

inside

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HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Frank Beamer should be remembered more for his impact off the field than on it



A LEGEND AND LEADER CALLS IT A CAREER

Virginia Tech football coach Frank Beamer announces plans to retire at season's end, concluding a 35-year coaching career that includes 29 seasons in Blacksburg

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HOKIES CLOSE 2015 REGULAR SEASON

The Virginia Tech women's soccer team won its final home match of the 2015 regular season, beating Pittsburgh 4-2 on Senior Night at Thompson Field behind two goals from Laila Gray and a goal each from Murielle Tiernan and Alani Johnson. The Hokies closed the regular season with a 14-3-2 mark, including a 6-3-1 record in ACC action. They won 14 matches in the regular season for the third consecutive year.

THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

“Being on scholarship has allowed me to attend my dream school and play the game I love without having to worry about the financial burden that would be placed on myself and my family. As the daughter of a single mother, one of the best moments of my college career was being able to call my mom and tell her that I had earned a scholarship. To the donors who make these moments happen for us student-athletes, thank you. Thank you for supporting us as we follow our dreams.”

Morgan Conklin
Senior | Midlothian, Virginia

“I am extremely fortunate to have most of my education paid for while playing the sport I love at such an amazing university. To be honest, without my scholarship, I most likely wouldn't be able to attend Virginia Tech because I'm an out-of-state student, and tuition is so expensive. I can't thank the Hokie Club enough for all the hard work they do to provide athletes an opportunity to receive a great education from a school like Virginia Tech.”

Jordan Coburn
Senior | Ellicott City, Maryland





The Donor File

Clarence "C.E." Hughes

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CURRENTLY RESIDES:
Fairlawn, Virginia

GRADUATION YEAR: 1971

FAMILY: Wife, Robena; sons: Scott '04;
Jason '08



Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...

A: Someone who follows Virginia Tech and is always proud to admit so. They do not have to have been a student there to be included in the Hokie Nation. A Hokie believes in "Ut Prosim" and strives to live up to that motto.

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because ...

A: Virginia Tech is known worldwide. We are located in rural Southwest Virginia, but our supporters can be seen almost anywhere you go. They proudly wear orange and maroon and are always quick to shout, "Go Hokies."

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

A: I feel like I have always been a Hokie fan. I can remember listening to the radio of the exploits of Bob Schweikert, George Foussekis and Kenny Edwards when I was a teen. I even remember attending one football game at Miles Stadium. When I became a student at Tech in 1967 and attended my first game at Lane Stadium, I knew that I would be a Hokie for life.

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

A: Living in Pulaski County, Virginia, even though we are close to Blacksburg, there was little information and communication for the Hokie Club

in the early 1980s. A small group of us Hokies decided to try to organize a Hokie Club in our area. This, coincidentally, was the time that Frank Beamer was named head football coach. We had him speak at our first event, which was one of the first events he had done since becoming a coach. I am not sure who was more nervous, Frank or our group that was just hoping that we would have people attend. Needless to say, the event was a success, and the Pulaski County Hokie Club has more than 160 members today.

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

A: My best memory is sitting in the Superdome on January 4, 2000, during the national championship game, thinking about some of my friends and other naysayers saying that, "Tech will never get close to playing for the national championship in any sport." I kept thinking to myself, "Well, I am sitting here in the Superdome and we are playing for the national championship in football, and I am not dreaming!" Even though we lost the game in the last quarter, we proved that we belonged on the field.

Q: Do you have any gameday superstitions? If so, what are they?

A: I'm not a superstitious person, but I

haven't missed a home football game for more than 48 years and that is one streak I hope to continue for many more years.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.

A: Getting up early on a fall day, the sun is shining, no wind in Blacksburg, and a big football game against a big rival starting at 3:30 p.m., and then tailgating with fellow Hokies, exchanging football tales and discussing a big Hokie victory after the game.

Q: Do you have any tailgating traditions? If so, tell us your best.

A: Putting Virginia Tech decals on my "Hokie car" and arriving early to tailgate. Also getting into the stadium at least one hour before kickoff to watch the team warm up and watch the stands fill up.

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

A: I feel it is important to support our student-athletes, both on and off their playing surfaces. It is my way of supporting Virginia Tech athletics and their endeavors to compete with other schools. Our investment is important to our student-athletes, who are working hard every day to make the Hokie Nation proud.

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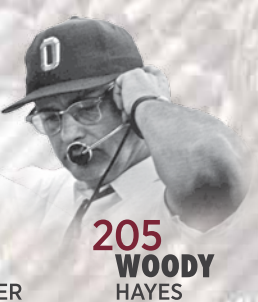
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Curtin wins individual crown at 2015 ACC Cross Country Championships

Tommy Curtin felt Syracuse runner Justyn Knight make his move with roughly a couple of hundred meters left during the 2015 ACC Men's Cross Country Championship race, and he immediately remembered the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships this past June when Knight ran by him in the 5,000-meter race to finish sixth.

"I was definitely worried," Curtin said. "He's a good kicker. He kicked past me at outdoor nationals in the 5K last year [Knight finished sixth; Curtin seventh]. I know he's good as well. We've traded off those wins before."

"But I'm confident in my kick, so I knew when he slid past that I'd be able to get right behind him, hang on and get him at the end."

The redshirt senior from Leesburg, Virginia, did just that, blowing past Knight in the final 100 meters and crossing the finish line first to claim his first ACC cross country title. His time of 23 minutes, 23 seconds, set a course record at the event, which was held at Apalachee Regional Park in Tallahassee, Florida, on Oct. 30.

Curtin, who had won the prestigious NCAA Pre-National race just two weeks earlier, became the second runner in Tech history to win an ACC cross country title. Will Mulherin won the individual crown in 2012 when he

led the Hokies to the team title.

"It's awesome," Curtin said. "Winning the individual title against all those guys who are at a national caliber is fantastic."

"This is a great win for Thomas," Tech head cross country coach Ben Thomas said. "He played his kick perfectly and beat a very competitive field."

Behind Curtin, the Hokies finished in fourth place with 120 points. Syracuse, with three runners finishing in the top five, won its third straight ACC team title. NC State claimed second, followed by Virginia.

In addition to Curtin winning the ACC title, the Hokies also took home the ACC Freshman of the Year award. Peter Seuer was the highest-placing true freshman in the field, finishing 34th overall in a time of 24:37.3.

Stuart Robertson was the second finisher for the Tech men's team, coming in 24th with a time of 24:21.0. Neil Gourley (24:33.8) and Daniel Jaskowak (24:34.6) finished 30th and 31st, respectively, and Darren Barlow (24:41.2) came in 39th. Brent Musselman was 43rd with a time of 24:52.1.

On the women's side, the Hokies finished in eighth place with 213 points. Virginia won the team title with 71 points. Abigail Motley


led all Tech women's runners, finishing 37th out of 131 runners with a time of 21:19.4.

Curtin expected the men's race to go one of two ways – either the pack would start out slow and the race would become more team-centered, or someone would go out quickly and try to run away from the pack.

"I was up there at the front, but it was already moving pretty quick as soon as the gun went off," Curtin said. "I knew the slow race wasn't going to happen then."

Curtin led a pack of five or six runners coming down the stretch until Knight made his move. But Curtin had a little extra in the tank and hit the throttle in the final 100 meters.

"It feels like you're going all out, and then at the end, we hit that downhill stretch," Curtin said. "I could hear Coach Thomas yelling, 'One more gear, one more gear.' At that point, when you're moving at what you think is your top speed, it's all about whoever wants it more, whoever has that gear you shouldn't have, but you get it because you want it."

Curtin now has won five ACC individual titles in his career between track and field and cross country. He finished second at the 2013 ACC Cross Country Championships and took a redshirt season last year. 

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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Beamer leaves a legacy of success on the field, more so off of it

Where to begin?

How do you write a farewell tribute about the most important person in the 143-year history of this university? How do you tell that story, knowing that no combination of words can capture his impact?

We knew this day was coming – the day Frank Beamer would no longer be the football coach at Virginia Tech. We just never knew when. On Nov. 1, he told us, announcing that he was putting his headset away and hanging up his whistle at season's end, retiring and formulating the game plan for the next phase of his life.

Tearing up several times during a news conference the following day, he explained his reasoning in simple terms – it was just time. In doing so, he left us with lumps in our throats and tears in our eyes.

Frank Beamer has coached for 29 seasons at Tech, 20 of which I have witnessed personally. But I lived all of them, dating back to my days as a hayseed farm kid from Craig County. So his pending departure hits close to home.

I've interviewed Coach Beamer hundreds of times over the years. Our interviews never amounted to interviews. They always morphed into conversations, and usually ended with him telling me, 'You know what I want to say. Make me look good.' That trust was humbling.

By now, you've heard the many stories and eloquent tributes. You know about the win totals, the bowl streak, the championships, and the awards. You know about the big victories - the kick at West Virginia, the 1995 Sugar Bowl, the win at Miami to claim the first ACC title, winning at Ohio State, and others.

Those seem so hollow now that he plans to retire, at least to me. Just a jumble of numbers and facts.

Numbers define a coach's legacy. A man's legacy, though, is defined by how he treated and impacted those around him.

So remember that Coach Beamer turned down his raise in 1990 when he found out state employees weren't getting one. Remember that, the first time I met him at the football media day in 1996, he walked up to me, shook my hand, and said, "Jimmy, how are ya doin'?" He already knew my name.

Remember that, a couple of years ago, a Tech student came by unannounced and wanted to get the football team involved in Operation Christmas Child, an initiative in which shoeboxes packed full of toys get shipped all around the world. Most coaches

would have dismissed her. Coach Beamer invited her in - and had his team participate.

Remember how he treated people, always taking time to sign an autograph or pose for a photo. Remember his loyalty and how he turned down opportunities at BC, Georgia, and North Carolina. He belonged to us, in Blacksburg, stalking the sidelines at Lane Stadium and squinting into the sun on glorious autumn afternoons. His humble, determined, hard-working nature fit Southwest Virginia's culture.

Remember him giving second and third chances to players when most wouldn't. Corey Marshall, who has turned his life around, comes to mind.

Remember seeing Mrs. Beamer and him at basketball games. Go read Tere Williams' Facebook page to get a feel for what that meant to her.

Remember the signed note I saw once in Dave Cianelli's office, congratulating him on winning the ACC championship in track and field.

Remember how Ace Custis and Kylie McGoldrick paid glowing tributes to Coach Beamer on Facebook – and neither is a football player. Remember the appreciation of all student-athletes in all sports for what he, and his football program, meant to their respective sports.

Remember that former UVA quarterback Shawn Moore responded "greatcoach" to a Jon Jeffries Facebook post. That's "respect."


Remember the heartfelt reactions of his former players to the news. He made a difference. He shaped their lives in a positive way and they appreciate that.

Remember that he made leadership look easy in a complicated world. He led by working hard, being honest, and treating people with respect. It's not a complicated formula. He led with a steady hand, while everyone else lost their heads.

Remember how Mrs. Beamer and he sat in the front row at the convocation following the April 16, 2007 shootings on Tech's campus – and wept.

There are so many others. The cold conclusion is that this wonderful human being is retiring and leaving a beloved university. The reality of that slaps so hard.

But Coach Beamer says it's time. That leaves AD Whit Babcock and his staff preparing to fill his position.

That's what they'll be doing, too – filling Coach Beamer's position. For sure, they'll never be able to replace him. 



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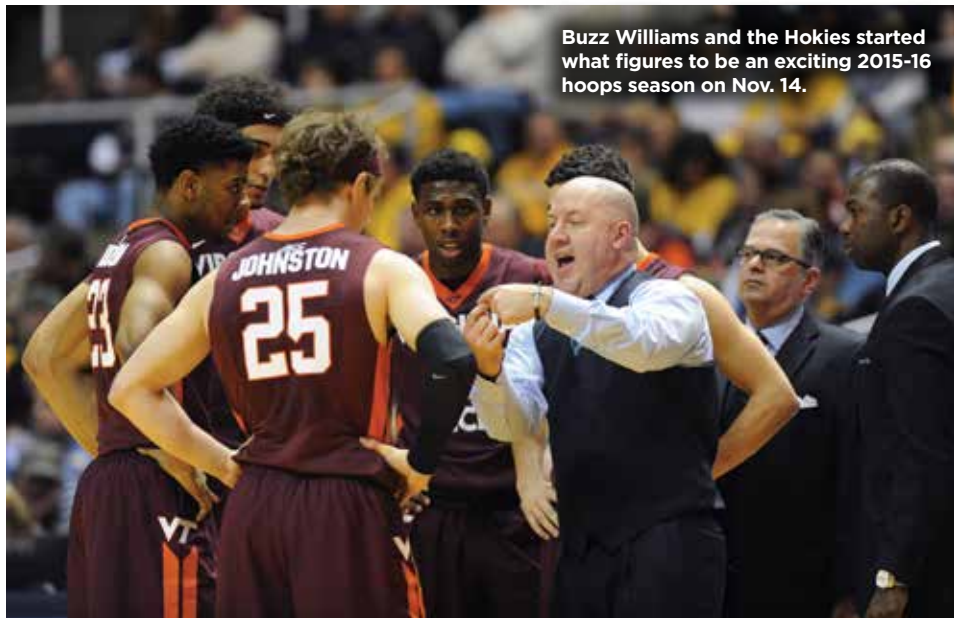
behind the mic | with Jon Laaser

Hoop dreams and black socks

The socks HAD to be black, and I HAD to have them now! The pursuit would take me to multiple suburban Minneapolis malls and ultimately would prove fruitless. The athletic sock makers clearly weren't paying as much attention as I was. I would eventually take the court wearing black socks, but they were my dad's dress socks. They looked ridiculous, but I felt really cool. I was, after all, the missing member of what should have been the "Fab Six." We would have to work on a new alliterative name for the group once I received my invitation.

The year was 1991, and the "Fab Five" was all the rage in college basketball. Had I been looking for black athletic socks the next year, I could have found them at any mall in the country. Billed as "the best recruiting class ever," the University of Michigan basketball team, under head coach Steve Fisher, was taking the college basketball world by storm. Their shorts were baggy, their heads were bald, and of course, their socks were black. They would eventually start five true freshmen on their way to the national title game, which, as luck would have it, was played at the Metrodome in Minneapolis. Jalen Rose was my man, and when good fortune created a chance meeting on a street corner at the Final Four, I was hooked on hoops for life.

Truth be told, I had already been smitten with basketball. I was the finest 4-foot, 2-inch point guard that Chanhassen Elementary had seen in years. Save for maybe my best friend, Brad Larson, who was the exact same size and probably a bit better off the dribble. But that was neither here nor there. I had a nicer Wolverines' Starter jacket than him anyway – which was really all that mattered. I had been enamored with Jerry Tarkanian's UNLV



Buzz Williams and the Hokies started what figures to be an exciting 2015-16 hoops season on Nov. 14.

Runnin' Rebels as they steamrolled Duke for the championship during the 1989-90 season. I was a tad conflicted when Bob Huggins' Cincinnati team, featuring another of my favorites, Nick Van Exel, went up against Michigan in that 1992 Final Four.

Every year after the title game was over, I begged my parents to let me stay up until "One Shining Moment" was over. The ball is tipped, and there you are ... I had never been musically inclined, but man, did I do a rendition of that song that would have brought Luther Vandross himself to tears – one way or another. You're running for your life, you're a shooting star...

I started to run an NCAA Tournament pool in middle school. There was no Internet yet, so the bracket didn't automatically populate. I had everyone in the pool pick the games in each

round. This was before cell phones, so many times, I would have my friends' moms pick for them if they weren't home when I called to get their picks. It was a nightly job. I loved it. I entered the picks onto the homemade giant bracket that I constructed out of poster board and numerous markers. The pool suffered a setback the year my mom won it. My friends thought the fix was in. They'll never prove it.

Selection Sunday was one of the most important days of the year to me. Back then, every game of the tournament wasn't accessible like it is today. Around the time I hit high school, DirecTV unveiled the Mega March Madness package. We had DirecTV! What luck again! Surely it was my responsibility to provide those games to much of the high school. After my parents left for work on the opening Thursday of the tournament, the

work began. Having already pre-planned playing hooky, my friends and I swung into action. We had three DirecTV receivers and three TVs, all of which needed to be dragged into the living room, aka "March Madness Dome," and rewired. I added the old black and white television from my bedroom and properly positioned the bunny ears to the CBS broadcast, and that gave us all four games.

When my dad arrived home from work and found 10 or so of us lounging with brackets hung on the wall, snacks littered about the room and all four games going, he generally wasn't thrilled. However, my yearly rebuttal of "It's March Madness, Dad," and then a comment on how his bracket was doing well would generally get us in the clear.

My hoop dreams ran into a problem about the same time. I grew through those years, but not enough. I was 5-4 when I got cut from the basketball team my sophomore year. I was devastated, but opportunity would soon present itself. The assistant coach told me and Brad – who was still the same size as me – that they needed people to provide commentary of the varsity games for public access television. They used the same tape for film session. I learned after a few broadcasts that they had taken to turning the sound down because we were a tad "too honest." No skin off my teeth, though, because I had found my calling in basketball. We eventually got fired from that

gig. I don't think there was a letter-writing campaign to bring us back.

I had experienced good fortune a few times through my basketball life. It only became more frequent from there. My first radio assignment in basketball was calling games for the Rocori Spartans. Bob Brink, one of the winningest coaches in Minnesota state high school history, led them. He was as great a man as he was a coach, and he gave me unlimited access to his program.

At the same time, I was an intern at KFAN radio in Minneapolis. I was given the opportunity to cover an emerging Minnesota Timberwolves team led by a still very young Kevin Garnett. The head coach was Flip Saunders. Unfortunately, he passed away recently. I have heard people eulogizing him over the past few weeks, and it brings back great memories of hanging out in the Wolves' locker room. Flip was an awesome guy, and so was KG. Latrell Sprewell has a bad rep, but was one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to meet. Joe Smith was also.


My playing days had already long been over, but I loved basketball more than ever. But my career in baseball took off first. I missed basketball in the five or so years that followed without it – and then VCU came into my life. I had moved to Richmond for baseball in 2010, but had made some connections within the VCU athletics department through mere

behind the mic | with Jon Laaser

happenstance. When the first baseball season ended, I was thrilled when they asked me to call their women's games and fill in a bit on the men's side.

A few months later, Shaka Smart and the Rams, like the "Fab Five" so many years before, were "it" in college basketball. The big difference – this time, I literally was along for the ride. As the program's profile grew, so did its exposure. More network television games meant the need for a television play-by-play guy. Guess who was standing there? The exposure I gained there put me on a track to be here – on the cusp of the Hokies' basketball season.

All of this is a way of saying I cannot wait for Virginia Tech basketball. I'm betting that my string of basketball good fortune will follow me to Blacksburg. When it does, it won't have much to do with me, though. Buzz Williams, and the members of his program, are the type of people who create the special circumstances that I have been fortunate enough to witness elsewhere. However, they don't do it with luck. They work harder than everybody else. After watching one practice, I could easily see that.

Whether or not they will be wearing black socks when they start accomplishing these things is yet to be determined. I will be, though, probably paired with nice loafers, recognizable as the guy lucky enough to call it. 



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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: Looking back at some recent cases, it seems the head coach often gets punished when he says that he wasn't aware of violations occurring under his watch. Jim Boeheim at Syracuse comes to mind. What if he really didn't know what was happening? Is it fair to suspend him? Megan in Blacksburg.

TP: "Those are certainly fair questions to ask. However, NCAA regulations specifically address this exact scenario. Bylaw 11.1.1.1 states that 'an institution's head coach is presumed to be responsible for the actions of all staff members who report to him and that the coach shall promote an atmosphere of compliance and monitor the activities of all staff members.'

"Therefore, a coach may be suspended if the NCAA enforcement staff determines that the bylaw has been violated. In Boeheim's case, he was suspended for nine ACC games this upcoming season."

Q: How long are players suspended by the NCAA for accepting benefits from agents? I recently saw where the kid from Ole Miss [Laremy Tunsil] was reinstated after missing seven games. Is seven games the standard?

Thanks, Tom from Christiansburg.

TP: "The length of the suspension varies depending on the total amount of the benefits and the specific facts of the case. In the case you mentioned, Tunsil received the use of three separate loaner vehicles over a six-month period though he did not pay for them. He also received a four-month interest-free promissory note on a \$3,000 down payment for purchasing a used vehicle, two nights of lodging at a local home, an airline ticket purchased by a friend of a teammate, and one day use of a rental vehicle."


"Under NCAA rules, a player is generally required to miss 30 percent of his sport's contests for accepting impermissible benefits greater than \$700. However, the penalty can be longer or shorter depending on any aggravating or mitigating factors connected to the case. For instance, last year, Georgia running back Todd Gurley was suspended for four games after accepting more than \$3,000 in cash for autographed memorabilia. He could have missed more games, but his full disclosure and Georgia's due diligence resulted in a less severe penalty."

"Keep in mind that student-athletes not only get suspended, but also are required

to make financial restitution (pay the value of the extra benefits to a charity) and often perform community service."

Q: Can student-athletes participate in DraftKings or FanDuel, two fantasy sports websites? Under the law, those sites aren't considered gambling, and we all know the NCAA comes down hard on gambling. Just curious. Thanks, J.C. in Blacksburg.

TP: "No. Neither student-athletes, nor any other staff members in our athletics department may participate in these particular types of contests. At the end of September, the NCAA staff issued a ruling pertaining to DraftKings and FanDuel, defining 'sports wagering as putting something at risk — such as an entry fee — with the opportunity to win something in return, which includes fantasy league games. Because of this, student-athletes, coaches, administrators and national office staff may not participate in sports wagering, including fantasy league games with a paid entry fee.'

"The penalty for participating is harsh. Student-athletes found to be wagering on these sites will automatically lose a year of competitive eligibility." 



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GABRIELLE BISHOP

SWIMMING & DIVING
Suffolk, Virginia

by Jimmy Robertson

Gabrielle Bishop, a versatile member of the Tech women's swimming and diving team, graduates in May with a degree in construction engineering and management, along with getting a minor in green engineering. She wants to pursue a career in construction and currently has several job offers. She hopes to make a decision on her future by the end of the fall semester.

Q: Why did you decide to major in construction engineering and management?

GB: "Coming into Tech, I knew I wanted to do engineering. I didn't know what type, so I went to a couple of information sessions, and I had heard about civil [engineering] before. This is when construction engineering management had just kind of started and was getting its feet on the ground. I went to those CEM sessions, and everything just kind of clicked. I liked everything that the professors had to say and what the seniors had to say. I was drawn more toward that because how it involves more than horizontal building. It involves vertical, horizontal ... you can go in any way. There's also the management aspect. You don't always have to stick with the same job. So there are more career opportunities with it, and I liked that openness."

Q: How have you managed to graduate in four years in engineering and still be a student-athlete? Most student-athletes who pursue engineering take five years.

GB: "I've taken heavy course loads. I'm in 19 credits this semester. It's a heavy course load, but it's doable. It's a lot about time management and communication with my coaches. A lot of the classes that I have, especially my junior and senior years, have conflicted with practice times, and I've had to work with them to rearrange some practices."

"As far as dealing with the work, it doesn't bother me. There is a goal I have in mind to have a career in this construction industry, and I'm going to get it done. I'm going to make sacrifices now and reap the rewards later."


Q: You haven't done an internship, but that hasn't stopped companies from pursuing you, has it?

GB: "We recently had our career fair, and I was able to get six interviews. I just got a call from one of the companies for a second-round interview. I also received an offer from another company yesterday [Oct. 21]. It's pretty exciting to be able to get out in the field and know that I have some opportunities ahead of me."

"I'm most interested in commercial construction, and that would be things such as building office buildings, sports venues, entertainment buildings – like a theater or an Imax – hospitals, educational buildings. I would start out in the field, kind of working with my hands and building from the ground up. I'd be labeled as a field engineer. I could work my way up or move into the office setting. I could do more things such as estimating or scheduling. Hopefully, in the next five years, I could work my way up to a project manager position and excel from there."

Q: So what are your future plans?

GB: "I'd like to make a decision [on her job offers] before the beginning of the spring semester, so hopefully by the end of December or the end of January, just to have something in my mind and not have to worry about where I'll be living. Before I graduate, I want to take the EIT, which is the engineering-in-training exam. This sets me up to get my professional engineering license within the next five years. I'd have to gain five years of experience, which is defined by the state. Then I'll apply for that [the PE exam] and pass that. Then I'll be awarded my professional engineering license."

"All that is really saying is that I'll be able to stamp off on documents, and if I receive plans, I can sign off and say that this is structurally sound and safe for people to operate in, things like that. It puts my name on the line and bumps up the responsibility I'll have on a project." 



Michal Szuba is a freestyle specialist on the Tech men's swimming and diving team and helped the 800-yard freestyle relay team to a bronze medal at last year's ACC Championships. He graduates next May with a degree in finance, with plans to pursue a career in the banking industry.

Q: Why did you decide to major in finance?

MS: "I like math, and I think finance is really interesting, especially investing. It's kind of exciting. I like the stock market. Stocks are changing every couple of seconds, so you have to follow them, and you're always trying to do your best [to make money], so that's exciting. In the future, I'd like to work in this area."

Q: Did anyone influence you, or try to lead you down this path?

MS: "Yes, my sister suggested this to me. She is three years older than I am, and she was studying economics in England. She thought it would be best if I went this way, and I've found it exciting."

Q: Finance is one of the most difficult majors at Virginia Tech. How have you managed to balance your time between academics and athletics?

MS: "It's been hard, but if you're focused on school and swimming, you can do it. Good time management is really important. We [the members of the swimming and diving team] don't have much free time, so school and practices come first and then free time. It's all about time management."

Q: Have you done any internships or co-ops, or anything like that?

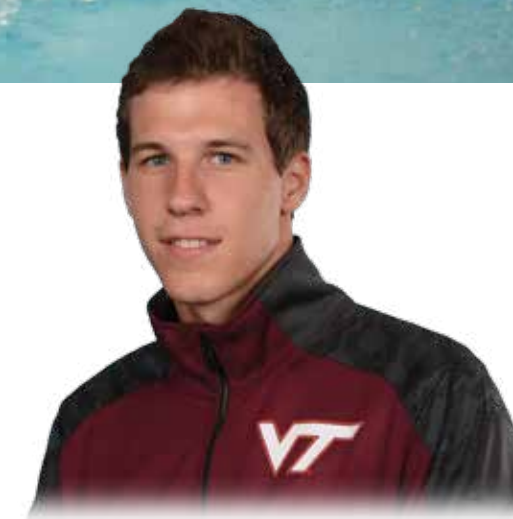
MS: "Yes. I did my first internship last summer in Poland. I worked for the national bank in Poland, and it was really exciting. It was great going home for the summer and spending time with my family. Actually, I wasn't in the finance section so much. I was in the accounting section, and I was doing things like accounts receivable reconciliation. I was putting numbers into the accounting system there. Just things like that. It was a two-month internship, and it was really fun."

Q: What did you learn from that experience?

MS: "I learned that finance is more fun than accounting [laughing], in my opinion. Sometimes, I was getting bored doing accounting. I've done projects in finance classes that were really exciting. It was just more interesting for me. I think that's my personality. That internship solidified my decision to major in finance, for sure."

Q: What are your future plans?

MS: "I haven't decided yet, but I'd like to go back to Europe and live in London. My sister lives there, so it would be kind of nice. Or maybe I'll end up back in Poland. I haven't decided yet. I wouldn't mind working for a company like PwC [a global financial services company]. They're worldwide. They're here in the U.S., the U.K., and even in Poland. But I'll go to Business Horizons [a career fair at Virginia Tech] next semester and talk to some




MICHAL SZUBA

SWIMMING & DIVING
Wroclaw, Poland

by Jimmy Robertson

companies. I could see myself as an investment banker. I know it's time-consuming, but it would be exciting. Maybe I'll do it for a year and see how it goes."

"My dream job would be to open my own company, and maybe one day, I'll do it. That would be exciting, just to start something from the beginning and see it grow." 

A LEGEND decides to RETIRE

Longtime football coach Frank Beamer announced his plans to retire at the end of this season, saying simply that it was time to end his 29-year tenure at Tech

by Jimmy Robertson



The meeting occurred late in 1992, and David Braine pulls the memory of it from his head quickly and with the utmost of clarity.

Tech's athletics director at the time, Braine walked in, and Dr. James McComas, the university's president, and Minnis Ridenour, the school's executive vice president, sat there. The meeting lasted less than 10 minutes.

"Do we need to make a change with our

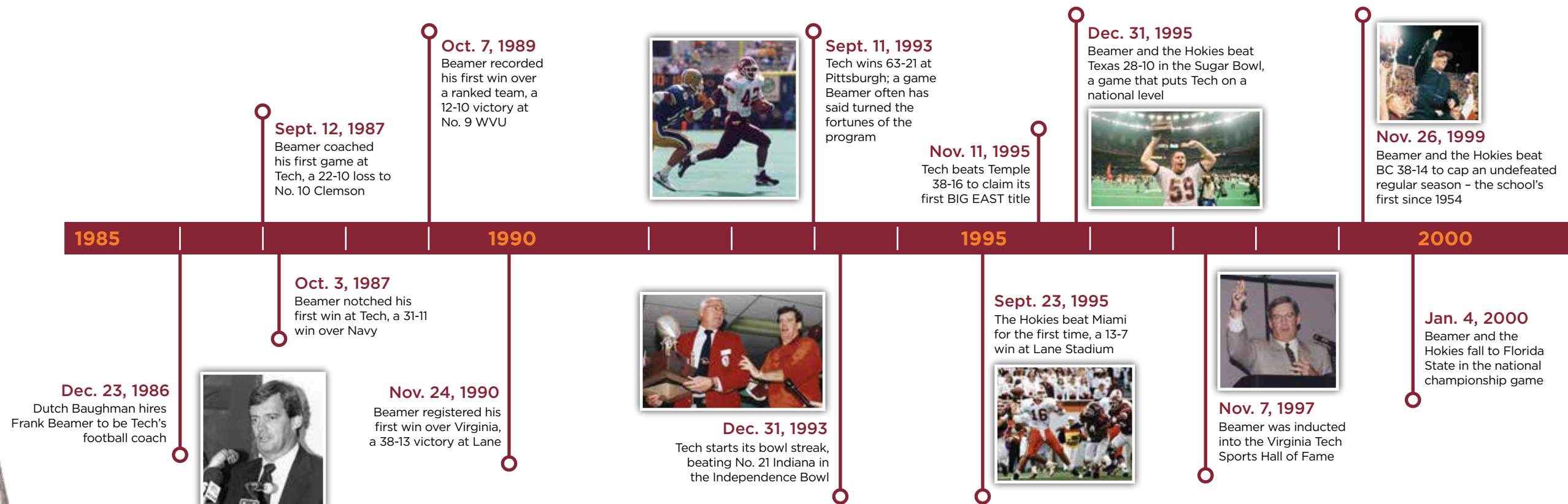
football coach?" McComas asked.

"No" Braine said.

That lone answer saved Frank Beamer's professional life and ultimately marked the first spark that ignited the Hokies' football program into the national stratosphere. Tech made a bowl game the next season – and won it – and the head man has been winning ever since, currently standing as college football's

all-time winningest active Football Bowl Subdivision [FBS] coach.

His unprecedented run, though, will come to an end following this season, as Beamer announced his retirement plans on Nov. 1, one day after the Hokies' 26-10 win over Boston College. He told his coaching staff and players, and then the following day, met with the Hokie Nation to offer some insight on his decision.



certainly validated Braine's decision. He guided the Hokies to four ACC titles (2004, 2007, 2008 and 2010), five ACC Coastal Division crowns, three BIG EAST Conference titles, two "major" bowl victories, six BCS appearances and a trip to the 1999 national championship game. He earned five conference Coach of the Year honors (three in the BIG EAST, two in the ACC), and in 1999, he received eight national Coach of the Year awards.

Beamer came to his decision days before the Boston College game, waking up one morning and telling wife Cheryl that he planned on retiring. He told his son, Shane, on Friday before the team left to travel to Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. Following the Hokies' victory, Cheryl Beamer asked her husband if he wanted to reconsider his decision, and he said he was at peace with it.

"When you're not sure it's the right thing, that's when you're not at peace," Beamer said. "I do feel like it's the right thing to do, and it's the right thing for Virginia Tech. I think it's the right time for me.

"It's a tough business. I think it's a younger guy's business, talking about practices and games. Everything is critical. Every loss is critical. After you do that a number of years, I think it wears on you a little bit. I knew what I was getting into. I chose the profession, and I'm not bad-mouthing the profession. I'm just saying it's a tough profession.

"The hardest thing I've had is that so many

people are counting on you and then when you let them down – and people express it differently and all that – but still, that's kind of my deal. I didn't want to let Hokies down. That's the hardest part about being average the last few years. That's another thing I'm proud of. At one time, average wasn't so bad. Now, average is unacceptable, really. That's a good thing. I'm proud of that. Tech fans deserve better. We've been average for too long."

Beamer's decision rocked Hokie Nation, though all knew the day eventually would come. It also saddened many in the athletics department, as Beamer served as the face of the department – and arguably the university – living its core values each and every day.

Following the team meeting, several players went to Beamer's office to offer well wishes and to show their appreciation for the opportunities he gave them.

"It was a big shock, just knowing how much he means to me personally and everything he's done for me," Tech fullback Sam Rogers said. "Coach Beamer was really one of the only coaches to give me a chance, and he means so much to me. It goes far beyond football. It's an honor to be coached by such a legend.

"I'm glad that he announced it this week so that we could celebrate him the right way and honor him the right way."

Like Rogers, most were surprised at the decision. Most expected this type of decision to come – if it were to come – at the conclusion of the season.

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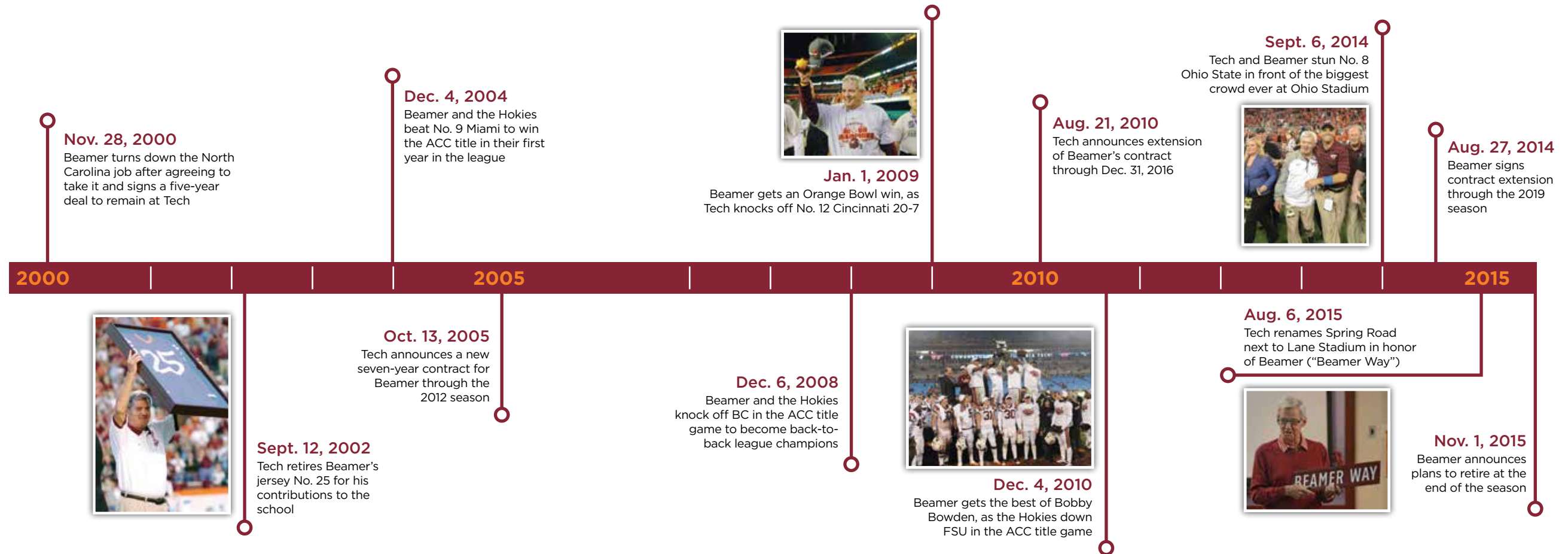


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IHS extra | frank beamer decides to retire



But Beamer wanted to be up front with his players and coaches.

"I have always wanted to be honest with people," he said. "If I know something, I can't keep it a secret, and I don't want to. My players and coaches deserve to know what's going on. For me, it was the right thing to do."

Speculation had been surrounding Beamer's future for roughly a year, dating back to December when the longtime coach underwent throat surgery that kept him from coaching in the Hokies' Military Bowl win over Cincinnati. He returned for spring practice, and he told media members at July's ACC Kickoff that he was energized for the upcoming season.

The surgery and subsequent recovery led to Beamer losing a lot of weight. But he said that his health was not a factor in his decision to retire.

"After this operation, I don't know that I've had quite the energy that I once had, but that hasn't been an issue at all," he said. "My health is good, and I'm thankful for that. Full speed ahead."

Beamer's legacy extends far beyond wins and losses on the field. He ran his program the right way, without a hint of scandal, and his players graduated. The program has increased its NCAA Academic Progress Rate scores each of the past four years.

In the community, he started a charity, which he named after his mother, and uses it to promote reading among young children. He often has read to kids at elementary schools, and he speaks to various civic groups within the community on a regular basis. He also speaks at various university functions, all with the intent of helping the school.

"It's a place that's been tremendous to me, and I hope I've been good for it," Beamer said. "We've kind of grown together. Like I've always said, I hope everything has gotten better. Bigger and better. I think, for the most part, that is true, and I hope that's true in every regard."

Beamer served as the face of the school when he helped students, staff personnel and administrators overcome the tragedy of April 16, 2007. He attended the convocation the day following the tragedy, and he later spoke to family members who lost loved ones on that fateful day.

He and the football program helped the university rebound to the thriving place it is today.

"When you walk in and you look back and saw the hurt and the pain and the grief in the eyes ... I'll never forget seeing those eyes," Beamer said. "It was one sick guy that caused all that. I'll never forget those eyes, I'll tell you that. It was something that didn't need to happen, and shouldn't have happened,

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but did.

“I went to a Richmond race [NASCAR] right after that, and someone said, ‘You’ll probably always be remembered for the tragedy that happened at Virginia Tech.’ I said, ‘Nah, what we’re going to be remembered for was how Virginia Tech reacted to that tragedy and how they came together and got closer. Cared about each other. That’s what we’ll really remember about that deal.’ And that’s really Virginia Tech right there.”

Those in the audience at the news conference in which he addressed his retirement plans included university president Dr. Tim Sands, current athletics director Whit Babcock, Braine, and Traci Weaver, the wife of former AD Jim Weaver, who passed away this past July. Jim Weaver’s leadership, and particularly his investment in facilities, helped Beamer take the Hokies on an unprecedented run of 22 straight bowl games.

That accomplishment may be Beamer’s biggest. Tech’s bowl streak currently is the longest active streak recognized by the NCAA.

Beamer answered a dozen questions during a news conference that lasted roughly 20 minutes. One of those questions included how he would like to be remembered.

He paused for a minute. Then he gave a short, succinct answer.

“He is who he is,” Beamer said. “Honest, caring and respectful.”

For sure, Hokie Nation will remember him in that exact way – and in so many others.

What others are saying about Virginia Tech head coach Frank Beamer

“Frank Beamer is one of the most respected coaches in college athletics and for good reason. What he has meant to college football, his players, staff and fans is immeasurable. He is a man of integrity, class and humility, and I’m tremendously pleased that part of his career has been spent in the Atlantic Coast Conference. I wish Frank, Cheryl and his entire family nothing but the best.” – ACC Commissioner John Swofford

“I know he wanted to win a national championship. I’ve told him, ‘You’ve already won one.’ I said, ‘Your national championship is the type of man you were and that legacy of how you treated people and the way these kids loved you.’ I said, ‘That’s your national championship.’ And those kids won’t forget him. So that, he is proud of.” – Cheryl Beamer, wife of Frank Beamer

“Congrats Frank Beamer on a legendary career. Thanks for everything you’ve done for Hokie Nation and Blacksburg.” – U.S. Senator and former Virginia Governor Mark Warner

“I remember him sitting on my couch, the smile he had on his face, the enthusiasm

and him really impressing my mom with his delivery. That was special because he made her smile and made me believe that he wanted me in that moment, and for him to take his time to come down there was really a special moment.” – Former Tech quarterback Michael Vick

“Coach Beamer has been so much more than a football coach to me. Everybody always asked me when I first got into the league, ‘Why did you go to Virginia Tech over some of these other schools?’ It’s that personal connection, that personal touch that those coaches just created with me and a lot of other players that they were able to recruit and get to come to Blacksburg. But Coach Beamer has been so much more than a football coach to me and a lot of other guys. We still talk to him to this day.” – Former Tech defensive back DeAngelo Hall

“Best college coach ever. This man is a living legend. Coach, you’ll be greatly missed, but respected in the highest regard for what you did for young men’s lives. I’ll never forget. Thank you.” – Former Tech defensive back Antone Exum

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A GAMBLE PAYS OFF

Wade Hansen transferred from a Division III school to Virginia Tech, hoping to earn a scholarship, and the Hokies' starting right tackle ultimately has seen his risky decision pay off

by Jimmy Robertson

“I just had that goal. That was my biggest thing. You go as hard as you can all the time, and someone will take notice. Until then, you’ve got to keep chugging along. You’ve got to keep working. You’ve got to keep doing what you’re doing. Just never settle to be good enough. That was the big thing my dad told me when I played Pop Warner. I never settled to be good enough.”

– Wade Hansen on earning a scholarship at Tech

The NCAA certainly frowns upon gambling of any type, and with his scraggly beard and country-boy outlook on life, Wade Hansen wouldn’t exactly fit the image of a man sitting at the poker table ready to wager his hard-earned capital on the flick of dealer’s wrist.

But Hansen isn’t afraid of risk. He quickly tells you that he plays the odds that are in his favor, and then he patiently waits to collect.

The starting right tackle on the Virginia Tech football team’s offensive line went all in, in gambling parlance, with his life-altering decision more than two years ago. He pushed all his chips to the center of the table, venturing everything that someone, somewhere, would actually gamble on him.

Tech head coach Frank Beamer and his staff did. Now both sides feel they hit the football jackpot.

“It’s made me who I am today,” Hansen said. “So I’m happy for the change.”

The change being that he transferred from a Division III school in small-town New York to Virginia Tech. He looked at other places during his search, spraying emails to locales such as Syracuse, Connecticut, East Carolina, Maryland and West Virginia.

At the time, Hansen wanted a scholarship. Virginia Tech offered him a shot.

Hansen spent two years at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, a private school in Troy, New York, near his tiny hometown of Raymertown. RPI’s specialty is engineering, and Hansen originally wanted to pursue a career in that. Playing football and being close to Raymertown, a spot not far from the Vermont border where his family ran a dairy operation, made the decision to go there rather easy. He could get a degree, play football and still get to the woods for hunting and fishing, two hobbies he cherishes in his spare time.

But it all came with a hefty price. Division III schools do not offer scholarships, and RPI’s tuition hovered around \$60,000 a year. Hansen received financial aid, but even with that, the costs mounted.

His parents, Craig and Pauline, make decent money. Craig Hansen works for Questar as a health and safety inspector, and Pauline works as an insurance adjustor – noble professions, but like most, not the type that can handle \$60,000 yearly in tuition bills.

So they sat down and had a conversation.

“I was recruited by a couple of Division III schools out of high school,” Hansen said. “I didn’t have any D-I or D-II offers. Going to RPI, in New York, that’s a big deal because of its academics and its engineering programs. They were really interested in me, and I thought I was going to pursue a career in engineering. It just seemed like the perfect fit.

“I played two years, and it was fun. It was a good time, but I felt that RPI was putting a financial burden on me and my family. The only way to relieve that was to continue to apply for more financial aid, or go somewhere where there was an opportunity to become a scholarship player. I sat down with my family, and we thought that was a good idea. We weren’t getting any positive feedback from the financial aid offices.”

Hansen cast emails in many directions, but only hooked two responses – Virginia Tech and Georgia Southern. Tech defensive line coach Charley Wiles told Hansen to make a highlight video and post it on YouTube, and

Hansen put together some highlights of his sophomore year.

Wiles liked what he saw. Hansen was a 6-foot-5, nearly 300-pounder with decent athleticism. He also played hard. Images of John Engelberger came to mind. Engelberger, a former All-American, came to Tech as a walk-on himself.

Wiles invited Hansen down for the spring game, and Tech’s staff ultimately offered him a preferred walk-on spot.

“We get emails and video all the time, and you look into them because you just never know when you can get someone who can help you,” Wiles said. “Wade had some quickness, and he was a bigger guy. We thought he could be a defensive tackle or an offensive tackle.”

“As soon as I set foot on the campus, I knew I wanted to come here,” Hansen said.

If only things were so simple. Hansen started feeling poorly on his return trip home to New York, and that served as a precursor of things to come.

Before the end of the semester, he had been



diagnosed with mononucleosis, Lyme disease and strep throat. He spent six weeks in bed. By the end of the semester, he had lost 30 pounds, and his grades dropped nearly as much.

“I had to take summer classes at two community colleges just to get my grades up to transfer here,” Hansen said.

By then, Hansen was committed to play his hand. He came to Blacksburg, and a few days on campus only reaffirmed his decision. He loved Southwest Virginia, which conjured memories of the dairy farm in rural Raymertown, and fishing and hunting opportunities were plentiful.

On the field, he sat out the season while meeting the NCAA’s residency requirements for transfers. He still paid a lot in tuition, but less than if he had remained at RPI.

Last August, Tech’s staff asked him to move to the offensive line, which lacked depth, particularly at the tackle spots. Hansen expressed apprehension at first. His goal remained getting a scholarship, and this looked like a step backward.

It took a conversation with Tech offensive line coach Stacy Searels to change Hansen’s mind.

“Will you help me earn a scholarship?” Hansen asked.

“Of course,” Searels told him. “You put in

the effort, and we’ll try to make this happen.”

“I was sold from there,” Hansen said, recalling the conversation.

Hansen played sparingly at the beginning of last season. Most of his snaps came on special teams. But an injury to Jonathan McLaughlin opened the door.

Hansen made his first career start in a game at Duke, which coincided with a Tech win over the then-No. 19 Blue Devils. His first career home start came in the Hokies’ 24-20 win over Virginia in the regular-season finale – a victory that secured Tech’s 22nd straight bowl berth.

He came off the bench in Tech’s Military Bowl win over Cincinnati, but still played 60 snaps. That propelled him into the offseason and into spring practice when he knew he’d have a chance to earn a starting position – and that coveted scholarship.

That happened on a chilly April day two days before the annual Maroon-Orange Game when Beamer delivered him the news.

“I’m going to take care of you,” he told him.

At that point, the dealer folded. In spite of being a former Division III player, in spite of getting sick and needing to go to two community colleges to get his grades up and in spite of paying his way at Tech for two years, Hansen cashed out in a big way.

“I just had that goal,” he said. “That was my biggest thing. You go as hard as you can all the time, and someone will take notice. Until then, you’ve got to keep chugging along. You’ve got to keep working. You’ve got to keep doing what you’re doing. Just never settle to be good enough. That was the big thing my dad told me when I played Pop Warner. I never settled to be good enough.”

Hansen has started every game this season. He’s on the verge of wrapping up his career.

He graduates next spring with a degree in history. He’s unsure of his goals after that point.

“If possible, I’d like to play football after college, if there are opportunities for it,” he said. “I had a good conversation with Ty Dillon [NASCAR Xfinity Series driver] when he was here [in early September] just about becoming part of a pit crew for NASCAR. I thought that was interesting. There is a possibility of going back home to New York and getting into law enforcement. That, or becoming a paid firefighter. I’m part of a volunteer fire department back home, and I love it.”

Hansen isn’t worried. He knows life is a game of risk, and the stakes are high.

But he’s not afraid. After all, he took the biggest gamble he possibly could take – and won.

Getting to know WADE HANSEN

It’s Friday night in the offseason. What are you doing?

“Maybe just before dusk go out and cast a few lines. Fish a little bit. Maybe go hit the bowling alley, and while I’m there, maybe go over to Frank Theatres and catch a flick.”

What is your favorite food?

“I’m a pizza guy. I love pizza. My grandmother used to make it all the time. She was 100 percent Italian, so she had all the old recipes that had been in the family for generations. She used to make some of the best pizza ever. Virginia pizza is not the same. That’s being nice.”

What is your favorite movie?

“Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby. I enjoy watching NASCAR, and that movie is hilarious. Will Ferrell is hilarious, and I love his whole character of wanting to go fast.”

What are you listening to before a football game?

“I’m more of a rock guy. I listen to the Metallica, Van Halen, Kid Rock ... I’m not huge into rap. There are a couple of songs that I listen to just because the beat gets me going. I’m more of a country buff when it comes to leisure listening. I like the older stuff, like George Strait, Alan Jackson and Hank Williams, Jr.”


What’s been your most memorable moment at Tech?

“The Thursday before the spring game last year. Coach Beamer pulled me aside. He said, ‘I heard this semester has been kind of



tough.’ I said, ‘Yes sir.’ He said, ‘Well I’m going to take care of you this summer. I’m going to put you on scholarship.’ I thanked him, and I gave him a hug. Then I got back in the warm-up line and warmed up [laughing].”

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

“In a perfect world, I’d either be a professional hunter on a TV series or retiring from the NFL. Those are my perfect-world scenarios.” 

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HOPE in a SHOEBOX

Tech's football players participate in Operation Christmas Child, sacrificing per diem money to purchase toys to pack in shoeboxes for children around the world

by Jimmy Robertson



Chuck Clark remembers the day vividly.

He was a senior at King's Fork High School in Suffolk, Virginia, and his mother, Lashonda, told him and his siblings to go through their closets and gather together any old clothes or shoes that were too small or simply no longer in style. They loaded the stuff into the trunk of their vehicle, and then they went to a rough section of Portsmouth.

"We went and found a bunch of homeless people in Portsmouth, and we pulled up and opened our trunk and let them go through and get what they wanted," Clark said. "I'd say there was 25-30 people there. We had old clothes, shoes, belts, ties, dress clothes ... things like that.

"We knew there would be people out there. It feels good to give back, not just at Christmas time, but any other time. Any time that you're

able to help someone in need without having them think that they owe you back, that's a good thing. You can't put a price on it."

Clark, along with his Virginia Tech football teammates, helped a bunch of other people recently, participating in Operation Christmas Child, a Samaritan's Purse initiative in which small kids' toys, school supplies and toiletries are packed into shoeboxes and then distributed to young children throughout the world. Samaritan's Purse, a Christian-based organization, has shipped 124 million shoeboxes around the world since starting this initiative in 1993.

To pay for the gifts that went into the shoeboxes, Tech's football players sacrificed a portion of their per diem money the week of the Duke football game, and head coach Frank Beamer made a monetary donation as

well. Dr. John Ballein, the associate AD for football operations, purchased the gifts, and the players packed shoeboxes on Oct. 23 in their players' lounge.

"Not everyone gets to experience a good Christmas," offensive tackle Darius Redman said while packing a box. "Some kids wake up [on Christmas morning] and don't have any gifts. So you're not going to know just how much it means to these kids to provide them with this. Just to make a kid's day, that's worth more than any snaps you take on the field."

Elizabeth Henry, a Tech student, actually spearheaded the football team's involvement in this project. Henry, who lives in Williamsburg, Virginia, started collecting shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child five years ago. Since arriving at Tech, she broadened the scope of her collections, asking fraternities, sororities,

students in her classes and other on-campus organizations to be a part of it. As a result, she has collected close to 2,000 boxes in two years.

Henry, a junior pursuing a human nutrition, foods and exercise degree, always wanted to get the football team on board with her endeavors. So she made a bold move, walking into Beamer's office one day to make her pitch.

"He gave me two minutes to explain what the project was, and why I wanted the VT football team involved," she said. "He then agreed to allow me to present this project in front of the team. I did just that and was surprised to see so many players sign up for boxes."

The initiative hits close to home for Henry. Born in Ukraine, she lived in an orphanage and once received a shoebox filled with gifts. The Henry family adopted her when she was 13, but she never forgot her feelings when she

received that shoebox.

"Before receiving the box, I had no hope or future to look forward to," she said. "That box meant someone took the time to pack it for me, and the world didn't seem like such a bad place any more. I do this because I know it will change a life somewhere overseas because it changed mine."


Tech's football players packed 120 shoeboxes in time to beat the Nov. 10 deadline. Samaritan's Purse needs the shoeboxes in by this time to allow for shipping to various parts of the world.

"There are not enough words to describe how much I appreciate their help," Henry said. "I am forever grateful. The players may not know it, but by packing these boxes, they are changing lives. They are giving hope in the form of a shoebox."

The players, though, were quite aware of their impact. This season on the field may not have turned out exactly how they wanted, but they have refused to let that blur the bigger picture – their obligation to live up to the university's motto *Ut Prosim* ("That I May Serve").

"This is an opportunity to give back to kids and make sure they have a great Christmas as well," tailback J.C. Coleman said. "I love kids, and I'm glad to be a part of something that is going to make them feel blessed."

Clark agreed.

"I'm about to turn 21, so getting presents at Christmas isn't that big of a deal to me," he said. "For someone who is 2 or 10 or 15, it's special to get presents. So what I had to give up monetarily, that's not anything compared to the smile you can put on someone else's face." 



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Senior Transition Seminar beneficial for Tech student-athletes

A panel of five guests recently offered invaluable insight to a group of student-athletes getting ready to wind down their playing days and pursue their future professional goals

by Jimmy Robertson

The NCAA constantly hammers home its overarching point that student-athletes more than likely will go pro in something other than sports, and Virginia Tech continues to prepare its student-athletes for that type of future.

Coordinated by the Office of Student-Athlete Development, the athletics department held its Senior Transition Seminar on Oct. 19, bringing in a panel of five guests to address an array of topics and answer questions from more than 100 student-athletes who gathered at the McConnell Auditorium in the Merryman Center for the event. The purpose of the event was to provide insight to student-athletes getting ready to transition into the professional world.

The panel consisted of former Tech student-athletes Wayne Robinson, who serves as the senior pastor at New Millenium Christian Center in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Jazmine Reeves, a university recruiter for Amazon. It also was comprised of Tori Fitzpatrick and Sean Hubbard, two representatives from Kohl's, a national department store chain. Carl Ehrlich, a former Harvard football player who founded his own company, rounded out the panel.

Kevin Jones, a former Tech football player who serves as an assistant AD in the athletics department, moderated the event. He serves as a good resource and example for Tech's student-athletes because he played in the NFL for seven years, and yet once he retired, he found himself in limbo, not sure of what to do. He ended up coming back to Tech and getting his degree.

"Right now, your goal is being a college athlete," Jones told the audience. "But I think the story is half told because being a college athlete is not a long-term thing. It's four or five years. Then what? That's not a scare tactic. That's reality.

"When sports is over, what are you going to do with yourself? Are you going to be out of school not pursuing your passion, or are you going to be pioneers in something? Breaking barriers? Serving people? Helping people out? Showing other Virginia Tech athletes how it's done? Coming back and being a mentor to others?"

Therein lies the big challenge for student-athletes across the country. Nearly all realize that they are not, or probably will not, play professionally in their respective sports. But



they spend so much time focusing on their sports while in college that they tend not to focus on their futures – and then the future becomes the present.

All the panelists urged the student-athletes to begin thinking about their futures immediately.

"What makes people happy, and what makes many of you happy, is that you're chasing after this goal. Every ounce of you is channeled at being great at something," Ehrlich said. "The challenge after sports is to find that next thing that you're going to be great at, and it's going to be different things – your job, your family. Finding those things and throwing yourself into those new projects is key. You need something new to be great at."

How does a student-athlete go about doing that? The panelists offered some insight into that process.

It starts with creating a vision, or a game plan, to put it in sports terminology. Then the process involves sharing the plan with people who know more about it than the student-athlete himself or herself. Of course, fulfilling all degree requirements is a must.

"I've got a former teammate, and he's at the door of a six-figure job – not football – and he doesn't have all his degree requirements," Jones said. "People give an arm and a leg for

that. Did he know the Dean [of the college of his major]? No. He was relying on someone from athletics to make a phone call for him."

Robinson, who played at Tech from 1976-80, strongly urged Tech's student-athletes to get to know academic advisors and deans from the "other side of the Drillfield." The athletics department has an Office for Student-Athlete Academic Support Services located in Lane Stadium, and most student-athletes take advantage of the resources offered by this office.

But knowing the folks on the other side of campus makes even more sense. They usually deal with employers in their respective fields of study – and their word goes a long way.

"You need to have consistent and substantive communications with academic advisors on both sides of the Drillfield," Robinson told the group. "You need to know them. They need to know you. If you don't have that relationship, then shame on you, but that doesn't mean you can't get it before this school year is over.

"Why is that important? Because academic advisors know people. They're considered 'gate keepers.' They know people who have companies that hire people."

Robinson stole the evening with his passion for helping Tech's student-athletes and his gifted oratory skills honed from countless public speaking engagements. But he also is a

good example for student-athletes.

Robinson played in the NBA for the Los Angeles Lakers and Detroit Pistons and also played in Europe. After his playing days ended, he worked for a few major companies before embarking on a career in ministry. He currently serves on Tech's Board of Visitors and possesses an inner zeal for the school.

He told the student-athletes to take a personal assessment – a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) – and let others evaluate them. They also should perform a market analysis of the careers that interest them.

"You should know what careers are hot right now, and who's hiring," he said to the group. "You can't stay in a vacuum. You need to do your homework. There's no reason to have a degree and not know what to do with it.

"Examine your employment options. You should know which employers are coming to this campus and are hiring. You should have gone online and pulled down their information, so that you can have an intelligent conversation with these people when they come. You've got to know more about the company than anyone in the line. That's the only way to distinguish yourself."

Fitzpatrick, who serves as a recruiter for Kohl's, and Hubbard, who works as a store manager, gave the student-athletes an

employer perspective in what they look for in employees. They talked about simple things such as attire, but also bigger picture items, including becoming familiar with a company before interviewing or even discussing a possible internship.

"Educating yourself on what you want to do and how you can do that is huge," Fitzpatrick said. "There is no bigger turnoff than when we have candidates who come up to us and talk to us and know nothing about our job and nothing about our company. It's not appealing, and right off the bat, I'm thinking, 'I don't even want to talk to this person.'"

Hubbard agreed, also adding that he likes to hire those with some type of previous experience. This gets back to something that all panelists agreed upon – doing an internship while in college.

Most of Tech's student-athletes complete internships, and many do more than one. For most, this is part of their degree requirement, and it also gives them added experience to put on a resumé, thus enabling them to distinguish themselves from hundreds of others who might be applying for the same position.


"If you tell me that you really want to be a manager, and I look at your resumé and I see that you've been flipping burgers and other things, I thinking that you haven't done anything to prepare yourself for this,"

Hubbard said. "If I see you've done an internship or have some other experience, those things really, really impress me."

The 90-minute seminar served many purposes, not the least of which was to remind student-athletes to start planning early. It reminded them to form a plan and reinforced the value of personal relationships with academic advisors and networking. It also stressed to them the importance of internships and educating themselves on companies of interest.

In addition, it served to point out that student-athletes have inherent advantages over other potential employees.

"I had so many skills that I used playing soccer and now I use them every day – work ethic, time management and leadership," said Reeves, the first All-American in Tech women's soccer history and the first to be drafted by a professional league. "That keeps me going. If you fall back on what you already know, it's going to take you a long way. But if you try to reinvent yourself, it's going to take you quite a bit longer."

Many of the student-athletes in attendance will be going pro after graduation next spring. Not in sports, but in fields of their choosing, and for sure, this seminar was the Office of Student-Athlete Development's latest way of guiding them down that path. 

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SHAVE FOR THE BRAVE EVENT ANOTHER *Success*

For the sixth straight fall, the Virginia Tech baseball team held its annual “Shave for the Brave” event, with more than 50 players, coaches, staff members and friends and family of the Hokies gathering on Oct. 29 at English Field to have their heads shaved and to bring awareness and raise funds for childhood cancer research. The team also held its Halloween game, dressing up in costumes for a softball game as a way to entertain fans.

The event was held in association with the St. Baldrick’s Foundation, which supports childhood cancer research, and the “46 Mommas Shave for the Brave” organization. Thanks mostly to funds donated through the Internet – on the team’s official donation page (<https://www.stbaldricks.org/events/>

VTBaseball) – the program is on pace to reach its targeted goal of \$30,000 for the second straight year. In all, the team has raised almost \$135,000 in six years.

For those still looking to support the cause, please go to the team’s donation page link and then sponsor a Hokie. The team is still raising money in hopes of winning the “Battle of the Bald” and take home the Bald Cup – a college showdown to see which school can raise the most money by Nov. 30. The Hokies are currently in second place (see complete standings here <http://www.stbaldricks.org/college-battle>).

This event marked the ninth of the 2015-16 academic year for 19 Ways – the baseball team’s initiative to find 19 ways to make a difference in the community. 





HER GOAL *is* STOPPING YOURS

Tech defender Jordan Coburn has started every game in her career after coming to Tech as head coach Chugger Adair's first recruit, and she brings an element of toughness to the Hokies' fast-paced philosophy

by Jimmy Robertson

“We will miss her. She's been a large part of our success over the years. She does the things that need to be done for our team to be successful. That's important in this sport.”

- Tech women's soccer coach Chugger Adair on Jordan Coburn

Every young soccer player in America, both male and female, loves to attack. The fun lies in pushing the ball up the field and either scoring a goal, or passing to a forward for a shot attempt.

But team success in soccer, like with every other sport, usually comes about because of how well a squad plays defense. And that requires having defenders with selfless attitudes and rugged dispositions.

Jordan Coburn, a defender on the Tech women's soccer team, possesses such qualities. While cordial and pleasant off the pitch, she proudly plays with a chip on it. Coburn has been a defender since she took up the sport as a toddler, so those in the New River Valley looking for tackling tips would be wise to heed the counsel of this Wikipedia of soccer defending.

When asked why she always has been a defender, this Maryland native listed an array of skills necessary for the task and then injected a bit of humor.

“Chugger would argue that I'm not the fittest on the team, so being a center back, you don't run the most,” she said. “But you can say that it just came naturally.”

“I joke with Drew [Kopp, Tech's associate head coach] because he was a center back, and I ask him, ‘Why are these center backs always unfit?’” said Chugger Adair, the team's head coach since December of 2010. “With Jo [Coburn], we really crushed her in her first year. We had a couple of overtime games her freshman year when she struggled late in the year. So her sophomore year, we really stressed fitness, and she got herself to a level that was sufficient. She's maintained that and proven herself on the field.”

That goes without saying, as Coburn has started every game in which she has played in her career and played an instrumental role in the program's unprecedented success. As a sophomore, the two-time All-ACC choice helped the team make it to the College Cup for the first time in program history, and the Hokies followed that with a trip to the Sweet 16 last season.

Her career coincides with that of Adair's as the head coach. In fact, Coburn and Adair have a special connection – she was his first recruit.

The story of how she ended up at Tech is interesting. She played for a prestigious club team in Bethesda coached by current Maryland head coach John Morgan, who was an assistant at Maryland when Coburn played for him. But he and the Terrapins never recruited Coburn, though he spoke highly of Coburn to Adair.

“We saw value in her,” Adair said. “Everyone has different things that they look for, different fits and that sort of thing.”

“They haven't made the NCAA Tournament the past couple of years,” Coburn said. “I definitely think I made the right decision.”

Coburn picked Tech over East Carolina, College of Charleston and George Mason. The beauty of the campus struck her, and the tight-knit relationships on the team sold her. It actually convinced her right from the start,

as “The second I set foot on Tech’s campus, I thought, “This is where I want to go.” But did Tech want her?

Still in the middle of putting together his staff, Adair wanted to be sure of his first recruit. So he told Coburn on her visit to Blacksburg that he wanted to see her play again.

That winter, he combined business with pleasure, taking his children to Washington, D.C., to visit some of the attractions, while also taking in one of Coburn’s games. With snow falling, he watched Coburn and her team on an artificial turf field outside of the D.C. His kids stayed in the car in a parking area next to the field, as he evaluated her – and he liked what he saw.

He landed his first recruit, and his kids had a great time.

“I enjoyed the trip,” he said, smiling. Adair also has enjoyed her play. Her work ethic and her skills got her on the field as a freshman, but her consistency has enabled her to stay there. She is a natural fit at defender. She sees the field well, and she communicates well with her teammates.

But perhaps most importantly, she’s not afraid to mix it up with opponents. On a team filled with players who like to fly up and down the field in following Adair’s fast-

paced philosophy, Coburn brings an edge, an element of toughness that every team needs. She and Candace Cephers serve as the enforcers on this team.

“You need to be physical and willing to go in and tackle and sacrifice yourself if you need to, to save a goal,” Coburn said. “You need to be vocal because you’re one of the players on the field besides the goalie who does see the entire field, so it’s important that you’re constantly communicating with everyone all the time.

“I’m probably a natural defender. I like the physical aspect of the game. I like going into tackles and being a defender. Your main priority is to keep the ball out of the net, so you’re used to making tackles.”

Depending on how the rest of the Hokies’ season goes, Coburn could end up starting more matches than any player in Tech history, a record currently held by Kelsey Mitchell (88 from 2009-12). Coburn has missed just three matches in her career – two by injury and one after receiving a red card.

That happened in the Clemson match last season. She hauled down a Clemson player to prevent a goal and readily admits she fouled the player, but the official gave her a red card. The Hokies won the game 2-0, but Coburn had to sit out the next game, Tech’s 2-0 loss

to Notre Dame. “It was extremely hard,” she said. “I had never sat out of a collegiate game before, but knew that I would have to suck it up and do my best cheering from the sideline.” “It [the play against Clemson] probably saved the game for us, to be honest,” Adair said.

Adair didn’t like the call either, but he liked that Coburn saved a potential goal. Those types of plays never get in the headlines, but they win games.

He has witnessed Coburn do that throughout her career. Earlier this season, in a match against Georgetown, she twice stopped scoring threats – once when the Hoyas got behind the Hokies’ defense and she made a nice tackle, and then another time when she simply beat a Hoya in a one-on-one matchup.

“After the game, the Georgetown coach was watching it, and he texted me,” Adair said. “He knows her well and thought it was a great tackle. It probably turned the game. It wasn’t in the box score. But with the game tied at 1, it probably saved the game for us and put us in a position to win. That’s what she’s been doing for us for four years.”

Coburn departs next spring with a degree in public relations and a minor in business

leadership. She already has put her speaking skills to use, having delivered presentations to Tech’s Board of Visitors and to Tech AD Whit Babcock’s senior staff members about a summer trip to the Dominican Republic – part of a leadership course that numerous student-athletes have taken the past four summers. She

plans on pursuing a career in sports marketing and would love to work for Under Armour, headquartered in her home state.

In the short term, she and her teammates will be playing in an NCAA tournament yet again – the program’s eighth straight appearance – and hoping to extend her career

for as long as possible. The alternative is a sobering thought. “We will miss her,” Adair said. “She’s been a large part of our success over the years. She does the things that need to be done for our team to be successful. That’s important in this sport.”

GETTING TO KNOW *Jordan Coburn*

#19

Q: It’s Friday night in the offseason, what are you doing?
JC: “I’m probably at home hanging out with my roommates and maybe catching up on my homework, or just watching TV. All of the seniors [herself, Ashley Meier, Morgan Conklin, Courtney Stutts and Delia Maresco] live together, so we’re basically on the same schedule all the time. When we have our down time, a lot of the time we hang out in the living room and talk or catch up on shows.”

Q: We understand that you’re a huge fan of Netflix. What are you watching these days?
JC: “Sometimes, I’ll just watch movies, but recently, I’ve been into Game of Thrones, which is on HBO and not Netflix. One of my teammates told me to start watching it. Right now, my favorite TV show is How to Get Away with Murder. We all watch that as a house. Our whole team loves that show, and I watch American Horror Story, which a lot of people think is crazy, but I think it’s so good. It’s really interesting stuff.”

Q: What is your favorite food?
JC: “Probably shrimp tacos from Cabo Fish Taco.”

Q: Favorite movie?
JC: “A Knight’s Tale is my favorite movie because it has a great story and an even better soundtrack. I first saw this movie with my family, and my parents love it, too, so whenever I watch it, I think of them.”

Q: If you could trade places with someone for a day, who would it be?
JC: “I would love to be Kevin Plank [CEO of Under Armour] for a day because it’s been a dream of mine to work for Under Armour for a while now. I think it would be awesome to know what goes on behind the scenes at a company whose mission is to make athletes better through passion and design.”

Q: What’s been your favorite moment at Tech?
JC: “For sure, going to the Final Four and playing Florida State. I’ll never forget when Ashley Manning scored the first goal in the game. We were up 1-0, and we were lucky that we had a ton of fans show up, and everyone just went crazy. It was the coolest moment to see. Also, when we beat UVA 4-2 in the ACC tournament. That was really exciting, too.”

Q: Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
JC: “Honestly, I just want to be doing something that I love, and I definitely think that it will be something sports related. It’s been something that’s been a part of me ever since I was a kid. So I really want to do something that I love and helping people, too, in any way that I can.”





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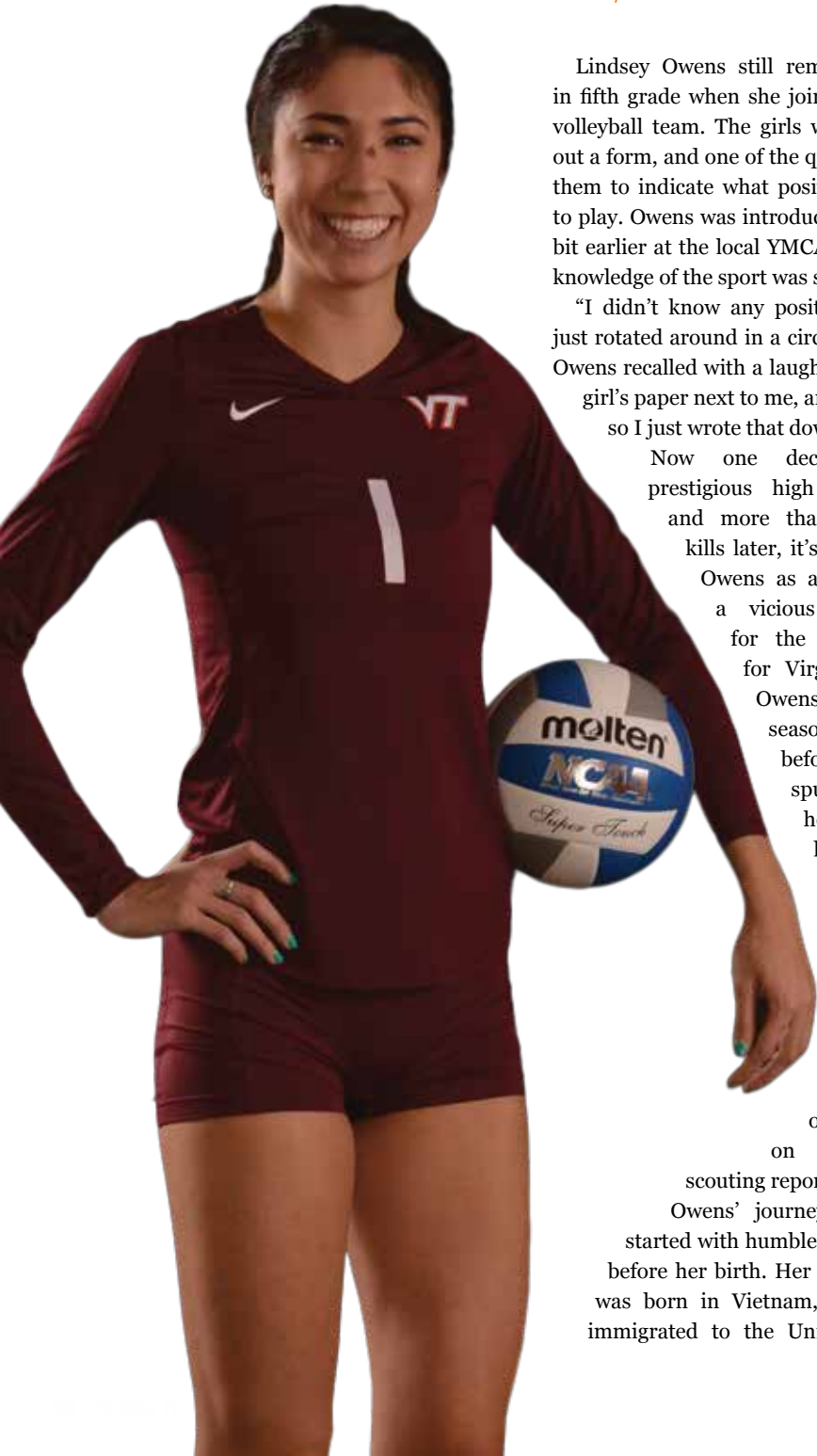
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Air Affair

Lindsey Owens started playing volleyball at a young age and Virginia Tech is reaping the benefits of her development, as the outside hitter recently recorded her 1,000th career kill

by **Matt Kovatch**

Special to Inside Hokie Sports



Lindsey Owens still remembers the day in fifth grade when she joined her first club volleyball team. The girls were asked to fill out a form, and one of the questions required them to indicate what position they wanted to play. Owens was introduced to the game a bit earlier at the local YMCA, but her overall knowledge of the sport was still minimal.

“I didn’t know any positions because we just rotated around in a circle at the YMCA,” Owens recalled with a laugh. “I looked at the girl’s paper next to me, and it said, ‘setter,’ so I just wrote that down.”

Now one decade, numerous prestigious high school awards and more than 1,000 college kills later, it’s hard to imagine Owens as anything else but a vicious outside hitter for the Hokies. Luckily for Virginia Tech fans, Owens only spent one season as a setter before her growth spurt kicked in and her club coaches had no choice but to move her to the front row. She since has evolved into one of the best players in the Atlantic Coast Conference and objective No. 1 on any opponent’s scouting report.

Owens’ journey to Blacksburg started with humble beginnings, even before her birth. Her mother, Theresa, was born in Vietnam, and her family immigrated to the United States from

the war-torn country right after she turned 8 years old. They bounced around for a while, spending time in a refugee camp while waiting to get sponsored by someone to take them in. Owens said her mother’s family lived with some nuns in a Nevada church upon arriving in America before eventually settling in Florida.

Theresa went to college at the University of Florida in Gainesville, though not without the help of student loans. While there, she met Lindsey’s father, Roger, who was unable to go to college because he needed to work to make money for his family.

Owens and her parents moved to Orlando shortly after her birth and began to set down roots, and her love of volleyball grew. It wasn’t long into Owens’ high school career that it became evident she possessed the opportunity to do something that her parents, or anyone else in her family, for that matter, couldn’t – earn a college scholarship.

Playing club volleyball for the Orlando Volleyball Academy, she earned AAU All-America honors right from the get-go as a freshman – a feat that she accomplished four times while leading her team to three national titles. Virginia Tech’s coaches noticed quickly and started calling.

“[Associate Head Coach] Shelby [Adair] was really dedicated and was at almost every single one of my matches during my club tournaments, which is at least three matches a day for sometimes three days straight,” Owens remembered. “Because of that alone, I felt like I had to go on a visit to Blacksburg to at least see what it was all about.”

Once Owens set foot on Tech’s campus, as is the case with many Hokies past and present, she was immediately sold.

“I was just blown away,” Owens said. “It was beautiful, the coaches were great, and it seemed like a really good culture to be in.

“I was just blown away. It was beautiful, the coaches were great, and it seemed like a really good culture to be in. Our team is very family oriented, and that was something I wanted because I was leaving my family from back home. Coming to a new family was good.”

-Lindsey Owens on her visit to Virginia Tech

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After committing to Tech, Owens concluded her prep career by leading Bishop Moore High School to the state title. She earned Florida Player of the Year honors and was named both the MaxPreps Medium Schools National Player of the Year and the PrepVolleyball National Senior Player of the Year.

Next came the good news from the Tech coaching staff.

“When I was offered a scholarship, we were in the coach’s office, so we kind of had to contain our excitement until after we left,” Owens said. “But definitely on our way home, we were super excited. Being the first in my family to get an athletic scholarship really lifted a weight off their [her parents] shoulders and made them realize that paying for volleyball for eight years was worth it. I have a little brother who now will have a lot more funds from the family to go to college.”

Owens wasted no time getting acclimated to the college game. She was named to the ACC All-Freshman Team after recording one of the best rookie seasons in school history. Her totals in both service aces and solo blocks led the team and ranked her third all time among Hokie freshmen, while she finished third on the squad in both kills and digs.

An All-ACC first-team performance followed as sophomore when she led the team in kills and placed second in digs and third in aces.

She hit her first snag this past offseason when she underwent surgery on her right shoulder. The wear and tear on her hitting shoulder over the years had caused her to develop bicep tendonitis, so doctors performed a procedure in March to remedy the problem and cleared Owens to begin playing again in July.



“All I missed was our spring season, but it was a bummer,” Owens explained. “As a competitive person, I saw everyone else getting better and improving, but I had to sit out, so it’s almost like I was regressing. Coming back this season has been hard. I hadn’t hit in almost six months, so it was really hard to understand that my body wasn’t going to let me do certain things that I wanted it to do. I just had to realize that and slowly work my way back instead of just expecting myself to immediately be the player I was before I had surgery.”

If she isn’t the player was before the surgery, she certainly is fooling people. She appears to have picked up right where she left off, and as of Nov. 4, once again led the Hokies in kills and service aces while tallying the second-most digs. At her current pace, she will finish her playing career a year from now among the school’s top five in all-time kills.

The future looks good for Owens on the court, and one could say the same about her outlook off the court as well. A biology major with a focus on animal and poultry science, Owens wants to become a veterinarian.

Going to vet school is the obvious next step, but Owens is a little more educated about what she wants to do than she was as a fifth-grader copying off of her teammate’s paper.

“Most people plan on applying [to vet school] the summer before their senior year, which is coming up for me, but I’m going to wait until I graduate so I can build my resumé,” Owens explained. “Because volleyball is so time consuming, it takes me away from what all the other applicants can do, like getting volunteer hours and internships. I’m going to wait until I graduate so I have my senior year – when I have fewer classes to take – and can use that time to build up my credentials with volunteer hours and research.”



Lindsey Owens has started every match in her career except one and could finish in the top five in school history in kills.

It’s a wise plan, as applying to vet school without the proper experience is far from a sure thing. Owens has volunteered at home over the summers at a small animal clinic, and she recently shadowed an equine vet, but her main goal is to work with large animal exotics – zoo-type creatures like wildlife and safari animals.

“This upcoming summer, I actually got into a program that goes over to Thailand,” Owens said. “We will get to work with elephants and wild cats in addition to a couple days at a dog shelter. I’m super excited about it because it’s right in the field of what I want to be doing. It will be my first actual hands-on experience with that, so I’ll be able to see if this is

something that I actually want to do.”

Owens said she probably will apply to the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine located in Blacksburg, but the University of Florida in her birthplace will certainly be beckoning. It’s not too far from her hometown of Orlando, which just happens to be home to one of the largest theme parks in the world – Disney’s Animal Kingdom.

“If everything works out, I would love to get involved with Animal Kingdom and Disney,” Owens said. “I absolutely love Orlando and Florida, and raising a family there in the future is ideal. I just like the whole culture – they treat their employees so well. That would be my perfect situation.”

GETTING TO KNOW *Lindsey Owens*

Q: What other sports did you play growing up?

LO: “Not a single one. If I could choose something besides volleyball, I think I would play tennis. I wouldn’t want to do soccer or basketball because they are somewhat contact sports, and that was one of the reasons why I chose volleyball.”

Q: What was the best part about growing up so close to Disney World?

LO: “We would always go to Disney or Universal for school field trips, and I always had a year-round pass to Universal’s Islands of Adventure. I probably went more than the average kid.”


Q: If you hadn’t chosen Virginia Tech, where would you have gone to college?

LO: “Florida State or Notre Dame. I looked at FSU because it was an in-state school and close to home, but we are huge Florida Gator fans in my family, so I didn’t think I could be a Seminole. Notre Dame was great, but being from Florida, it was a little more north than I wanted to go. I now realize it still gets really cold in Blacksburg – I was definitely in for a shock my freshman year!”

Q: Where is the hardest place to play in the ACC?

LO: “I remember Louisville being really tough to play because they packed their gym, and they’re really good. Also, Georgia Tech usually has their place packed. The band is there, it’s loud, and the fans are right next to you when you’re serving.”

Q: With your mother being from Vietnam, have you ever visited the country?

LO: “My family’s never been back, but we really want to go while my grandparents are still healthy enough to travel. We think they really miss it, but they don’t have the means to go. Also, they want to go with the whole family, so it’s just a matter of finding the time.” 



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HOKIES AIMING TO BE *Trophy Team* BY END OF THE 2015-16 SEASON

Nick
Brascetta

The Virginia Tech wrestling program is one filled with plenty of substance, given the program's recent string of performances at the NCAA Championships.

But the Hokies added some style this past fall. Head coach Kevin Dresser and his staff oversaw the addition of splashy graphics to the walls of the hallway and wrestling room, as well as the installation of plaques honoring those who have earned All-America status while at Tech, and those reside along the hallway that leads to the coaches' offices and the wrestling room.

Given his program's rise, though, Dresser may need to find an additional hallway for All-America plaques – the current one may not be long enough.

Tech saw four wrestlers – half of the eight who qualified for the NCAA Championships – earn All-America honors last season, propelling the team to a 10th-place finish at the event, which was held in St. Louis. That performance marked the program's third straight top-10 showing at the NCAA Championships and arguably cemented the program as the university's top intercollegiate sport.

Still, as great as last season ended, Dresser and the Hokies weren't satisfied. All five wrestlers who made it to the quarterfinals of their respective weight classes lost, and only strong performances in the consolation rounds enabled Tech to secure that top-10 finish.

"I think we left some points out there," Dresser admitted. "I think it's a good sign that we finished in the top 10 in the country, yet we feel like we left some points out there. I think that's progress. It takes a lot of things going right to put yourself in the top-10 conversation. Every good team is going to look back. You've got 10 weight classes, and every team is going to think that they left points out there. That's just the nature of the beast."

The good news for Dresser

going into this 2015 season is that his squad returns nearly everyone from last season. The bad news, though, is that word "nearly."

Longtime stalwart Devin Carter departed after an unprecedented career in which he established himself as the best wrestler in the program's history. The Christiansburg, Virginia product finished third at 141 pounds last March at the NCAA Championships, securing his third All-America honor. He became the program's first three-time All-American and first four-time ACC champion. He won nearly 90 percent of his matches – a program best.

He leaves behind more than just wins, though. Carter set the program standard for work ethic and toughness. He came back from injuries multiple times in his career and still managed to be successful on the mat.

Now, Tech needs to find that type of leader from the returners – an alpha dog – to get others to respond.

"Devin has set the bar high at Virginia Tech," Dresser said. "Gosh, he was a heckuva lot of fun to watch, and I hope we have guys who want to break his records. I hope we have guys who, by the time they're finished, people are going to say, 'Devin who?' I think we have some individuals who are really competitive, and it's OK to be competitive. I think the best guys want a legacy, and they want – as much as they like and respect Devin – to surpass him."

Tech also lost another senior in Chris Moon, a 165-pounder who injured his shoulder early last season and underwent surgery that robbed him of his final year. Moon was a two-time NCAA qualifier who also will be missed.

But Dresser feels the Hokies possess the pieces to record yet another successful season. Seven of the eight who qualified for March's NCAA Championships return, including three of the four All-Americans. Dresser also gets the services of a couple of highly touted freshmen who took redshirt years last season, and a couple of members of this past year's recruiting class have a shot at getting into the lineup.

Dresser hopes the Hokies possess enough to get on the podium as a team next March.

The Tech wrestling team begins life without Devin Carter, but the Hokies return three All-Americans and several other standouts – and they again have big expectations for the upcoming season

by Jimmy Robertson

Getting to the podium requires finishing fourth or better in the team race at the NCAA Championships.

"There are a couple of things that need to happen," Dresser said. "If we can stay healthy and if we can mentally improve, those are the two keys, and then we have to have a little luck. If we can do that, then I think this team has the potential to be our best team ever. But it's far from automatic."

"This team has some of the most talented wrestlers top to bottom that we've ever had. Just about all of these guys can really wrestle. They're really good wrestlers and good athletes. The No. 1 guys in our weight classes are really talented and athletic guys across the board. Sometimes you win with tough, physical guys, and sometimes you win with talented guys. If you can get both, then you've really got a shot."

Here's a look at each weight class:

125 pounds – Joey Dance returns at this weight class following a terrific regular season – and a disappointing NCAA Championships. The junior from Christiansburg, Virginia went 28-4 overall and only lost twice during the regular season. He won an ACC title and also took home titles at the Virginia Duals and the Midlands Championships. He finished second at the Cliff Keen Las Vegas Invitational.

But in the quarterfinal round of the NCAA Championships, he let a big lead slip away, losing to Iowa's Thomas Gilman in sudden victory. In the consolation round, he lost to unseeded Conor Youtsey of Michigan in sudden victory, which ended his season.

"Joey's had two seasons that are completely opposite of each other," Dresser said. "His freshman year, he didn't have a very good season, but he had a good NCAA tournament. Last year, he had a good season and a bad NCAA tournament."

"We need to put the two together this year. There's no question that he's capable of going a long way. The weight class is super loaded [nationally] this year. There are a lot of studs in that class. But Joey is capable of being the

head stud."

133 pounds – Kevin Norstrom was up and down last season, but he went 18-15 overall and qualified for the NCAA Championships. He finished in seventh place at the Cliff Keen Las Vegas Invitational and took fifth place at the Midlands Championships.

Norstrom finished in fourth place at the ACC Championships and went 1-2 at the NAAs. Dresser hopes to see more consistency out of him this season.

"I think he learned a lot last year," Dresser said. "He had a typical freshman year – up and down. He did some good things, and he looked terrible at times. I'm curious to see what we're going to get out of him this year. He's a talented guy, and he's turned up the toughness meter. That's what he needed to do."

Dennis Gustafson may figure in at this weight class once he returns to the mat in January. He took a redshirt year last season, but tore his ACL and is still rehabbing. Gustafson went 25-15 as a freshman and won the ACC title at this weight class in 2014.

"He's progressing nicely," Dresser said. "Depending on how he recovers, that could be an interesting wrestle-off in February."

141 pounds – All eyes are on this weight class, as Tech searches for a replacement for Carter. Solomon Chishko, a redshirt freshman, leads all contenders heading into the season. Chishko wrestled unattached at several tournaments while

Joey
Dance

Ty
Walz

Zach
Epperly

taking a redshirt season and finished with a 24-7 mark. Gustafson also could figure in, though he would be a smaller wrestler at this weight class.

“Solomon is a tremendous wrestler,” Dresser said. “I think he’s capable of being a top-10 guy right away. The question with him is how is he going to grind? Is he going to be a grinder? You’ve got to be a grinder to be a top-10 guy week in and week out. He’s got to be able to grind. There’s a big difference between redshirting and wrestling a couple of opens versus being the guy every week.”

While pursuing his doctoral degree at Tech, Carter also works out with the wrestling team, something legally allowed by the NCAA since Carter is part of the regional training center. He figures to make Chishko that much better once the season starts.



149 pounds - Sal Mastriani returns at this weight class after a season in which he went 24-12 and qualified for the NCAA Championships. Mastriani won the Hokie Open at this weight class, along with winning the Virginia Duals. He also finished eighth at the Cliff Keen Las Vegas Invitational and fourth at the Midlands Championships.

Mastriani struggled at the ACC Championships, where, as the No. 2 seed, he lost in the semifinals to the No. 3 seed Christian Barber of North Carolina and then to No. 5 seed T.J. Miller of Virginia in the consolation round.

At the NCAA Championships, though, he rebounded, winning two matches and advancing to the quarterfinal round. In his first-round match, he was behind 9-2, but rallied to tie the match at 11 and then won in sudden victory over Rutgers’ Kenneth Theobald.

“Sal has improved,” Dresser said. “When he came to us, he wasn’t a great wrestler, but he’s elevated himself to a good wrestler. He’s so tough. He got to the round of 12 last year on toughness.

“I’m curious to see how he progresses. Last year, he came out of nowhere. No one knew him, and he surprised some people, including Devin at the Hokie Open [when Carter was attempting to move up to 149 pounds]. He’s not going to surprise anyone this year. He’s made a name for himself, and now he’s got to go out and defend that name.”

157 pounds - All-American Nick Brascetta returns at this weight class after finishing fourth at the NCAA Championships. Brascetta suffered an elbow injury earlier in the season and missed a good chunk of the campaign, but he returned in time to win the ACC title at this weight class and receive a bid to the NAAs.

Brascetta entered the NAAs unseeded, but advanced to the quarterfinal round with two wins. He lost to top seed – and eventual national champion – Isaiah Martinez of Illinois, but came back through the consolation rounds to win three matches. His

season ended with a loss to James Green of Nebraska in the third-place match.

Brascetta went 13-2 on the year and figures to be in contention for a third All-America honor this season.

“Nick’s healthy right now,” Dresser said. “He’s had the best month of training [October] that he’s had in two years. He’s one heckuva wrestler. He’s technical and he’s such a competitor. He doesn’t like losing in anything. The goal for Nick is to get 30 matches and help this team from start to finish, from November to March.”

Tech has some depth at this weight, with Jake Spengler, a redshirt freshman, and Dayton Racer, a top-100 recruit nationally out of Iowa.

165 pounds - Dresser and his staff go into the season searching for answers at this weight class. Moon’s injury left the spot in the hands of Chad Strube, who returns for his fifth year. Strube went 9-13 last year and finished fourth at the ACC Championships.

However, an incoming freshman named David McFadden went into the season as the leader for the job at this weight class. McFadden, a New Jersey native, was ranked the No. 1 152-pounder in the nation by both FloWrestling and InterMat coming out of high school. InterMat ranked him the No. 18 senior overall, regardless of weight class.

“Is he ready to step in and be the guy?” Dresser asked. “He could be. He brings great wrestling skill and he’s tough. He’s a gamer. He’s like Joey in that sense – the bigger the match, the better he is. He’s going to have to adjust to the week in and week out pounding of college wrestling.

“We’ve got another guy named David Bergida, who got hurt a little last year, but he did OK. We’ve got three guys at 165, and I’d give McFadden the edge based on what I’ve seen, but we’ll see how they all progress.”

Bergida, another New Jersey native, is a redshirt junior who went 12-11 last season.

174 pounds - All-American Zach Epperly returns at this weight class and comes into this season with expectations of doing great things – perhaps things that have never been done before at Tech. Epperly earned All-America honors last season as a redshirt freshman by placing seventh at the NCAA Championships.

Epperly, who came in third at the ACC Championships, really came on toward the end of the season. He beat Pittsburgh’s Tyler Wilps 3-2 in a dual meet, and Wilps went on to wrestle for the national championship. He lost to Matt Brown of Penn State 2-1 in the quarterfinal round of the NCAA Championships, and Brown won the national

else. The sky is the limit for that guy.”

Tae Leary, who wrestled some at 184 pounds last year, and freshman Cody Hughes are the backups at this weight class.

184 pounds - Dresser and his staff have two intriguing options at this weight class. Austin Gabel returns after missing the second part of last season with a torn ACL and MCL, injuries that required surgery. Gabel received medical clearance on Nov. 1 to begin wrestling, and his presence on the mat gives the Hokies some experience. The fifth-year senior went 13-11 last season. The previous two seasons, he qualified for the NCAA Championships at 174 pounds.

The other option is talented Zack Zavatsky, who took a redshirt year last season. He went 15-1 while wrestling unattached. He came to Tech as a top-75 recruit nationally and a top-10 recruit at 182 pounds. The Pennsylvania native won a state title his senior year of high school in a state noted for outstanding wrestling.


“Zack Zavatsky is a really, really good wrestler,” Dresser said. “He can flat wrestle. How can he handle the grind? On a good day, he’s the best guy at this weight, but he doesn’t have good days all the time. The guy that is the most consistent, that we can count on ... Austin’s done a good job. But from an injury




title. In the consolation round of the NAAs, he pinned Blaise Butler of Virginia – and Butler had beaten him three times during the regular season.

Epperly, who went into this season ranked No. 2 nationally in this weight class, finished his season with a 24-8 record, and Dresser expects to see more from him this season.

“When you make All-America as a freshman, you’re pretty special,” Dresser said. “With that said, I think he’s got a lot more. He won a lot of close matches last year. My battle cry with Zach is that we need to separate ourselves from the masses. We’re going to have close matches with the top guys in the nation, but we need to separate ourselves from everybody



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season preview | wrestling

standpoint, can we count on Austin?
“You’ve got two guys that are both really good and both capable of being All-Americans. That will be the most interesting thing to see how it plays out. Austin won’t be cleared until after the first four weeks. He’ll get cleared [for practice] by Nov. 1.”

197 pounds – Jared Haught, a redshirt sophomore, returns after a season in which he went 16-18 overall, but qualified for the NCAA Championships. He went 1-2 at the NAAs, with his lone win coming against unseeded Braden Atwood of Purdue.
Haught brings a rugged style and a blue-collar work ethic to the mat, as well as toughness. David Reck will be challenging him for time.

“He’s a guy that’s probably the most blue-collar guy on our team from a wrestling standpoint,” Dresser said of Haught. “He’s not pretty, but he’s going to battle till he gets it done. He had an up-and-down year last year, but he worked so hard that you just don’t want to count him out. I think he’s going to have a really good year. Jared is in the conversation of being an All-American this year.”

Heavyweight - All-American Ty Walz returns to lead the way at arguably the Hokies’ deepest weight class. Dan Garwood and Brandon Taylor return as well, creating great competition at this class.
Walz, though, leads the way. He lost his second-round match at the NCAA Championships, but came back to win three consolation matches, including a 2-1 upset of No. 4 seed Austin Marsden of Oklahoma State. He lost in sudden victory to Jimmy Lawson of Penn State, but in the seventh-place match, he beat Minnesota’s Michael Kroells, giving him



five wins in the event.
Walz went 28-9 last season. The two-time NCAA qualifier finished in third place at the ACC Championships.
“He’s one of the most improved guys we’ve got,” Dresser said. “He just works so hard and spends so much time in all phases of being a college athlete. I think he’s got a chance to be a high All-American again. But heavyweight is a game of inches, so Ty’s got to understand that there is no automatic.”
Dresser’s talented squad will once again grapple with a difficult schedule. Tech’s non-conference slate features the likes of Iowa State, Penn State, Northern Iowa, West Virginia and Edinboro. Edinboro finished third at the NCAA Championships last March, while Penn State came in sixth. Iowa State (No. 14) and West Virginia (No. 20) were top 20 teams. In the ACC, NC State, Duke and North Carolina are much improved.

In all, Tech’s schedule features nine teams that finished in the top 25 at the NCAA Championships.
“We’ve got to be good every weekend because we’ve got a lot of team goals this year,” Dresser said. “We break down every day and say, ‘Trophy Team.’ You’ve got to be in the top four in the nation to get a trophy. So the battle cry is ‘Trophy Team.’”
“We’re going to raise the bar, and we’ve got to be good at the ACC’s and throughout the year. If we want to be good at the end of the year, we can’t just show up at the end of the year. We need to win an ACC title. We need to progress every weekend. We need to try and beat Penn State and beat Iowa State. We need to win those. The biggest match of the year is the next match.”
Tech opened the 2015 season Nov. 7 against Iowa State, with the Hokie Open slated for the next day. The Hokies begin ACC competition on Jan. 31 at Virginia.

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