mark lasted 19 years before being broken by Tyrod Taylor in 2010, while his attempts record held for 22 years until Logan Thomas snapped it in 2013. Furrer still ranks second on Tech’s list in career completions and third in attempts. He’s fourth in career touchdown passes and fifth in passing yards.

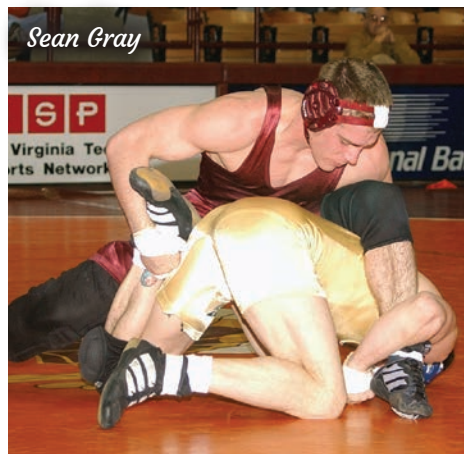
Furrer works as the senior vice president of product at Q2Holdings, a company that provides virtual banking solutions to regional and community financial institutions and is based in Austin, Texas. He leads the overall product, marketing and branding efforts for the company. He and his family live in Georgetown, Texas.

Sean Gray knew very little about Virginia Tech when then-Tech wrestling coach Keith Moulam started recruiting him out of Blair Academy in New Jersey in the mid-1990s.

Actually, he knew nothing about Virginia Tech.

“We’re at Blair Academy and coming off a national championship, our first ever, and we had a great group of seniors, so we’re getting calls from everywhere, all the top wrestling schools,” Gray said. “Then I get this call from Virginia Tech. I was, like, ‘Virginia who?’ I think the first question I asked of Coach Moulam was, ‘Are you guys Division I?’ He told me yes.”

Gray later came down and visited for Tech’s 1996 Thursday night football game against East Carolina, fell in love with the campus and the coaches, and ultimately embarked on one of the best careers ever by a Tech wrestler.



As a freshman in 1997-98, he posted one of the best seasons in school history, coming just a win short of earning All-America honors at the NCAA Wrestling Championships. He went 32-8 that season and captured the Colonial Athletic Association title at 134 pounds, while also winning the league’s Rookie of the Year award. Seven of those eight losses came to nationally ranked wrestlers.

He took a redshirt season the following year and enjoyed a terrific redshirt sophomore campaign, going 40-3 overall in the 141-pound weight class, including an 8-0 mark in Eastern Wrestling League (EWL) action. He placed seventh at the 2000 NCAA Championships, earning All-America honors. He followed that by earning All-America honors again in 2001, finishing sixth at 141 pounds. In doing so, he became the program’s first two-time All-American.

Unfortunately, he tore an ACL his senior season and wasn’t 100 percent. He still qualified for the NCAA Championships, but came up short in his bid to be a three-time All-American.

He admitted he came up short of his ultimate goal – winning a national championship. Yet today, he looks back fondly on his five years in Blacksburg.

“There are so many memories of my entire experience at Virginia Tech that has kept me forever connected,” he said. “I had such an amazing experience there. Some of my best friends to this day, I met there. I met my wife there, so that was special.

“If we’re talking wrestling, I probably had two moments that stand out. When I first became an All-American was pretty exciting, just how I did it because I had gotten upset the first round of the national tournament and had to wrestle all the way back just to place. I beat a future NCAA champion and a future Olympic silver medalist just to place that year.

“The other was becoming Virginia Tech’s first two-time All-American. Those two things

stand out. When you become an All-American, you make wrestling history, and I was excited about being the school’s first two-time All-American.”

Gray qualified for the NCAA Championships all four years of his career, and he was a three-time EWL champion. He finished his collegiate career undefeated in conference dual-meet competition and was inducted into the EWL Hall of Fame on March 4, 2007.

Gray finished as the school’s all-time leader in wins (133), winning percentage (.850), pins (45), and pins in a single season (15). He still ranks as the school’s leader in career individual wins and pins and second in winning percentage (.875). Only Devin Carter, who just wrapped up his brilliant career, won a higher percentage of his matches (.883).

“It is surprising,” Gray said of his records. “Especially with Virginia Tech having back-to-back top-10 finishes nationally and multiple All-Americans, and then having one of the most special wrestlers and exciting wrestlers to go through NCAA Division I wrestling in Devin Carter. So to still have those records stand, it’s astonishing. I never accomplished my goal, and that still drives me in coaching today. But to look back, I guess I can say I had a pretty darn good career.”

Then he added, laughing, “I can also tell you this – I know those records won’t last much longer.”

Today, Gray and his family live in Pennington, New Jersey, and he works as an assistant wrestling coach at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey, where he has spent the past five years. This past season, he helped the program get a school-record five qualifiers to the NCAA Wrestling Championships. Prior to that, he worked as an assistant at Boston University for seven seasons.



It seems near miraculous that **Dr. Duane Lagan** served as the team doctor for the Hokies after hearing the story as to how it came about.

Lagan was working at a health clinic in his tiny hometown of Okeene, Oklahoma, when, in 1989, he received a note in the mail from Dr. John Moore, who worked at Virginia Tech’s student health center, but knew Lagan from when both worked at Texas A&M. The envelope held the clipping of ad announcing the search

of a team physician for Tech's varsity sports.

"He had never, ever written to me – and there was no letter with it – but he cut out the ad and sent me the clipping and wrote on it, 'Duane, wondered if you'd be interested. John.'" Lagan said. "That's all it was. So I asked my wife, 'Do I inquire about this job or what?' We were settled in and doing fine. She said, 'Do what you want to do.' After a couple of days, I called."

Lagan ultimately got the job, and "I was happy every day I was there."

He began in the fall of 1989, and his cheerful and caring disposition made him a favorite among Tech's student-athletes during a career that spanned 14 years.

He served as the team physician for all varsity sports at Tech – the last team physician to do so, as the athletics department put more resources into sports medicine shortly after Lagan's departure. Today, each sport has a trainer assigned to it, and the department uses multiple physicians to treat the needs of its student-athletes.

The role required working long hours. In fact, he took care of the cheerleaders and the HokieBird, too.

"Anything that was there," he said. "Sometimes that would get a little complex with games going on at the same time at different venues, but it usually worked out fine. I loved taking care of all the different ones

and the long hours."

He even worked on a few coaches' kids.

"I sewed up a few lacerations from bike wrecks," he chuckled. "Most of those things, you could take care of. That was always sort of the fun part of it, just having that family."

Lagan was involved in several high-profile cases during his time at Tech. He convinced football coach Frank Beamer to go to the hospital after Beamer experienced chest pains following a road game at East Carolina in 1989. A few days later, Beamer underwent surgery to repair an artery that led to his heart – a procedure that prevented something disastrous from happening.

Lagan also worked at Tech when women's basketball player Rayna DuBose suffered meningococcal meningitis, which caused her to lose her limbs, and when football player Chad Cooper was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré, a disorder of the nervous system that nearly cost him his career.

In addition to working in athletics, Lagan served as a physician at the University Health Center, spending mornings on campus before heading to the athletics facilities. He traveled to all football and men's basketball games from 1989 through April of 2003. He was also on the bench for all home football, men's and women's basketball and wrestling events, and was on call for every sport. He often did house calls to athletes' apartments and dorm rooms.

"That was a wonderful time, taking care of athletes," he said. "I'm an empathetic sort of guy. I have a soft spot for a kid who gets recruited from any type of life and takes off 100 miles or 300 miles or a 1,000 miles to play at a university and have something medical happen to him. You're checking a knee or something, and they're scared to death. Why would they have any confidence in some little ol' undersized fellow who tells them that they're going to have to have surgery? I've always thought of it from their end of it and tried to reassure them that they're getting good medical care."

Lagan retired from athletics in January of 2003, but stayed on to work as a staff physician in Student Health Services until the end of the academic year and worked part time for Student Health Services until 2006 when he and his wife, Dee, returned to their hometown in Oklahoma. He worked part time there, running his private practice, and he also served as the team physician for Okeene High School. He later retired to take care of his ailing wife, though he cared for injured athletes as needed.

In 2013, Lagan and his wife were presented with The Distinguished Citizen Award for their service in the community of Okeene the prior 48 years. The honor came as a surprise, though not quite on the same level as opening the mailbox and learning that a school wanted to induct him into its Hall of Fame.

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"I'm a little, ol' country doctor in a little tiny town," he said. "I live an obscure life in an obscure place of the world and to go from there and end up in the sports Hall of Fame is unexpected, which is a gross understatement. But it's certainly gratifying."



Virginia Tech's campus takes on a different look each year as new buildings get built, old ones get renovated and streets and highways deviate from their previous route.

April Byrd found this out on her recent visit to Blacksburg. After a 15-year absence, she barely recognized the place.

"It's one of those things where you say, 'Yeah, I'll go back eventually,' and then as life started to happen, the next thing you know, it's been 15 years later, and I'm like, 'I have not been back to Blacksburg,'" she said.

Byrd, a product of Alexandria, Virginia, graduated in 2000 and departed after a storied four-year career on the track as both a long and triple jumper. She set school indoor and outdoor women's long jump and triple jump records that still stand today.

Byrd burst onto the scene quickly, setting the school's indoor record in the triple jump at her first collegiate meet (40 feet, 1.5 inches). She then set the school's outdoor record in the event as a sophomore with a leap of 39 feet, 10.75 inches.

That same year, she captured the triple jump title at the Atlantic 10 Outdoor Track and Field Championships and helped the Hokies to the A-10 team championship. Her individual crown served as the first of seven individual championships that she would win in her illustrious career.

In 1999, she won the long jump at the conference's indoor meet and the triple jump at the outdoor meet. Her triple jump propelled her to the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships that season.

"That was probably my most memorable moment," she said. "Making it to the NCAA track and field meet, and being able to compete at that level."


During her final season in 2000, she won both the long jump and triple jump at both of the conference's indoor and outdoor meets. At the Atlantic 10 Outdoor Track and Field Championships, Byrd's titles in the long and triple jumps guided the Hokies to another team title.

Byrd closed her career by winning the triple jump at the prestigious Penn Relays. In some ways, simply winning a gold medal in her favorite event at such a distinguished meet marked the perfect end to her career.

"It would probably be the triple jump record," Byrd said, referring to setting the triple jump record as her favorite accomplishment. "That was what I was better at. I do have more pride in that, and that was the one I competed in at the NCAA Championship meet."

After breaking the school record in both the long jump and triple jump as a junior – both indoor and outdoor – Byrd accomplished the feat again during her senior season. She still holds the school's indoor record in the long jump (19 feet, 9 inches) and triple jump (41 feet, 4.25 inches), and she still holds the school's outdoor record in both events (long jump, 20 feet, 1.5 inches; triple jump, 42 feet, 5.25 inches).

"I'm extremely surprised about that," she said. "I really didn't think they'd be standing at this point in time."

After graduating in 2000 with a degree in communication, Byrd Mosley went to work as a public relations assistant for a non-profit organization in Washington, D.C. In 2001, she moved to Atlanta and worked in marketing communications for five years before getting an associate's degree in graphic design. For the past 10 years, she has been working as a graphic and web designer, and she also owns her own business designing personalized tabletop nightlights for children. 

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Former Tech quarterback Michael Vick came back to campus in early August and talked with the team

Michael Vick, who led the Hokies to a perfect regular season in 1999 and an appearance in the 2000 national championship game against Florida State, came back to Blacksburg for the Hokies' opening practice on Aug. 7, and after being introduced by head coach Frank Beamer, he spoke to the team for approximately 10 minutes.


"I told them to embrace the opportunity," Vick said. "Don't take anything lightly. Life is ahead of them, whether it's the NFL or

graduating and moving on to other things. They have a great opportunity to do many things with their lives, and this is the platform to do it. They deserve it. They work hard to get here, and this entire school and program will give them everything that they need as long as they put in the hard work."

Vick talked with media members inside of Tech's new practice facility, which left an impression on him. A huge graphic of him is displayed on one of the walls in the facility, along with graphics of several other great

players from Tech's past.

"It goes to show that I did something right when I was here," Vick said of the graphic. "It's remarkable. There are so many great players who did the same thing and made a contribution. We're all proud to be a part of it."

On Aug. 25, Vick signed a one-year contract with the Pittsburgh Steelers to be Ben Roethlisberger's backup after spending last season with the New York Jets. The 2015 season will be Vick's 13th in the NFL. 

FLORIDA TEAMMATES-
and friends-
FIND THEIR WAY
AT TECH



Bound by their Haitian roots and South Florida background, Luther Maddy and Dadi Nicolas together have taken advantage of their opportunities in Blacksburg and continue to pursue their dreams

by Jimmy Robertson

Luther Maddy talks about as fast as he plays, which is with tailback speed that belies his defensive tackle stature. But when he talks about his future plans, he picks up velocity, excitement gushing from his voice. When an interviewer hears the words “tax credits” and “section 8 housing,” he or she quickly realizes that it’s time to steer the conversation back toward football, lest Mr. Maddy make one look uneducated.

Maddy wants to purchase or build and manage his own properties, putting his already secured degree in apparel, housing and resources, with a concentration in residential property, to good use. It’s a lofty dream for a young man who comes from modest means, but Maddy, currently in the process of getting another degree (consumer studies), refuses to let the past dictate the future – his future.

Dadi Nicolas has similar dreams. Like Maddy, he, too, secured his degree last spring, receiving one in sociology, and he, too, continues work on a second one (consumer studies). He hasn’t quite narrowed his focus on his future, but he mentions several possibilities, including law school.

Fans love to hear this, student-athletes with gigantic dreams. But they tend to forget that, as the saying goes, “The dream is free, but the hustle is sold separately.” It costs nothing to dream. It takes work, though, to make the dream become reality.

Maddy and Nicolas know this better than anyone else. Their stories are eerily similar – two young men of Haitian descent growing up in a small city that clings to Florida’s eastern coast. They went to the same high school in Delray Beach, and they both viewed football as a means to an end. They went unwanted by many during the recruiting process, but came to Virginia Tech as teammates and friends. After rooming together for four years, they will leave as brothers, with degrees.

These two started as kids with dreams – and they’ve been hustling ever since.

Humble Beginnings

When most people think of Haiti, they think of poverty, and they think of the earthquake that decimated the country in January of 2010. The World Bank lists Haiti as the poorest nation in the western hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world.

Maddy and Nicolas, though, light up with pride at the mention of the nation that they consider their homeland. They don’t think “poverty.” They think resiliency. In their eyes, Haiti’s top resource is its people.

Nicolas, in fact, was born in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, before coming to the U.S. with a guardian at

three months old. Maddy’s parents were born in Haiti before emigrating to the U.S., and his stepmom also hails from Haiti.

Maddy never knew his natural mother, Andreas Jean-Baptiste. She died the day after giving birth to him in a Florida hospital in 1993.

“God has His reasons for everything,” Maddy said. “He has a plan. I definitely play the game for her. Of course, we didn’t have a relationship, but she’s still my mother. I’ve got her name tatted on my arm, and I still think about her all the time.

“God keeps blessing me. I don’t know if she has anything

“

God keeps blessing me. I don’t know if she has anything to do with it, but I know she’s watching over me. I could have gone in the wrong direction in high school, but something told me to go in the right direction. I’m guessing that’s Him through her. I feel like she’s looking over me.

– Luther Maddy on the impact of his deceased mother

”

to do with it, but I know she’s watching over me. I could have gone in the wrong direction in high school, but something told me to go in the right direction. I’m guessing that’s Him through her. I feel like she’s looking over me.”

Maddy’s father, Jumelle, later married Maddy’s stepmother, Muraline, and they raised him and his younger brother.

“She’s definitely been a mother figure for me,” Maddy said of his stepmom.

Maddy’s three older brothers were born in Haiti, and an older sister – whom he has never met, though he talks to her on the phone periodically – lives in France with her mother.

His parents managed to get jobs in the South Florida area. His dad works as a limo driver, and his stepmom at a jewelry store. They lived an unpretentious lifestyle and always stressed to Maddy and his younger brother to dream bigger.

Largely because of the example they set, Maddy rarely got

into trouble. He made good grades and stayed focused, turning his back on distractions that led to other, less promising, paths.

"My parents are big into academics," he said. "They wanted me to get my degree. They didn't care what it was in. They wanted me to put forth the effort into whatever I wanted to, and they did a great job of leading me in the right direction."

Nicolas' guardian, Esperanta Estime, led him in the right direction as well. She helped raise Nicolas' biological mother in Haiti, and Estime ended up bringing Nicolas to the States, landing in Delray Beach, which features a large Haitian population. She raised him as her own until Nicolas' mother arrived nearly 16 years later.

"Basically, I have two moms – my biological mom and a mother that raised me," Nicolas said. "She did a great job."

Nicolas' father still lives in Haiti. He serves as a pastor at his church. He has never seen his son play college football.

In fact, the family has seen him play just once – in Tech's 42-24 win at Miami in 2013. But they watched him a lot while he and Maddy teamed to play for Atlantic Community High School in Delray Beach.

The two were friends, but not really close. Maddy's family lived on the western edge of

the city, while Nicolas' lived in the southern part. The distance – roughly five miles, according to Maddy – precluded them from hanging out much.

"We had a lot of the same friends, and we'd hang out at lunch or whatever," Maddy said. "He has a basketball court in his neighborhood, and a lot of people hang out there. I'd go hang out there sometimes. We weren't real, real close. We were cool, but we weren't as tight as we are now. We didn't talk as much as we do now."

Football, more than anything else, brought them together.

The path to Virginia Tech

Charley Wiles vividly remembers the conversation. He was talking with Atlantic High head coach Chris Bean when one of Bean's young assistants, Kelsey Brooks, came up to Wiles and told him, "I've got two guys who are better than who y'all already have."

Wiles hardly knew Brooks at the time, but he's used to hyperbole from high school coaches, and he trusted Bean and his staff anyway – and for good reason. They turned Tech's staff on to prospects like David Clowney, Brandon Flowers, Mark Leal and Jayron Hosley – all of whom played at Atlantic, ended up at Tech, and for the most

part, enjoyed good careers in Blacksburg.

In January of 2011, while in South Florida on a trip to check out another prospect – receiver Robert Lockhart at West Boca Raton High – Wiles, head coach Frank Beamer, assistant coaches Kevin Sherman and Torrian Gray stopped in at an Atlantic basketball game after the in-home visit with Lockhart and met the Atlantic football coaching staff.

"We had some time, and I thought it would be a good idea to run by there," Wiles said. "We were outside the school and sat there talking, and Chris [Bean] was pushing Dadi and Luther. It was late in the recruiting process, and we took the DVD's [of the prospects]."

"I stayed down there, but Coach Beamer watched the DVD's and really liked both of them, so I looked them up on Hudl [a site for recruits to upload film of themselves] and liked them, too. But where we were situated, numbers-wise, we didn't know if we'd have room for both."

Tech's staff, seeing a need at defensive end, made a scholarship offer to Nicolas, who already had committed to Minnesota. The winter of 2010-11 turned out to be a whirlwind for the young man, who received college offers despite playing just one season of varsity football. He had played football at the recreational league level, but switched

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to basketball while in high school and then decided to come out for spring football practice during his junior year.

"I knew that [football] was my best chance of getting to college," Nicolas said. "I knew that in order for me to get to college, I'd have to earn a scholarship. I couldn't probably afford to go to college. I needed to make a way, and I knew I had a good chance of making a way through football.

"I definitely thought it was realistic. I had seen other guys that were out there, and I had confidence in myself. I had faith in myself even though everyone did not believe in what I was trying to accomplish. But doubters become motivators, and that's what happened."

Maddy, too, saw football as a way to get a college education. He committed to Western Michigan over schools like Marshall, UNLV and Middle Tennessee. A trip to Kalamazoo, Michigan led to that decision.

He always had played football, but never seriously. His parents wanted him to go to college, but he knew they couldn't afford to send him. He needed a scholarship, and he knew to get one, he needed to turn it up a notch on the field.

"I was doing it [football] just to do it," Maddy said. "I was hanging out late at nights, and just being a kid. But my senior year, I saw

an opportunity to get a scholarship and be able to give back to my family. That summer, I started taking it seriously. I started lifting weights and running and got in good shape. I had a good season, and that's when offers started coming in."

As the 2011 signing day approached, the Tech coaches held their final scholarship for Stephone Anthony, a five-star linebacker from near Charlotte. But the day before signing day, Anthony committed to Clemson, and Tech's staff offered Maddy the scholarship.

Maddy committed on the spot. The University of Washington tried to get him to switch on signing day, but he wanted to play with Nicolas and Hosley.

"As soon as Coach Wiles called me, I'm like, 'Yeah, I'm going to Tech,'" Maddy said. "We've got a pipeline. Before me, it was Jayron [Hosley], Brandon [Flowers] and David Clowney. They set the bar. They had a lot of good things to say about Tech. It was an easy decision."

"Both Dadi and Luther were victims of this recruiting that has sped up," Wiles said. "Everyone offers these 10th- and 11th-graders, filling up with those guys. Who offers a senior now? They were a product of that. That's how a guy like Dadi ends up at Minnesota or a guy like Luther ends up at Western Michigan.

They were good enough. They just reached their potential as a high school kid a little later than other kids did."

Blessed with success

Though he received the last offer in the 2011 recruiting class, Maddy actually saw the field first, playing as a true freshman. He moved into the starting lineup midway through the season and started seven of the final eight games.

The turning point in Maddy's career came the following spring. He found himself constantly matched up against Andrew Miller and Brent Benedict – and Miller is one of the best offensive linemen ever to play at Tech. Maddy, though, held his own, and by the end of spring practice, he received the George Preas Award, which goes to the MVP of spring practice (defense).

"That's when I started feeling comfortable," Maddy said.

He's been one of the ACC's best defensive linemen ever since. Two seasons ago, he earned third-team All-ACC honors after recording 55 tackles, including 13.5 for a loss, and 6.5 sacks. Last season, the league's coaches and media members respected him so much that they named him as an honorable mention All-ACC choice even though he missed most of the season with a knee injury.

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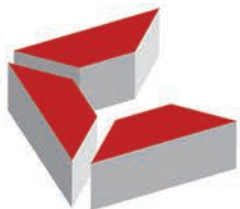
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football spotlight | maddy & nicolas

Heading into the Ohio State game, he felt and looked better than ever. After getting up to 314 pounds last January, primarily because the knee injury limited his workouts, he trimmed to 285 over the summer.

"I feel faster, and I feel explosive," he said. "I didn't get fat, but I felt puffy. I thought I needed to lose some weight. I thought it would be easier on my knee, too."

Nicolas' ascension has been a bit more methodical. He arrived at Tech weighing 200 pounds, so the coaches decided that he needed to take a redshirt year and add weight. He spent the next two seasons as a backup before bursting onto the scene last season when he recorded 72 tackles, including 18.5 for a loss, and nine sacks. He earned second-team All-ACC honors, but Wiles considered him the best defensive lineman in the league.

"I never had any doubt I could play," Nicolas said. "I always felt I could play with anybody. I've always had confidence in myself. I knew that what I do with my time is important and that there was some growth that needed to happen, both physically and mentally."

"It's just a matter of understanding the defense and understanding college football and understanding what my role was. Once you understand what you're doing, everything falls into place."

The two have helped each other in ways too numerous to count. They know one another better than they know themselves.

In other words, they are brothers – in every way except biologically.

"Dad's really family oriented," Maddy said. "He really believes in family and loyalty. He's not a party-scene type. He's not quiet, but he stays to himself. He's a good friend and cares a lot about people. If he sees someone having a bad day, he'll pull them to the side and give them words of motivation. He's passionate about football. He has a good heart."

"We've enjoyed it," Nicolas said. "We came in together and we've been sticking together since day 1. That's what's going to happen until the day we leave."

"Me and Luther have a relationship that's like what brothers have. We want a lot of the same things. We're good at motivating each other. We're self-driven people. We're self-motivated. He's my brother for life. That's all I have to say."

Promising Futures

The 2015 football season represents the last chance for Maddy and Nicolas to make

an impact on the gridiron for the Hokies, but only the next step toward their futures. Neither Maddy nor Nicolas are completely clear on what their futures hold, but they know they possess opportunities – better ones than had they simply stayed in Delray Beach following their high school graduations.

Football could be one of those options. NFL scouts continue to come to Blacksburg once a week to check out prospects and usually end up watching the two defensive linemen. Both possess the potential to be drafted next May.

"They're workers. That's the thing," Wiles said. "They're overachieving, hard-working guys. That's what's hopefully going to give them the opportunity as they move forward to be successful."

But Maddy and Nicolas say they only think about pro football in passing. Maddy has completed three internships, all related to property management, since arriving at Tech. He wants to run his own management company and buy several properties, using one to provide nicer housing for poor people.

"It'll be a luxury complex, but still be affordable," he said.

The thought of going to law school really appeals to Nicolas. Maybe become an agent or get into marketing. Also, he said he could see himself teaching and coaching.

"I could see myself doing media," he said, adding another thought. "That's something that if I really wanted to do that, I think I could do good with that."

Both want to go to Haiti at some point if, for nothing else, to get in tune with their heritage. And both plan to keep in touch with their family and friends in Delray Beach.

Sometimes a person gets caught up in where he or she is going. Maddy and Nicolas certainly never want to forget where they've been.

"This," Nicolas said, a reference to the university and the football program. "is bigger than me coming here and having a great career and getting a college degree. It stopped being about me a long time ago."

"The day I signed my letter [of intent], it stopped being about me. I just earned the right to be here. After I got here, I realized it's about everything that I represent, and there are a lot of things because I represent a whole lot."

They both represent South Florida. They both represent Haiti. They both represent examples of success through hard work. They both represent Virginia Tech.

And for that, Hokie Nation should be grateful. 



From left to right: NASCAR driver Ty Dillon, Coach Frank Beamer, RCR engineer Derek Vaughan, BMS general manager Jerry Caldwell and Tech AD Whit Babcock.

BATTLE AT BRISTOL LESS THAN A YEAR AWAY

Bristol Motor Speedway officials and NASCAR Xfinity Series driver Ty Dillon came to Blacksburg in mid-August to hype the 2016 game between Tech and Tennessee

Bristol Motor Speedway general manager Jerry Caldwell, NASCAR Xfinity Series driver Ty Dillon and Derek Vaughan, an engineer with Richard Childress Racing – and a Virginia Tech graduate (mechanical engineering, class of 1998) – along with other BMS officials came to Blacksburg in August to promote the “Battle at Bristol,” the 2016 non-conference football matchup between Virginia Tech and Tennessee.


The group toured Tech’s facilities, met with athletics department personnel, including AD Whit Babcock and head football coach Frank Beamer, and answered questions from the

media. Dillon and Vaughan also caught passes and ran drills with assistant head coach Shane Beamer and some of Tech’s players.

BMS officials anticipate the Sept. 10, 2016 game will break college football’s all-time single-game attendance mark. The current record occurred in 2013 when Michigan and Notre Dame played in front of 115,109 fans at Michigan Stadium. Even with the race more than a year away, ticket sales are going briskly.

The Tech athletics department is offering donors to The Virginia Tech Athletic Fund (aka, the Hokie Club) and season ticket holders the opportunity to place a \$25

non-refundable deposit on each ticket. Contributors and season ticket holders have until Oct. 1 to place a deposit on tickets to the game and receive first consideration within the Hokie Club’s Point Priority System. Tech officials then plan on offering the remainder of their allotment – if any remain – to the general public at some point after the first of the year.

Season ticket holders and contributors interested in being a part of history can purchase tickets to the Battle at Bristol by calling the Tech Athletics Ticket Office at 1-800 VA TECH4. 





RETURN TRIP *Home* BRINGS BACK FOND *Memories* FOR *Beamer*

Tech's longtime head football coach spent part of a summer day in Carroll County talking about his roots with some people who know him the best

by Jimmy Robertson

(Editor's note: this story appeared on the hokiesports.com website on July 31. After numerous positive comments, it was decided to include it in this issue of the magazine for those who might have missed it.)

A familiar refrain for Virginia Tech athletics in 2015 has been, "This is Home." Simple in its nature and subtle to its core, that message on posters, schedule cards and social media calls people to return to Blacksburg and to Virginia Tech, where many fans, students and alumni have enjoyed some of the best moments of their lives.

Frank Beamer calls Blacksburg home these days, and those who know him best know that Virginia Tech is more to him than his employer. It, too, is home.

But to get to know Tech's head football coach, one needs to venture to his childhood home, the genesis of this great man. On a perfect day in late July, Beamer, son Shane, and some athletics department staffers journeyed to Carroll County, a beautiful slice of land on a Southwest Virginia plateau that cozies up to the Appalachian Mountains, to do exactly that.

The caravan went down the interstate and hopped off on state Route 100, a road that Beamer knows all too well.

"All my burn operations were in the Pulaski hospital," he said, a reference to an explosion that caused burns on his face when he was 7 years old. "I couldn't tell you how many times I've been down this road. I could drive this road with my eyes closed."

Several in the group wondered if Beamer's eyes were always on the road or on the bucolic scenery at times, but that's an entirely different topic. Let's just say that there was ample discussion of racing,

drafting and other NASCAR maneuvers.

The group safely pulled into Hillsville, the county seat, where he met with eight friends, most of them former classmates, and enjoyed lunch at The Hardware Co., a neat little spot on Main Street owned and operated by Logan Tiebout and wife Kelley.

At ease in his own backyard, Beamer made introductions as only he could.

"This one's from Fancy Gap," he said, introducing Judy Williams. "This one's from down the mountain," he said of Ralph Berrier, who runs an apple orchard near Cana at the foot of Fancy Gap Mountain. "This one's a city slicker," he said of Joe McGrady, who runs a law firm in Hillsville, which, with a robust population of 2,600, hardly constitutes a city.

For that reason, the remark draws laughs. As do many others. It takes less than 30 seconds to realize that people in this part of Virginia love Frank Mitchell Beamer more than perhaps any other constituency. And they love him for who he is, not what he does.

That became evident over lunch, when the stories started flowing. Others in the group included Larry Joe and Janet Banks (both of whom went to school with Beamer from the eighth grade on), Gary Quesinberry (who graduated with Beamer and played on the high school football team with him), Jim Marshall (another classmate who also played on the football team) and Mike Bolen (who lived in Fancy Gap near the Beamers and also played football). Beamer and many

of his classmates at the table celebrated the 50th year of their high school graduation earlier this summer – which they planned, fittingly, when their famous classmate could be there.

They deal on each other over the course of lunch, serving the best ones on Beamer. He isn't above telling on himself, an endearing quality for someone of his stature. Few know of his affection for marching bands, which started in fifth grade when he was named the co-outstanding band member. In those days, bands traveled and played at events like the Apple Blossom Festival in Winchester and the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C. Riding Greyhounds and spending nights in hotel rooms were treats.

But his band career got sidetracked in ninth grade when he didn't make the squad. It forced him to take an alternative route to continue being a member.

"A week before we're getting ready to go – I believe it was the Apple Blossom Festival – they said, 'We need a tuba guy in the back. But don't play. Just put your lips there and put your gums out. Just act like you're playing so we can fill out the back row,'" he said. "There were three of us that tried out to carry the tuba. Now I'm a pretty good athlete, and the tryout was putting the tuba on your shoulder and walking across the stage while they watched you march. Well, I lost the tryout. I wasn't good enough, I guess. I thought it was rigged."

He laughed, and then he continued.

"Then two days before they're ready to go, they said, 'We've got to have one more guy that will carry the banner – the banner up front,'" Beamer said. "They said the only thing was you had to be able to fit in that last uniform. There was only one uniform left. I went over there, and it was a little snug, but I sucked in my stomach."

"I still tell everyone that everything has always worked out for me. Even then, I went from the back of the band in the tuba section right to the front."

The story says a lot about Beamer, who constantly acknowledges the Marching Virginians and Highty-Tighties, Tech's marching bands. He even invites them to scrimmages, so that his team experiences a game-day vibe.

There were other tales. Did anyone know Beamer was in the Boy Scouts? His uncle served as a scoutmaster, and once, he instructed the boys to build a birdhouse, giving them the actual design.

"After looking at ours, I knew Frank and I were not going to be carpenters," laughed Bolen, who is a year younger than Beamer.

Beamer could have been a farmer. His parents, Raymond and Herma Beamer, owned a small farm in Fancy Gap, a little blip of a place located about seven miles from Hillsville on Route 52, which snakes through the Carroll County countryside. He milked cows and put up hay as a child, humbling and hard work, but character-molding enterprises.

Beamer derived his work ethic and toughness from those days on the farm. Of course, he also got those traits honestly. Like most couples in those days, his parents worked full-time jobs in addition to farming. Beamer's father worked as an engineer for the highway department, while his mother carved out a career as a teacher. They raised four children.

Herma Beamer might be thought of as highly in Carroll County as her famous son. She taught many of the current elder citizens in elementary school. After getting her teacher's certificate from what was then Radford State Teacher's College (now Radford University), she educated the youth in various one-room schools throughout the county for much of her life.

Mrs. Beamer ran a strict household, keeping her two sons and two daughters in line, and she carried that same philosophy to the classroom. She viewed each of her students as her "child," both loving and disciplining at the appropriate times.

Her son, though, caught a little more of the disciplining than some of the others.

"I used to get it at school if I did something wrong and even a few times when I didn't," Beamer laughed. "Then I'd get it again on the way home. I remember several times thinking, 'Man, I've got to get out of the sixth grade.'"

His mother passed away during the early morning hours of a Thursday in the fall of 2004, shortly before the Hokies played a football game against Maryland. Beamer coached in the game, which turned into a 55-6 rout of the Terrapins. In failing health leading up to her death, she had told her son to keep coaching in spite of her situation. He dutifully listened, knowing that her generation didn't like to be coddled.

Not long after her passing, he established Herma's Readers, a charity organization that collects books and promotes reading among younger children. Those in Carroll County agreed it was the perfect way to





honor her memory.

Other stories surfaced. Beamer once stood up to a bully by ... well ... let's just say by using more than words, and they all joked about selling Krispy Kreme donuts to pay for a senior trip to New York City for the World's Fair. Content from this discussion is best left among the classmates.

Inevitably, though, the conversation shifted toward sports and Beamer's exploits. Some were legendary; some not so much.

Beamer played three (football, basketball and baseball), but excelled in football. His baseball career took a jolt when Berrier, who played baseball with Beamer, told of how Beamer, an outfielder, once let a fly ball hit him square on the head.

"There was a runner at second," Beamer tried to explain in self-defense. "I looked at him to see if he was tagging up. Before I could look up, the ball hit me right there [pointing toward his forehead]."

The story drew laughs. It was quintessential Beamer, showing self-deprecating humor and humility.

On the gridiron, things went better, as he seemed destined to lead Hillsville High to a district championship. A quarterback playing for then-Coach Tommy Thompson and his wide-open offense – a rarity in those

days – Beamer put the team in position to win a title, but a poor call by an official in a game against Blacksburg High robbed them of their chance at glory.

Marshall dove in on this story, telling of how Hillsville squandered a 13-point halftime lead and found itself trailing by one in the waning moments. They had Blacksburg pinned at its own end. Blacksburg quarterback Duane Shealor scrambled in the end zone, and a group of Hillsville players sacked him for the game-winning safety, or so they thought. An official inexplicably said that time had expired, nullifying the sack. The call awarded the Indians, as they were known then, the victory.

"We absolutely got cheated out of it," McGrady said. "Everybody wants to say that, but we really did. Our coach played the old films, and you could see it on the films. There is no question we got cheated out of it."

But that's only part of the story, according to Shane Beamer.

"To show how things come full circle," Shane said. "Duane Shealor is now his [Frank's] neighbor. Lives right beside him [at the Blacksburg Country Club]."

"Nah, I haven't," Frank said when asked if he had every talked about that game with his neighbor. "That was hard to take."

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Beamer takes losses hard, even ones from 50 years ago. While humble and respectful toward opponents, he's extremely competitive. Few see that side of him, but folks in Carroll County know.

Most of the group's fondest sports memories of Beamer, though, come from his tenure as the Hokies' football coach over the past nearly three decades. One person cited the kick against West Virginia in 1999 as a favorite moment. Another recalled the national championship game in 2000. Someone mentioned André Davis' game against West Virginia in 2000 in which he scored touchdowns three different ways.

When pointed out that most of their fondest sports memories of him came when he was a coach – and not from his playing days – Beamer laughed.

"They're getting around to that," he cracked.

Two hours later, the lunch gang gradually, and a bit dejectedly, said their goodbyes, knowing that time with the county's cherished son is rare. Beamer signed some posters and even a couple of media guides, including one that McCarthy planned to give to Judge Edward Turner – a UVa graduate.

Beamer then hopped in his silver Cadillac with Shane and a couple of staffers in tow and turned around on Main Street, heading

toward Carroll County Middle School. This building used to be the home of old Hillsville High School, and behind the building, carved out of a small hill, sat the football field where Beamer used to play.

This patch of grass was barely 100 yards long, and it also served as the baseball field. The field looked a little ragged, and the concrete bleachers appeared to be in disrepair.

But the memories were of high-definition quality.

"This," Beamer said, pointing to the hill. "is where we did conditioning. We had to run up this hill for our conditioning. Then over there [pointing toward what would have been right field], there was a light pole [which had since been taken down]. They didn't take it down after football season, so during baseball season, if you were the right fielder – and I was several times – you had to navigate that pole. Can you imagine? I almost knocked myself out a couple of times."

Seeing the field also touched Shane, who had not seen the place where his father made his mark. Shane played for Blacksburg High School and had played against Carroll County High, but the game was played at the new high school a few miles away.

"He brought me here once, but we just stayed at the top of the hill," Shane said. "We

didn't come down here and look at it."


The coach also toured a few of his old hangouts, showing the group the VFW Hall and Corney's, a local hot dog/hamburger joint that has since closed. Back in the day, one paid 20 cents for a hot dog and 30 for a hamburger. Cornelia Hall ran the place and looked out for the kids.

As the afternoon slipped toward sunset, Beamer made the decision not to visit his old home place in Fancy Gap or the elementary school he attended, though two video staff members in a separate car went and shot some footage. The day ended with the familiar jaunt back up state Route 100 toward the interstate and on to Blacksburg.

As he drove back and started getting ready for the kickoff of his 29th season, he seemed at ease, happy for down time, good conversation and close friends at the place he still calls home.

"He is a true source of pride," McGrady said. "He's well liked in this area. He'll do things for this community, too. He'll make donations, and he's always willing to come up with something when asked."

"He couldn't be any more popular around here."

That's a familiar refrain heard in many parts of Virginia. Yet as outside observers quickly learn, those in Carroll County best understand the reasons why – this is home. 



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FULLER READY TO TAKE NEXT STEP THIS SEASON

Former Tech receiver trying to make his mark
in his third year with the Detroit Lions

by Jimmy Robertson

Corey Fuller's athletics career started on track.

Now, the former track standout's football career appears to be on track as well.

Fuller, a Detroit Lions' wide receiver, commenced his third season in the NFL when the Lions opened the 2015 campaign at San Diego on Sept. 13. The game, and this season, mark the latest progression in the somewhat surprising career of a young man who really only played one season of college football.

The second oldest of the Fuller brothers, the former Tech receiver garnered more recognition for his track exploits at his Baltimore high school than in football, and he went to the University of Kansas on a track scholarship. Yet in the span of five years, he's transitioned from track athlete to the Lions' No. 3 receiving option.

"I can definitely say I've surprised myself," Fuller said in a phone interview on Aug. 18. "I still think about it today. I'm going into my third year in the NFL against guys that were probably top recruits coming out of high school, and if they weren't, they had maybe two or three football scholarships [offers]."

"A guy like me, I didn't have any football scholarships. I had three track scholarships. I went to Kansas for two years, and I didn't play football at all. I transferred and played one year of college football. Now I'm in my third year, and I think about it, and I'm grateful I'm still able to play. I don't think too many people know that, and that's fine with me. I don't want people to look at me as a former track runner. I want to be known as Corey Fuller, a football player from Virginia Tech with three other brothers."

Tech's coaches knew little about Corey Fuller, the football player, when he transferred to Tech at the start of the 2010 season. He sat out that season, and then in 2011, he played 57 snaps on offense, catching just two passes.

But in 2012, he emerged, starting eight games and catching 34 passes for 815 yards and six touchdowns. His 21-yard, fourth-quarter touchdown reception in the Russell Athletic Bowl knotted things against Rutgers, and the Hokies eventually won that game in overtime.

That 2012 season set the stage for Fuller to be drafted by the Lions in the 2013 NFL Draft. The sixth-round pick spent his first season on the Lions' practice squad.

"When I was at Virginia Tech, I only got

one year of experience, actual out-on-the-field playing," he said. "So when I got to the NFL after getting drafted, I was still raw. I didn't know anything, honestly. So that [being on the practice squad] gave me a chance to learn how to be pro, learn different tricks on and off the field to help me.

"It was a little tough. You want to get out there and help the team win, but I think it was beneficial. After playing just one year of college football, that was something I definitely needed."

Fuller started to show his potential last season when he played in all 16 games for Detroit. He even started twice when Calvin Johnson, arguably the NFL's best receiver, missed some time because of an injury.

For the season, Fuller caught 14 passes for 212 yards and a touchdown. His 5-yard grab for a score against New Orleans turned out to be the game winner, capping the Lions' comeback in a 24-23 victory. Noted for his blazing speed, he averaged more than 15 yards per catch last season.

"I was mainly the fourth receiver," Fuller said "I came in when Calvin Johnson was down and went out there and did my job. I didn't want to try to do too much. I just wanted to go out there and not cause the offense to miss a step, and I think I did a pretty good job of that. While doing that, I gained confidence and experience.

"For me, it's about going out there and getting better every day. The coaches are going to put the guys out there that best help in certain situations, and I want to be one of those guys. I want the coaches to be able to come in and say, 'We've got confidence in Corey on this particular play to get this particular ball and make a play on it.'"

Fuller spent the spring and summer working on his footwork and strength. A long strider because of his track background, he focused on shortening his stride and doing exercises to help his short-area quickness. That figures to help him when he faces his younger brother, Kyle, twice a season.

The two went head to head last season, as Kyle Fuller plays cornerback for the Chicago Bears. Much was made of the meeting by the national media, but the two Fuller brothers took it in stride.

"The first game, it was more hype from everyone else," Corey Fuller said. "We spoke. We knew we were going against each other.

We did a little bit of trash talking, but he was going to do what he had to do to prepare for the week, and I was going to do what I had to do to prepare for the week. We got to go against each other. There was a little bit of trash talking, but it was all in fun. It was a good experience for my family.

"Then in the second game, it wasn't a big deal. He played for Chicago. I played for Detroit. It wasn't something we overhyped.




We let the media do all that."

Fuller keeps tabs on Kendall, the youngest Fuller who continues to play well for the Hokies. He, too, seems destined to play in the NFL at some point in the future.

It's highly likely all four Fuller brothers will play or will have played in the NFL (Vincent played from 2005-11). The Browner brothers (Jim, Joey, Keith and Ross) are the only quartet of brothers to have played in the NFL, with most of their stints coming in the 1980s.

"We don't think about it too much," Fuller said. "If it does happen, that would be a blessing."

For now, Fuller concentrates on getting better each day. Contrary to many people's impressions, he loves the city of Detroit and the people in the organization. He hopes to reward their faith in him by helping the team make a return trip to the playoffs.

"It's just like Baltimore to me," he said of Detroit. "Growing up in Baltimore and coming to Detroit, it's like the same thing. The organization, everyone from upstairs down, they're great role models. They always have their doors open for you to come in and talk to them. They speak to you every morning. The coaches are the same way, and my teammates are the same way. The fan base is amazing. The entire city, I love it." 

Here are the former Tech players currently with NFL organizations:

by Jimmy Robertson

BUFFALO BILLS

5 Tyrod Taylor – Taylor signed with the Bills in the offseason, searching for a starting job after the former Tech quarterback spent his first four years in the NFL with the Baltimore Ravens and earning it. He played in one game last season and 14 games overall during his time with the Ravens. He completed 19 of 35 passes for 199 yards and two interceptions, and he also rushed for 136 yards and a touchdown in that span.

Taylor signed a three-year, \$3.35 million deal with the Bills, with \$1.15 guaranteed. But he could earn up to \$7 million provided he reaches playing time incentives.

CHICAGO BEARS

23 Kyle Fuller – Fuller had an incredible rookie season last fall, leading all rookies with four interceptions and tying for the league lead among rookies with three forced fumbles. The former Tech cornerback finished with 73 tackles, including three for a loss. He played in all 16 games for the Bears, starting 14 of them.

Fuller, a first-round draft pick last May, was one of two players in the NFL (Detroit's James Ihedigbo) to record at least four interceptions and three forced fumbles. He was one of five NFL rookies since 1990 to do that as well.

Fuller signed a four-year, \$9.687 million deal after being drafted last year. He'll make a base salary of \$860,318 this season.

6 Will Montgomery – The former Tech offensive lineman continues to find employment in the NFL, continuing an amazing career that started when he arrived as a walk-on in Blacksburg. He started eight

games last season for the Denver Broncos – he played in all 16 – before signing a one-year, \$950,000 deal with the Bears for this upcoming season.

This season will mark Montgomery's 10th in the NFL. He started his career with the Carolina Panthers in 2006 and has played for the New York Jets (2007-08), Washington Redskins (2008-13) and Denver Broncos (2014).

19 Eddie Royal – Royal signed with Chicago in the offseason after spending three seasons with the San Diego Chargers. Last season, the former Tech receiver started 11 games for San Diego and played in all 16, catching 62 passes for 778 yards and seven touchdowns. His seven scoring receptions ranked second on the team and were the second-highest total of his seven-year NFL career.

Royal has caught 338 passes for 3,750 yards and 25 touchdowns in his career. He signed a three-year, \$15 million deal (\$10 million guaranteed) with the Bears in March. His base salary this season is \$1.5 million.

71 Nick Becton – The former Tech offensive lineman has spent just two seasons in the NFL so far, but has been a part of four organizations. The New Orleans Saints coaches cut Becton on Sept. 5, but the Chicago Bears personnel people signed Becton to their practice squad just two days later.

Becton, an undrafted free agent who signed with San Diego following the 2013 NFL Draft, spent training camp last year with the Chargers, who eventually cut him in late August. He then signed with the New York Giants, who placed him on their practice

squad. But late in the season, the Saints signed him off the Giants' practice squad, and he spent the remainder of the season on their active roster.

Becton has played in one NFL game since making it to the league – he played once during the 2013 season with the Chargers.

DETROIT LIONS

10 Corey Fuller – The former Tech receiver is carving a career for himself with the Detroit Lions, who took him in the sixth round of the 2013 NFL Draft. He spent his first season on the Lions' practice squad and then he played in all 16 games for the Lions last season, starting twice. He caught 14 passes for 212 yards and one touchdown. The touchdown was the game-winning score in Detroit's 24-23 win over New Orleans.

Fuller signed a two-year, \$930,000 deal last year and will earn \$510,000 this season.

52 Darryl Tapp – Tapp's first season in Detroit was a success, as the veteran defensive end played in all 16 games in 2014 and finished with 17 tackles (12 solo) in a reserve role. The Lions' personnel people thought enough of Tapp's performance to bring him back for a second season, signing him to a one-year deal worth \$950,000 (base salary of \$870,000).

Tapp is entering his 10th season in the NFL. He spent his first four seasons with the Seattle Seahawks, who drafted him in the second round of the 2006 NFL Draft. The Seahawks traded him in the offseason after his fourth year to the Philadelphia Eagles, where he spent three seasons. He also spent a year in Washington before joining the Lions at the start of last season.

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HOUSTON TEXANS

76 Duane Brown – Brown ranks as one of the best offensive tackles in the league, as evidenced by his third Pro Bowl appearance following his performance last season. He also ranks as one of the most dependable linemen. He has started all 106 games that he has played in during his career (he missed four games in 2010 and two in 2012).

Brown has three more years left on a six-year, \$53.4 million contract that he signed in 2012. He will make \$7 million this season.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

65 Laurence Gibson – Gibson was a seventh-round draft pick of the Dallas Cowboys following this past May's NFL Draft, but the Cowboys coaches released him on Sept. 4. Dallas' personnel people wanted him to join their practice squad, but Gibson decided to go in a different direction and signed with the Chiefs, who placed him on their practice squad.

The former Tech offensive lineman will attempt to get on the Chiefs active roster and be eligible for games at some point this season.

MIAMI DOLPHINS

6 Logan Thomas – Thomas' tenure with Arizona ended after one season, as Cardinals' brass cut him on Sept. 5. But the Dolphins personnel people snapped him up shortly thereafter and signed him to the 53-man

roster. He will be the mix as a backup behind starter Ryan Tannehill. The Dolphins also kept two other quarterbacks on their roster – Matt Moore and McLeod Bethel-Thompson.

A year ago, Thomas played in two games for the Cardinals, completing 1 of 9 for 81 yards and a touchdown – the 81-yarder came on his first attempt – and an interception. The fourth-round pick in last year's draft also played in Arizona's playoff game against Carolina.

Thomas signed a four-year deal worth \$2.652 million after getting drafted. He's slated to make a base salary of \$510,000 this season.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

32 Antone Exum, Jr. – Exum played in 15 games as a rookie last season for the Vikings, who selected him in the sixth round of the 2014 NFL Draft. He played very little from scrimmage, though, as he transitioned from playing cornerback at Tech to playing safety for the Vikings. In fact, he played just 16 snaps from scrimmage a year ago, finishing with six tackles (four solo), and he also recovered a fumble.

Exum, who goes into this season as a reserve at one of the safety spots, signed a four-year, \$2.335 million rookie contract. He will make a base salary of \$510,000 this season.

NEW YORK GIANTS

28 Jayron Hosley – Hosley suffered through a terrible 2014 season with the Giants. He missed the first four games while serving a NFL-mandated suspension. Once he came back to the team, he played in just six games, starting two of them. The former Tech cornerback finished the year with just eight tackles (all solo).

A third-round pick in the 2012 NFL Draft, Hosley is entering his fourth season with the Giants. He has played in 29 games, starting nine of them, and recorded 57 tackles and an interception in his career.

This season marks the final year of the four-year contract he signed as a rookie. He is scheduled to make a base salary of \$660,000 this season.

OAKLAND RAIDERS

56 Chase Williams – After not being drafted in this past May's NFL Draft, Williams signed a free-agent deal with the Raiders on June 4 and spent much of the summer with the Raiders. On Aug. 26, Oakland waived him, but then placed him on injured reserve with an undisclosed injury.

Williams finished tied for fourth on the Hokies' squad a year ago with 72 tackles despite missing four games with a knee injury.

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PITTSBURGH STEELERS

2 Michael Vick – The former Tech quarterback signed a one-year deal with the Steelers after their backup quarterback, Bruce Gradkowski, went on injured reserve with a season-ending injury.

This will mark Vick's 13th season in the NFL. He spent last season with the New York Jets, starting three games and playing in 10. He completed 64 of 121 for 604 yards, with three touchdowns and two interceptions. He also rushed for 153 yards on 26 carries.

The No. 1 pick in the 2001 NFL Draft, Vick spent his first six seasons with the Atlanta Falcons. He later spent five seasons with the Philadelphia Eagles.

Vick has thrown for 22,093 yards and 131 touchdowns in his career. He holds the NFL record for career rushing yards by a quarterback with 6,010.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

24 Brandon Flowers – Flowers restarted his career in San Diego after spending his first six seasons in the NFL with the Kansas City Chiefs, who cut him in June of 2014. Ten days after being cut, he signed a one-year deal with San Diego and played in 14 games last season, finishing with 52 tackles (48 solo) and three interceptions. The former Tech cornerback cashed in this offseason, agreeing to a

four-year, \$36 million deal in March.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

31 Kam Chancellor – The former Tech safety, who is holding out because of a contract dispute, started 14 games for the Seahawks last season, missing two games with a groin injury. He finished with 78 tackles (60 solo), one interception and one forced fumble on his way to earning Pro Bowl honors.

Chancellor has started every game in which he has played the past four seasons. For his career, he has recorded 398 tackles (292 solo), eight interceptions, six forced fumbles and two sacks.

Chancellor, a fifth-round choice of the Seahawks in the 2010 NFL Draft, is a three-time Pro Bowler. He signed a four-year contract in 2013 worth \$28 million (\$7.825 million guaranteed) and is slated to make a base salary of \$4.555 million this season.

WASHINGTON REDSKINS

23 DeAngelo Hall – Hall's 2014 season was short-lived, as he played in just three games. He tore an Achilles tendon in the Redskins' third game, which cost him the remainder of the season. The former Tech cornerback recorded 16 tackles (12 solo), recovered a fumble and forced a fumble last season.


After an impressive 2013 season with

Washington – he finished with 78 tackles, four interceptions and three forced fumbles – he signed a four-year, \$17 million contract to remain with the Redskins. Approximately \$5.5 million of that is guaranteed.

Hall, a three time Pro Bowler, is entering his 12th season in the NFL after the Atlanta Falcons took him in the first round of the 2004 NFL Draft. In his 11 seasons (seven with Washington), he has recorded 733 tackles and 43 interceptions.

30 Kysheen Jarrett – Jarrett, a former Tech rover, made the Redskins 53-man roster and went into this season as a backup at one of the safety spots. The sixth round of the Redskins in this past May's NFL Draft also figures to help out on most of the Redskins' special teams.

Jarrett signed a four-year, \$2.415 million contract following the draft, with a base salary of \$435,000 for this season.

59 James Gayle – The former Tech defensive end signed with the Redskins in early January after signing with the Tennessee Titans in May of last year as a college free agent. Gayle underwent shoulder surgery in early June, and the Titans then waived him on July 30 of last year. Gayle will try to get himself healthy and help the Redskins at some point in the near future. 



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“It was exactly what I needed. It helped me improve my game. For the most part, it helped me technically, but it also brought me grittiness and the physical aspect of things. One of my mom’s biggest worries was that I would get hurt, but I learned how to weasel my way around and stay out of tackles and keep up with the pace of the game. It was also neat to prove myself. [Opposing teams] would make fun of us – ‘Oh, they have a girl on their team, they’re going to stink.’ I think they were surprised that I could keep up, and our team was actually pretty good.”

– Ashley Meier on playing on a boys club team as a teenager



Ashley Meier honed her skills playing with the boys while growing up in Ohio, and one of the best players in Tech history may have a future in the sport after college

by **Matt Kovatch**

Special to Inside Hokie Sports

For those who like to waste time on the Internet, there are few better places to do it than Wikipedia. In fact, there's even a site called The Wiki Game, where the user is given two terms and must find his or her way from one to the other in the least amount of clicks possible.

If Hokie fans were to replicate that exact game on the official site for United States soccer (ussoccer.com), they might be surprised to find that one of their own is just a mere four clicks away from the player bios of World Cup heroes like Carli Lloyd and Alex Morgan.

That person is Ashley Meier, a senior midfielder on the Virginia Tech women's soccer team and easily one of the most accomplished players in school history. Not only is she a three-time All-ACC performer and ranks in the top five of several career categories at Tech, but she also has been involved with the Olympic Development Program for years. She most recently spent part of her spring with the U-23 national team that won the Four Nations Tournament in Norway. The U-23 team typically serves as the final steppingstone for players talented enough to be chosen for an Olympic or World Cup squad.

"It has been such an honor to be involved with the national team for so long," Meier said. "The trip to Norway was great, and playing with such high-caliber players has been awesome. It's helped me along the way.

"In Norway, they kind of treated us like, 'This is your mini World Cup. When you go home, you'll obviously be cheering for the team that you probably want to be on some day. We want you to set a standard. We want to win every single game here and show them that we are the best in the world no matter the age.'"

Watching the national team bring home the ultimate trophy was extra sweet for Meier because the squad that captured the country's attention in Canada this summer included a pair of former teammates from her U-20 days. During a trip to Japan in 2012, Meier roomed with current center back Julie Johnston and competed with fellow midfielder Morgan Brian, both of whom started during the World Cup run.

"Julie is one of the best teammates and leaders I have ever played with," Meier said. "There are also a bunch of others I've played with who aren't on the roster yet but are in the mix to make next

year's Olympic cycle."

Of course, all of Meier's success didn't happen overnight. Born and raised in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, she began playing the game at the age of 4. She followed in the footsteps of her older sister, Alyssa (who played at Pittsburgh – the two faced off on Alyssa's senior day when Virginia Tech visited the Panthers in 2013), and they worked on their game with a goal in the back yard.

Arguably the biggest factor in her development came when Meier's club team split up when she was 10 years old. Rather than find another club to migrate to like the other girls, she accepted an offer to stay with the club – the Cleveland Whitecaps – and play with the boys. Girls and boys often play soccer together as youths, but Meier's situation became a unique one because she stuck with that team for eight years until she turned 18 and moved on to Blacksburg.

"I went into that thinking I probably wouldn't do it for very long," she said. "Guys are bigger, faster and stronger, so I didn't know how long I'd be able to keep up, but they ended up being like my brothers. They'd pick on me in good fun here and there, but when an opponent tackled me or took me out, they had my back."

As one might assume, playing against the tougher competition quickly turned Meier into a better player.

"It was exactly what I needed," she said. "It helped me improve my game. For the most part, it helped me technically, but it also brought me grittiness and the physical aspect of things. One of my mom's biggest worries was that I would get hurt, but I learned how to weasel my way around and stay out of tackles



Ashley Meier has started more than 70 matches in her career at Tech and is closing in on the career 30-goal milestone.

and keep up with the pace of the game.

"It was also neat to prove myself. [Opposing teams] would make fun of us – 'Oh, they have a girl on their team, they're going to stink.' I think they were surprised that I could keep up, and our team was actually pretty good."

Meier never regretted her decision to play with the boys for so long, and you can count Virginia Tech head coach Chugger Adair among those who agree. For one thing, doing so helped shaped her into the player whom she's become.

"It [girls playing with the guys] tends to make those players quicker in their speed

of play, quicker overall and able to deal with more athletic teams and competition, just because the boys are a little bit faster and stronger," Adair explained. "Ashley can close you down with pressure quickly. She's quick running with the ball, and she's good going to the goal. She's also very tough. She leads by example with her work rate, and she'll grind out games for us."

Meier's time with the boys team also benefitted Adair, as it hid her from rival schools that would have otherwise recruited her. A lot of scouting and recruiting takes place at big

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events and tournaments, so coaches get to see a lot of girls at once, but seeing Meier required a little extra effort.

"It was probably good for us because it was harder for other schools to see her," Adair recalled. "We were able to see her play with girls, but we did have to make a special trip. I was actually able to head up and see her play for a girls' team in the State Cup tournament as a guest player."

"I remember him sitting in the corner," Meier said. "It was really weird. It was a weeknight game, and he literally flew out just to see me. We really couldn't be in contact because of the rules and regulations, but I could see him over there, and I was nervous."

Meier soon visited Blacksburg, fell in love with the campus, the community and the players on the team and committed before her junior year began. She went on to win the National High School Player of the Year award as a senior and already has helped the Hokies make three trips to the NCAA Tournament. She and the Hokies went into this season with huge expectations, so she likes to keep her focus on the next match, but she also needs to keep options open for the future.

"I did apply to grad school this past summer, but there's still the question of if I want to put my name into the [National Women's Soccer League] draft and do the pro side of things," she said. "I could obviously defer if I got into grad school, but I'm just kind of waiting to see how the season goes. It's still up in the air."

Nearing a degree in occupational therapy, the odds are that Meier will have no issues being accepted into at least one graduate school – she is, after all, a three-time All-ACC Academic Team selection and has made the



As one of just four seniors on the squad this season, Ashley Meier is expected to play a leadership role - one in which she embraces.


Dean's List four times.

There's also the massive time commitment of staying involved as a professional soccer player, especially one with dreams of Olympic or World Cup gold. With the way the pool player program works for the national squad, one must be ready to go at the drop of a hat.

"You might get called in [to training camp], and you might not," Meier said of the cyclical nature of the U.S. roster selection. "It's kind of hit and miss until you actually have a name on your jersey, and you're with the full team. Whenever the call comes, it's kind of expected that you'll be like, 'Yes I will go,' and you miss a week of school, and that's kind of how it goes. It's year-round, but you never really

know when it's going to happen.

"But for me, deciding not to put my name into the draft is something that would obviously hurt my chances of being on the national team some day. That is something I'm taking into consideration because being completely done with soccer forever is probably not the way I want to go just yet."

It's sure to be a tough decision for Meier, but for now she remains focused on taking the Hokies deep into the NCAA Tournament once more. And who knows? Maybe when the next World Cup comes around in 2019, those surfing the Internet will only need one click to get from Carli Lloyd's or Alex Morgan's bio to Meier's. 

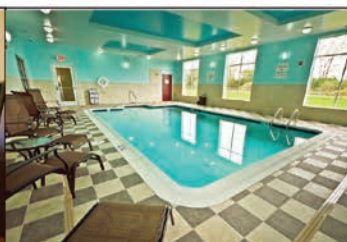
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LAURETANO *finds* HOME

After traveling around the world as a young kid, Tech men's soccer player Daniel Lauretano and his family eventually landed in Virginia – and he ultimately has found a home at Virginia Tech

by **Evan Nicely**

Special to Inside Hokie Sports



Despite Hawaii's calming breezes, white sandy beaches and crystal blue waters, a young Daniel Lauretano just wanted his family to settle down on the mainland.

Yes, he had caught island fever. It eventually came about, the product of constant moving as a young kid while the family followed his father's job across the United States and the globe. The Lauretanos have called France, Germany and Belgium home, just to name a few of their stops.

His fever, though, was cured when he reached his teenage years, as the family finally settled down on the mainland, and his soccer career blossomed. Now one of just two seniors on the Virginia Tech men's soccer roster, Lauretano keeps focused on his task of helping to settle down and lead a young, talented Hokies' squad with high expectations.

Lauretano's father, also named Daniel, is a former lawyer and Judge Advocate General – known better to most TV viewers by its acronym "JAG." The elder Lauretano's work took him and his family's bags across the world, as he practiced military law for the government, specializing in the legalities of war.

In addition to those four locales off the mainland, Lauretano's family spent two stints in Virginia, as well as stays in Texas, Georgia and California. A national favorite among most kids these days, soccer turned out to be the perfect way to stay busy growing up.

"What really started me with soccer

was playing in Belgium," Lauretano said. "My coach played professionally there, and we were living on a military base, and my dad would take me to training sessions. I remember learning from him, and from then on, soccer became fun for me."

So as his father's job forced a constant change of new scenery, Lauretano found two things that became a constant in his life – a loving family and the game of soccer.

"With my family, I found a lot of joy being around them," Lauretano said. "As a young kid, all I really needed was my brother, my sister and my parents. When we were in Hawaii, and I was getting a little older, I remember being overjoyed leaving the island because I wanted to see what it was like back in the United States."

Lauretano's father eventually reached a settlement with the family. He wanted to continue in his current capacity until all three of the children reached high school. Then the family would put down roots in the continental United States.

So when that time came, the family chose to settle down in the Richmond area, and Lauretano and his older brother and sister attended Thomas Dale High School. With a promise fulfilled from his dad and the support of his family, Lauretano's career took off.

"Freshman year [of high school] is when I told myself that I wanted to turn this thing into something to get recruited to for college," Lauretano said. "I worked incredibly hard during high school



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and playing academy to put myself in that position."

Vittorio Lauretano, Daniel's older brother and a former high school teammate who went on to play collegiately at Radford University, pushed Daniel and helped him become a star. He earned three first-team all-district honors, as well as earning first-team all-region and all-state accolades. He also was named the Central District Player of the Year.

Lauretano's success started gaining him recognition beyond the Richmond metro area, and it was only a matter of time before college coaches came calling. As the recruiting process wore on, he narrowed his choices down to Virginia Tech and nearby Radford. Despite being presented with the opportunity to play with his brother again, he jumped at the chance to play soccer in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"There was no doubt in my mind that Tech was always the front-runner, but I always had in the back of my mind to think about playing with my brother," Lauretano said. "He wanted to say that, once he got into playing college soccer, he could push his brother into playing college soccer also."

Lauretano chose to join Tech, as head coach Mike Brizendine, a longtime assistant, was entering his fourth season at the helm of the program. He liked that the program knew how to win, having made it to the College Cup in 2007, and he believed in the tough steps that Brizendine and his staff were taking in trying to reach that level once again in the nation's best soccer conference.

"To say from where we were to where we are now, in no way shape or form was it an easy path," Lauretano said. "There were a lot of dark times, but we're coming out, and we're on the upswing now."

The team went 7-8-2 last season, with a 2-5-1 mark in the ACC. It marked the first time that the Hokies had won two games in ACC play since 2009, and they accomplished that thanks to a few older leaders, like Lauretano, and a slew of talented freshmen. Most of the team's firepower returns for this season, and Lauretano plans on helping the team stay grounded and achieve its goals.

"It's tough having just two seniors, but across the board, we're working hard," he said. "We're not seeing so much adversity because everyone is on the same page. As a senior, I want to graduate and say I was part of a successful program. As I said before, the only thing stopping us from that is ourselves."

One of the keys to success this year is Ricardo John, who earned All-ACC second-team recognition as a freshman last year after he scored a team-best five goals. The other two top point-getters were a freshman and a sophomore. John represents the new guard that Lauretano hopes to lead to a bright future.

"It's fun to be able to say I paid my dues those three years to have my senior year," he said. "I've always been blessed to have the opportunity to play in the ACC because, without a doubt, it's the best soccer conference in the country. I think the experience is going to help us. We have juniors and sophomores that played a ton last year and know what the ACC is like and will help us."

The team will be tested thoroughly again this year, as Brizendine lined up a daunting slate, including three of the past five national champions visiting Blacksburg to face the Hokies. In all, they face seven teams that played in the NCAA tournament last year.


"To have so many returning players and to have freshmen that played a lot last year that are back as sophomores and have seen ACC soccer for what it is ... we're building," Lauretano said. "Instead of constantly rebuilding, we're building for something great, and that could be this year."

Lauretano represents a staple and a constant face for a Hokie team that has needed it since he arrived on campus. He has donned the Chicago maroon and burnt orange more than 50 times in his career, scoring four goals and adding three assists, and he wants to build on that.

"He's come back this year in great form. His attitude, his leadership and his form have been spectacular," Brizendine said. "We're seeing things out of him we always thought were there."

For a team that has incurred a lot of changes and appears to be settling down, it seems only fitting that one of its leaders finally has settled down himself after spending most of his younger years traveling around the world.

"It [his college experience] has been the best four years of my life," Lauretano said. "Life is always about memories, and I will always remember Virginia Tech. It's hard to explain."

"You want to look back at your life with no regrets, and people will say, 'Why'd you stick it out all four years?' But at the end of the day, I don't regret staying here, and it's been a blessing." 

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