

inside

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HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

HOKIES TAB FUENTE AS NEW FOOTBALL COACH

The former Memphis coach turned around the Tigers' fortunes and looks to build on all that retiring head coach Frank Beamer and his staff have set in place

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Quarterback Michael Brewer traveled a long, winding road to get to Tech



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contents

Hokie Club News | 2

News & Notes | 6

Curtin earns All-America honors

From the Editor's Desk | 9

Fuente hiring should add offense to Tech

Behind the Mic – Jon Laaser | 10

Compliance | 12

Academic Spotlight – Morgan Conklin | 14

Tech women's soccer player pursuing career in broadcasting

Academic Spotlight – Ronny Vandyke | 15

Psychology grad has options once football ends

IHS extra – Hokies tab Fuente as football coach | 16

Former Memphis coach to continue Beamer's legacy

IHS extra – Ross gave Beamer first job | 20

Beamer's first job was at The Citadel in 1973

IHS extra – Baughman on hiring Beamer at Tech | 22

Former Tech AD gave Beamer a chance in Blacksburg

Football Spotlight – Michael Brewer | 24

Tech QB travels winding road to finish career as a Hokie

IHS extra – 25th year anniversary of 1990

Tech-UVA game | 28

Beamer's first win over UVA was one never to be forgotten

NCAA Women's Soccer Recap | 34

Hokies' great season ends with second-round loss

Women's Hoops Recruiting | 36

Wolff and staff sign two during fall signing period

Men's Hoops Recruiting | 37

Williams adds size with signing of Sy

Diving Spotlight – Logan Stevens | 38

Tech's top diver with high expectations this season

Olympics Sports Recruiting | 42

Tech's Olympic sports add talent during early signing period



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BEAMER GOES OUT WITH WIN OVER UVA

Virginia Tech head coach Frank Beamer coached his final regular-season game on Nov. 28 in Charlottesville when the Hokies met Virginia in the two teams' annual Commonwealth Clash. Tech's head coach for the past 29 years announced on Nov. 1 that he planned to retire at the end of this season, ending a 35-year head coaching career.

In a game that resembled both Beamer and his program over the course of nearly three decades, the Hokies got behind by seven on two occasions in the second half, but rallied to tie the game both times. They took a 23-20 lead on a Joey Slye field goal with 1:38 left and then sealed the win on Chuck Clark's interception with 59 seconds remaining.

Following the game—which marked Tech's 12th straight win in the series and Beamer's 20th over the Cavaliers – the players hoisted Beamer onto their shoulders and carried him off the field. He clutched the Commonwealth Cup in his right hand as he went out.

"I told them in there [the locker room after the game] that I really appreciate them letting me be a part of this thing," Beamer said. "It's a great group of coaches and a great group of kids, and if we hadn't come out on this end of it, I would have said the same thing. Winning and losing doesn't change that. I'm really, really proud of them. I've got to say thanks to the administration. Whit [Babcock, Virginia Tech's AD] and his staff could not have treated me any better—better than I deserve. I really appreciate what they've done."

THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"I'm really appreciative of the Hokie Club for raising money for student-athletes to play the game they love and to give us the opportunity to receive a great education. It's a blessing that we could have such an opportunity. I thank all those who raise money and those who contribute. I'll never take that for granted."

Ronny Vandyke
Redshirt Senior | Lorton, Virginia

"I'm extremely thankful for someone to give and help pay for my scholarship. To give me the opportunity to play the game that I love and have been cherishing since I was 4 or 5 years old and to have the opportunity to get a degree for free and have a chance to play at the next level ... it's just truly a blessing. Thank you to all those who have helped make this happen, not just for me, but for all of us."

Isaiah Ford
Sophomore | Jacksonville, Florida





The Donor File

William T. Stewart IV

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL:
Diamond Hokie

CURRENTLY RESIDES:
Richmond, Virginia

GRADUATION YEAR: 2007

FAMILY: Susan (mother); Bill (father); Elizabeth (sister, class of 2006)



Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...

A: Anyone who bleeds orange and maroon, but also truly lives by the school motto of “*Ut Prosim*” or “That I May Serve.”

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because ...

A: The fans and the alumni show their support through the good and the bad, with unwavering love for the university and the student-athletes who represent it on a daily basis.

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

A: I am not even sure where to begin. Ending Miami’s 39-game regular-season winning streak in 2003 was one of the most electric atmospheres I’ve ever witnessed at Lane Stadium, and it was also my parents’ first experience at Lane Stadium. I would have to put the Nebraska (2009) and the Miami (2011) wins at home and beating the Buckeyes at the Horseshoe last year up there, too. I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the basketball win over No. 7 Duke at Cassell Coliseum in 2005 during our first year in the ACC. I have also never been prouder to be a Hokie fan than attending Coach Beamer’s last game at Lane Stadium and seeing the love and support from the Hokie Nation.

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

A: Once I graduated, I didn’t really know the best way to stay involved. But when I

started my first job, one of my managers (a Tech grad and a rabid fan) introduced me to his Hokie Rep and also put me in contact with David Everett [Director of Major Gifts for Intercollegiate Athletics]. I have been involved ever since.

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

A: Growing up a fan of a school from the Big Ten (Danny Coale caught the ball!), I knew I wanted to go to a school with a top athletics program. So I tagged along with my older sister while she was visiting colleges, and she ultimately picked Virginia Tech. I visited when she was a freshman, and I knew Blacksburg was the place for me as well. Virginia Tech has felt like home ever since.

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

A: I am not very superstitious, but I try to attend as many games in person as possible, home and away. For some reason, I think my additional voice yelling in the stadium might help push the team toward a win. Plus, I would rather show my support in person. Oh, and I may also wear the same outfit to the next game if we win.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.

A: Arriving mid-morning on a sunny fall Saturday for a full day of tailgating with family and friends before a night game at Lane Stadium. Of course, the Hokies would win!

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

A: Mainly just enjoying the tailgate with family and catching up with friends over great food and drinks. We usually travel in from Richmond the day before and ensure we are in our parking spot early enough to fully appreciate the tailgate.

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

A: The school motto of “*Ut Prosim*” has resonated with me since I was a student. I think it is really important to provide the student-athletes who represent the university in such a positive light the opportunity to further their professional and their athletics careers.

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

A: I love Virginia Tech more than just about anything. If I can help further advance the objectives and goals of the university and the athletics department, then I will do whatever I can to help. Being a part of the Hokie Club is one way to give back.

Q: My favorite Virginia Tech sports are ...

A: I enjoy and root for all Virginia Tech sports teams, but if I had to put any at the top of the list, then it would have to be football, men’s basketball and baseball.

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

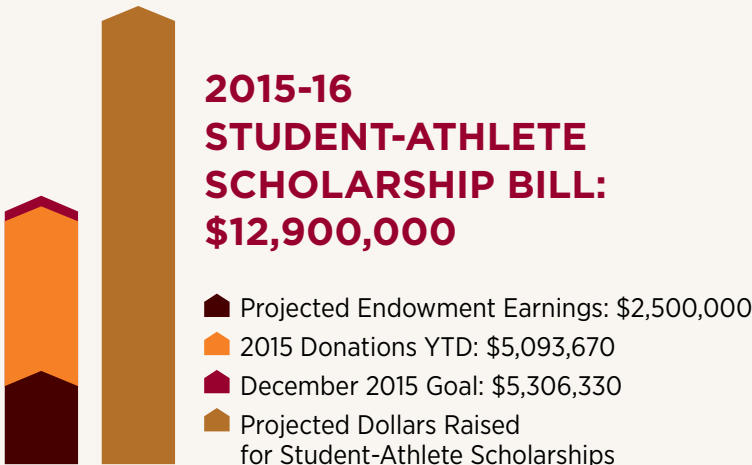
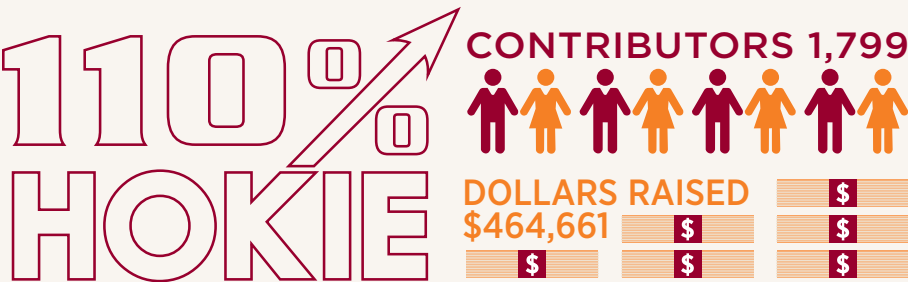
A: Tyrod Taylor, hands down. He is one of the most exciting and accomplished players in school history, and I never felt like we were out of a game with Tyrod at the helm. Tyrod is a true leader and representative of the school, both on and off the field. I also would have to say Frank Beamer. While I obviously never saw him play, Coach Beamer epitomizes everything that Virginia Tech stands for, and the program would not be where it is today without him.

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

A: Either Malcolm Delaney or Erick Green [two basketball players].

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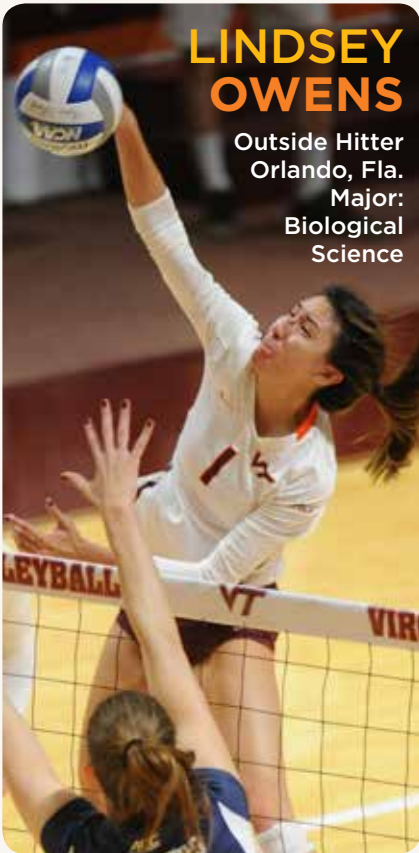
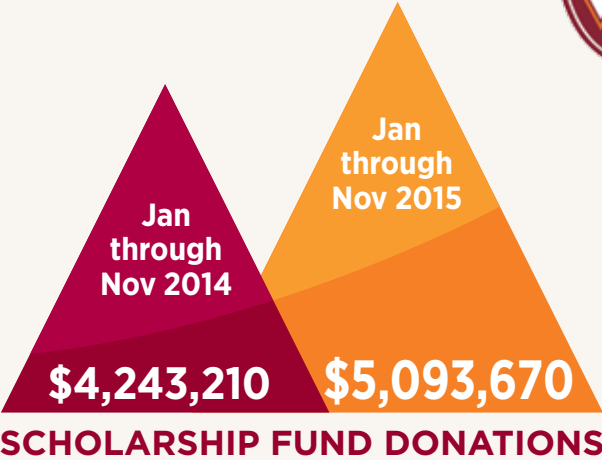
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Being the first in my family to get an athletic scholarship, really lifted the weight off my parents’ shoulders and they realized that paying for volleyball for eight years prior to college was worth it. I have a little brother who now will have an opportunity to go to college, too, as a result of my Hokie Club scholarship.



LINDSEY OWENS

Outside Hitter
Orlando, Fla.
Major:
Biological Science

Ford breaks two Tech records in regular-season finale

Tech receiver Isaiah Ford broke two single-season records in the Hokies’ 23-20 win over Virginia in the regular-season finale in Charlottesville.

Ford, a sophomore from Jacksonville, Florida, caught six passes for 121 yards in the game, including 32-yard reception for a touchdown. The touchdown catch marked his 10th of the season, breaking the previous school record of nine shared by André Davis (1999) and Antonio Freeman (1993).

“I said at media day last year that I wanted to score 10 touchdowns, and I couldn’t do it last year,” Ford said. “That was definitely one of my goals coming into this year, so to achieve it this year really was a blessing.”

Ford’s six receptions gave him 63 for the season, which also is a school record. Jarrett Boykin held the previous record of 61, which he caught during the 2011 season.

Ford has caught at least two passes in every game of his career (25)—also a school record.

Curtin earns All-America honors

Virginia Tech cross country runner Thomas Curtin earned All-America honors following his 22nd-place finish at the 2015 NCAA Division I Men’s Cross Country Championships held Nov. 21 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Curtin’s finish was the fourth-highest finish by a Tech men’s runner at the NCAA Championship. He was the top finisher for the

Hokies, running the 10k course in a time of 30 minutes, 15.1 seconds.

Curtin, a redshirt senior from Leesburg, Virginia, had won three straight races heading into the event, including the ACC title and the NCAA Southeast Regional. A foot injury, though, hampered him in his bid to win his fourth straight race and first national championship. He still earned All-America honors in cross country for the first time, becoming just the sixth Tech men’s runner to do so.

The Tech men’s team, which received an at-large bid to the Championships and was making the program’s sixth appearance (just the second since 1987), finished in 27th place. Other Tech finishers were Stuart Robertson, who came in 144th with a time of 31:21.9, and Neil Gourley, who was 157th with a time of 31:30.6. Daniel Jaskowak and Peter Seufer came in 190th and 205th, respectively, while Brent Musselman was 218th and Darren Barlow was 239th.

Santamaria chosen for SEED group

Virginia Tech kicker Michael Santamaria, a redshirt freshman from Athens, Georgia, received notification recently that he had been chosen to be a part of SEED—Student-managed Endowment for Educational Development at Virginia Tech.

SEED, which was started in 1993, is one of the largest undergraduate student-managed equity funds in the nation. It consists of a group of around 30 students who, under the


watchful eye of finance professors, manage an approximately \$5 million equity portfolio for the Virginia Tech Foundation.



Students in SEED learn how to gather data on industry sectors and individual companies, model company financials, perform valuation analyses, trade stocks, reposition the portfolio to respond to market conditions, and prepare periodic reports on the portfolio and its holdings. They also compete in stock pitch contests held at other universities.

Day trading is not a part of SEED. Rather, the group looks for undervalued companies with potential for future growth.

SEED students, who do not receive college credit, are selected for SEED each semester through a competitive process, and Santamaria went through that process to be a part of the group. The process required a written essay, a transcript, a resumé, and a formal interview—one of which required a 30-minute presentation.

Santamaria gave a presentation to a committee on why he liked Proctor & Gamble, which sells a lot of consumer products, as an investment. The company’s Pampers diaper brand continues to be highly successful and China’s eliminating of its “one child” policy offers room for growth. (Please note this is not investment advice—just a broad recap of Santamaria’s presentation.)

Santamaria, a business major, plans on pursuing a career in financial planning or wealth management in the future. 



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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Fuente's penchant for high-scoring offenses creates excitement among Tech fans

Like most Americans, Tech football fans began their Christmas shopping around the end of November.

They received a gift when the Hokies won three of their final four games — all three on the road — to become bowl eligible. They received a gift when Frank Beamer and the Hokies beat UVA, a gift they've received many times, but never gets old. They received yet another when new football coach Justin Fuente asked Bud Foster to stay on the staff — and their beloved defensive coordinator agreed.

That last one went a long way toward giving Hokie Nation a holly, jolly Christmas. But that's only a stocking stuffer compared to what Fuente could — *could* — bring Tech fans down the road.

Tech AD Whit Babcock hired Fuente for many reasons — core values, fit, character, his work as the coach at Memphis, recommendations from those in the profession and others. But Fuente's philosophy on offense and his staff's ability to get production on that side of the ball ranked right up there, too.

There is more offense today than at any other time in the history of college football. As of Dec. 1, 13 teams averaged more than 40 points a game — and all 13 qualified for bowls. In 1999, Virginia Tech led the nation in scoring offense and was one of just two teams averaging more than 40 points per game.

Teams need to be able to score. Consider Boston College: the Eagles lead the nation in total defense — and finished 0-8 in conference play.

Therein lies Fuente's strength. He served as a co-offensive coordinator at TCU for three

seasons, and the Horned Frogs ranked in the top 10 in scoring offense all three seasons. They ranked in the top 20 nationally in rushing offense all three seasons.

In 2013, Fuente's second year at Memphis, his team ranked 96th or worse in the four major offense categories — scoring, total, rushing and passing. This season, two years later, the Tigers ranked seventh nationally in scoring (42.7 ppg), 12th in total (510.4 ypg) and 14th in passing (324.4 ypg). They haven't been shabby running the ball either, averaging 186.2 yards per game on the ground.

Interestingly, Fuente believes in running the ball, which seems counterintuitive to most coaches who run "spread" offenses.

"We want to change the tempo," he said. "That doesn't mean we want to go at such a speed that we hang the defensive side of the ball out to dry, so to speak, by making them play the whole game, but we do want to control the tempo.

"We have been a run-the-ball-first team. We have made big plays through play-action pass and moving the pocket and getting the ball on the perimeter, and that's what we'll continue to try to do.

"I believe that's the best way to have success as a team. [If] you can run the football, you're better on defense. You're better on offense. You're better on special teams. And then you can make some big plays through the play-action pass and getting the ball to the edge. We'll continue to change the tempo and start with running the football."

Tech's current staff certainly leaves some good pieces in place. Bucky Hodges, Isaiah

Ford, Cam Phillips, and Travon McMillian and the return of four starting linemen are nice places to start. Of course, Fuente needs to find a quarterback, whether it is Brenden Motley, Dwayne Lawson or an incoming freshman, to develop some consistency.

The Hokies have struggled with consistency on offense the past few seasons, partly because of a playing of a lot of younger players and partly because of injuries. Their top two tailbacks missed this season, and their starting quarterback, Michael Brewer, missed five games.

That inconsistency is a primary reason why the Hokies have lost 14 games by a touchdown or less in the past four seasons — 10 by five points or less.

Maybe Fuente possesses the secret sauce to fix that. But he cautions fans about lofty expectations of scoreboard explosions.

"We're not," he said when asked if his team would start scoring 60 a game. "We didn't when we started at the last place either. The key is to find a way to win the ball game. Just try to win the game, and that's all that matters.

"I know some people are going to expect that, and there's nothing I can do to stop it. But it's far-fetched. I hope we can get to that. It's going to take some time. I'm hopeful we can get it done."

Tech fans are, too, but they need to be patient. Fuente isn't exactly Santa Claus, but he could deliver some nice presents at some point down the road.

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behind the mic | with Jon Laaser

Beamer, Bud and bridges connecting the past and the future

Justin Fuente has been introduced as the next head football coach at Virginia Tech. This is something that I am exceptionally excited about—a feeling I know that I share with a majority of Hokie Nation. In my first interaction with the 39-year-old, I found him to be humble, sincere, knowledgeable and driven. I thought the process of his hiring and the execution of the announcement was remarkably smooth and well done by all associated. An A-plus, as Whit Babcock might have said.

I also look forward to penning many columns about Fuente’s success and the building of his program as it unfolds. I got the impression that the access for fans to be involved in the program would continue to be there. As I have tried to be this year, I enjoy being a window for you in that way.

However, I am equally excited about the fact that Bud Foster will remain with the program. And in this column, I wanted to write to you about bridges. I feel they are immensely important. The following is an explanation as to why.

Bud’s defensive pedigree is unrivaled, and the continuation, and potentially enhancement of, the “Lunch Pail” defense is immensely intriguing—and valuable. But to me, and to many Hokies, he now represents the bridge between the “Beamer Way” and the future at Tech.

And that is a necessary bridge. Bud, possibly more than anyone else besides Frank Beamer himself, has been responsible for the culture within not only the football program,

but also the university. It is imperative that culture survives. Bud recognized that, and so did Babcock. There is winning on the field, and there is winning in the way you win. You do that by treating people kindly and doing it consistently. Beamer never wavered from that principle. Neither has Bud.

From the moment I met Bud this past summer, he has been exceptionally gracious and welcoming. As much as I would like to think that had something to do with me, I recognize it’s the only way he knows to be. It’s the way he was taught—by Beamer.

Bud is unquestionably an excellent bridge, but I find it reassuring that there are so many other bridges that Tech is fortunate enough to have—people who are determined to maintain the Virginia Tech way of doing things.

Mike Burnop is a bridge, an extremely sturdy one. For me, he served as a bridge from Bill Roth. He has taught me how someone who is fortunate enough to speak for this community should go about doing so ever since my arrival in Blacksburg. I marvel at Mike’s ability and effort in that regard. I am also awed by his devotion to this program. Like Bud, he was there for every snap of the Beamer era. Unlike most, he was there before that as well. I heard a rumor that he even caught a few passes back in the day. Make no mistake, Mike is emotional about the end of one era and the beginning of another, but I can easily tell that he is eager to remind of the past while leading to the future. We share that vision.

Andrew Allegretta is a bridge, albeit a younger one. He has selflessly guided me

through a technical maze that we needed to traverse to bring you what turns out is Beamer’s final season. Like Bud, he has done so despite his own personal disappointment. Like Bud, he has done so because he loves Virginia Tech—and because he understands the importance of it continuing to operate with the same personality it has for decades.

Mike and Andrew are just a couple of the many people who have recounted tales of Beamer and his family to me. Each person who has come up to me at any point is, in a way, a bridge. I encourage you all to continue to be those bridges. And don’t be bashful. As we will move further away from the Beamer era in the days to come, it will be those memories that we will need to hold on to more tightly.

With each passing game and event this season, I couldn’t help but feel a growing sense of gratitude that Beamer was still the coach during my first season. With the stories you bridges have told me, I would have had an idea, but I wouldn’t have fully understood.

I couldn’t have realized how comfortable Beamer would make me feel while riding in his Cadillac to his hometown of Hillsville. There would have been no way of recreating the moment when I hesitantly wandered onto the practice field during camp, and he not only didn’t tell me to get off the field, but instead waved me closer to the huddle.

There was every week’s pregame interview and “Tech Talk Live” appearance where he dutifully showed up and graciously handled victory and defeat in the exact same manner. I’ll cherish that time, but even more so will

be the brief private moments. Recently, he humbly asked if it would be all right if we sang “Happy Birthday” to his wife, Cheryl, during HIS radio show. We were a bit off key, but we got the job done. There was also a poem he wrote to her that he shared with Mike and I that night. Then there was the time he paused from breaking down game film to cut off a string on my suit jacket because he couldn’t allow my pocket to rip. Wouldn’t think of it.

There are more stories, and just four months ago, I’m pretty sure he thought I was the parking valet when he pulled up to Pinehurst for the ACC Kickoff. No, seriously. Point being, I already have so many favorites. I’ve known the man for mere months. Imagine the wealth of stories, anecdotes, and more importantly, impact he has had on those he has been around for decades.

Beamer is fond of saying that he is fortunate and grateful. And he undoubtedly is. We all are, in fact. We all got to be a part of it. We all got to actually experience it—me, for just a short time, which will fortunately allow me to be a bridge when I talk of the Beamer way. For many of you, for much longer, which will only strengthen your conviction when you speak as well.

Here is the best part. Beamer himself is the ultimate bridge. He’s retiring from coaching. He’s not retiring from Tech. He couldn’t do it if he wanted to do. He couldn’t have



Frank Beamer and wife Cheryl (center) attended the news conference announcing the hiring of Justin Fuente as the new football coach—and got to know one of Fuente’s daughters in the process.

engrained that love of a place, and an idea, in so many, if he didn’t feel it himself. In a gracious way, he will fade for a bit to allow Fuente to establish himself because that’s the only way he knows how. But he will be around, as he was at Fuente’s introductory press conference.

What was he doing during the press conference? Critiquing the next coach’s remarks? Of course not. He was busy getting to know Fuente’s youngest daughter, Charlotte,

as he and Cheryl helped welcome the Fuente family to Blacksburg. That, of course, is what you would expect.

The process that will transition us from the Beamer era to the Fuente era will undoubtedly be smooth. Both men will ensure that. The bridges that will connect the two are all of us. I’m happy to be one. I hope you are, too.

In closing, as Beamer closes each of his press conferences with, “Thank y’all,” he means it. So do I.

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

Keeping up *with* Compliance

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

Q: The NCAA doesn't let donors/boosters/fans give money to student-athletes, but I seem to recall Virginia Tech paying for medical expenses for Rayna DuBose when she became ill years ago. Did the school receive a waiver to do this? Just curious. Thanks, Cara in Blacksburg.

TP: "Actually, no. Rayna's insurance paid for most of her medical expenses resulting from her bout with meningococcal meningitis, and then several fundraisers were held and a trust fund was set up to help with those expenses not covered. NCAA regulations permit this under extreme circumstances and, obviously, a life-threatening illness falls into that category. "Under NCAA Bylaw 16.11.1.7, which addresses miscellaneous benefits, a member-institution, such as Virginia Tech, may hold a fundraiser for student-athletes or their family members provided that 'the extreme circumstances should be extraordinary in the result of event beyond the student-athlete's control; the proceeds must be designated for specific purposes (e.g. payment of medical bills or purchase of medical equipment); the proceeds are directly given to the beneficiaries, with receipt kept on file by the institution, which must include the amount of expenses incurred and the total received; and the excess proceeds must be given to a not-for-profit

organization with the receipt kept on file by the institution."

Q: I know that we can't provide benefits to prospective student-athletes, but what about their coaches or AAU coaches? I'm guessing that this is not permissible as well. Thanks, Evan in Vinton, Virginia.

TP: "You are correct. No institutional employee or representative of an institution—coach, former player, donor, etc.—can provide a benefit to a prospective student-athlete's coach. Several NCAA bylaws deal with this topic. No meals or cash or anything to anyone who coaches or directs prospective student-athletes. This includes AAU or club team coaches. The only 'freebie' that is permitted is two complimentary admissions to Virginia Tech sporting events, provided via pass list."

Q: What do you know about "subtweeting?" That's a word that keeps coming up in NCAA circles, and I'm not really sure what it is. Thanks for any insight you could provide. Penny in Pearisburg, Virginia.

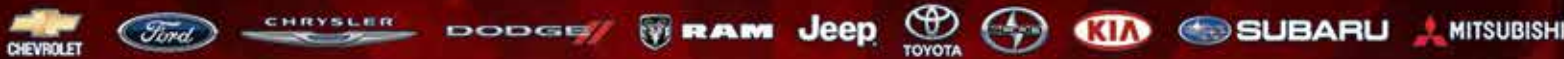
TP: "Probably our next headache in the recruiting realm. Subtweeting, I'm told, is simply tweeting something about someone

else without mentioning his/her name. In most cases, it's clear as to whom the person doing the tweeting is referring to.

"NCAA regulations forbid coaches from commenting publicly about a prospective student-athlete—other than to simply confirm recruitment of said student-athlete—but some coaches are starting to more frequently tweet out a comment that is a direct reference to a prospect without directly mentioning that individual's name.

"NCAA Bylaw 13.10.2.1 deals with comments before the actual signing of a letter-of-intent, and it states that 'the institution [a term which captures all university employees] is precluded from commenting in any manner as to the likelihood of the prospective student-athlete committing or signing with that institution.' The NCAA staff recently came out with additional explanation on this topic, saying that 'an institutional staff member may not publicly reference the name, nickname or other personally identifiable information of a prospective student-athlete other than to confirm recruitment of the prospective student-athlete.'

"Unfortunately, as a result of the restrictions currently in place regarding the recruiting process, social media is something that we are forced to monitor carefully as its use evolves." *VT*



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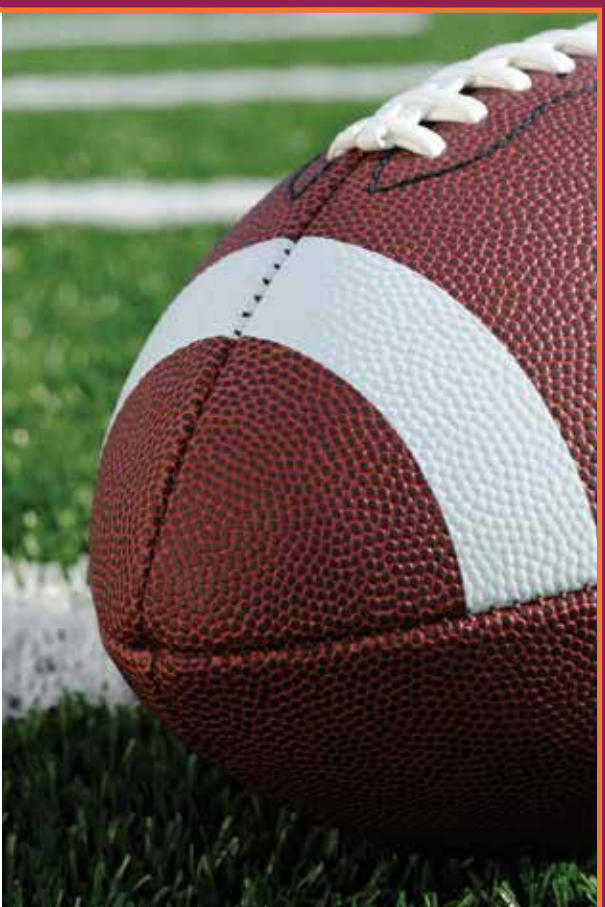
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MARTIN TRAVEL



MORGAN CONKLIN

WOMEN'S SOCCER
Midlothian, Virginia
by Jimmy Robertson

Morgan Conklin, a midfielder on the Tech women's soccer team, grew up wanting to be an orthodontist, but changed her mind while at the university. Pursuing a degree in communication, she now plans on seeking a career in sports broadcasting.

Q: You started out pursuing a major in human nutrition, foods and exercise, but changed to communication. What led to the change of heart?

MC: "I liked the material, but I didn't enjoy the sciences and what would build up to the HNFE material. I didn't like the general classes that I had to take for it. I had to meet with an advisor and make a four-year plan, and I saw all the classes that I was going to have to take, and I just didn't have an interest. I wanted to be an orthodontist. That's what I had always wanted to do since middle school. But I couldn't get past all those general classes.

"My dad was a high school football coach and then my brother played at the University of Richmond, so I kind of grew up in a sports family. I just understand sports, and I would always talk with my dad about sports. That's how we were. Realizing that I could potentially make a living off of something like that was exciting to me.

"I interviewed Andrew Allegretta [the IMG radio voice for Tech women's basketball and baseball] for a class project, and I really connected with him. I kind of got involved in the internship [IMG's broadcasting internship program]. Once I got more experience with it, I fell in love with it. Now that I'm coming to the end of my soccer career, it's been cool that I've found something else that kind of gives me that competitive and nervous, but exciting, feeling that I've only felt in soccer games."


Q: What sort of things have you done while working as an intern in IMG's broadcasting program?

MC: "I started by doing color commentary for the men's soccer team [in the fall of her junior year], and then in the spring, I did color commentary for lacrosse. In the spring is when Andrew figured out a way to add sideline reporting, so I did sideline for lacrosse, softball and baseball. One of the cool things I did was sideline for ESPN3 for the spring [football] game. I got to interview Bud Foster, Kyshoen Jarrett and Kyle Fuller, which was cool. I've done more ESPN3 games this fall. He's given me a lot of real-world experience, opportunities. It started with color, and I worked my way to sideline and now more ESPN3 stuff."

Q: You also worked as an intern for the Richmond Flying Squirrels with Jon Laaser earlier this summer. Have all these experiences confirmed your desires to pursue a career in broadcasting?

MC: "Yes. Everything I've done, I've wanted to do more of it. I've wanted to get better. I've wanted to do more reps, so I can improve faster. I've been lucky in that I've loved all the opportunities that have come my way. I've wanted to do more of them. They've given me that broadcasting bug and made me want to make a career out of this."

Q: What are your future plans?

MC: "I've been focused on our soccer season, so I'm going to do more work on that over the winter break. I'm going to intern with WSLS [an NBC affiliate in Roanoke] this spring. I've applied for an internship with the ACC, the Futures Internship, which is a postgrad internship [a paid internship for those pursuing a career in television or athletics administration]. I would like to work for a network, like the SEC Network or Raycom – something like that, just to get the experience. I'll look at any opportunity that comes my way, but I think a network would be good to work for just to get to cover different sports and different teams. I think I'll hear on the ACC internship at the beginning of the new year." 

Ronny Vandyke, a member of the Virginia Tech football team, graduated last May with a degree in psychology. He also received a minor in leadership and social change. He is mulling over several options in relation to his future.

Q: When you were looking for majors, why did you decide on psychology?

RVD: "Ever since high school, I had an interest in doing that – majoring in psychology. But I had heard negative things about it, like, if I wanted to do well in that field, then I'd have to go to grad school. I remember it like yesterday. I was working. I had a job my senior year of high school. I was working at a sports bar, and one of the customers asked me what I would be doing when I came to Virginia Tech. The comment he made was, 'Man, do you want to have food on your table?'

"My mom wanted me to do business. So I think I got caught up in that, and I tried the route of business. I didn't declare a major, but I was taking an economics class my sophomore year, so that I could get into business. I couldn't pass the class. I had to withdraw. So I was asking myself, 'Should I retake the class or should do what I wanted to do, which was major in psychology?' I chose to major in psychology, and I think I made the best choice. I really enjoyed the major. The classes were challenging, but they were interesting. If I had done business, I don't think I would have enjoyed my years here academically."

Q: So what was it about psychology that appealed to you?

RVD: "A lot of it is studying the brain and how we function as human beings. That always interested me a lot. I like studying about behaviors and why we do certain things. Things like that have always interested me."


Q: You went to the Dominican Republic as part of a class a couple of summers ago. What did you do, and what did you learn?

RVD: "That was part of a leadership class that I had to take. It was just a lot of different things. It was experiencing some of the poverty there and working with the kids. We met with those kids for a couple of days and did a lot of activities and had a lesson for them because most of those kids are coming from neighborhoods with sexually transmitted diseases. So we taught them how to avoid getting caught up in that type of stuff and we used sports activities as a way to teach. That was really neat. It was a great learning experience just to be a part of that."

Q: You graduated in four years. How were you able to balance the rigors of football and your academic coursework?

RVD: "It was tough. There were times when I thought about dropping classes because I didn't think I could get through them. I had to really have a lot of trust in the Lord and know that He was going to be there with me to help me get through those classes that were really tough. My goal was to graduate, so I stuck to that, and it was tough, but I did it. Having people to support me and trusting in the Lord really helped me to graduate."

Q: What are your future plans?

RVD: "After the season, I'm going to train either for the Combine or the Pro Day that we have here this spring. I don't have a backup plan – it's going to work out. I'm not sure what I'll do when football is over. Maybe working with adults, or just making an impact in people's lives in some type of way. I really don't know right now. I just want to follow God's will, and He hasn't given me a clear path yet. So I'm just trying to be patient and take it day by day." 

RONNY VANDYKE

FOOTBALL
Lorton, Virginia
by Jimmy Robertson



FUENTE TO TAKE OVER HOKIES' FOOTBALL PROGRAM

The former Memphis coach said he admired Frank Beamer and the Hokies from afar for many years and always wanted to be a part of something like what the program has become

by Jimmy Robertson

For the first time in nearly three decades Virginia Tech held a news conference to announce the hiring of a new football coach.

At this news conference, held in the football players' lounge, Justin Fuente addressed an array of topics—everything from the appeal of the school to staffing to philosophy to recruiting and much, much more.

The former quarterback, first at Oklahoma and then at Murray State, even offered some insight as to what he is looking for in a quarterback.

“When we talk about it in the staff room, I tell them that I don’t want guys like me,” Fuente said. “I want somebody that can move.”

With that bit of levity, Fuente showed all aspects of his personality, combining a funny side with seriousness about his task, humility at replacing a legend and thankfulness for the opportunity, as he gets set to replace retiring coach Frank Beamer. Fuente assumes full duties at the helm once the Hokies and Beamer play in their bowl game.

The 39-year-old Fuente, whose wife and three daughters were also in attendance, agreed to a six-year contract that pays him \$3.2 million in the first year and subsequently increases thereafter—a more than \$20 million commitment in all. He comes to Tech after spending four seasons at Memphis, where he turned around a program that had won just five games combined the three seasons before he arrived. In the past two seasons, he led Memphis to a 19-6 mark, including a 9-3 record this season.

His turnaround job at Memphis, his coaching pedigree having worked with Gary Patterson at TCU and his ability to build offenses that put points on the board more than sold Tech AD Whit Babcock.

“Justin was absolutely our top choice and the only one we offered the job to,” Babcock said. “I know that every AD will say that, but I sincerely want to assure you that it’s true. And also to sit up here in front of you today and say, my saddle is hitched to him and vice versa, as well as our 22 other coaches, but he and I are in it together, and I’m proud to tell you he was the top choice and the one we wanted, and I’m thrilled that he said ‘yes.’”

Babcock became familiar with Fuente from Babcock’s days as the AD at Cincinnati. During that time, the American Athletic Conference invited Memphis into the league, and Cincinnati and Memphis became league opponents. Babcock first met Fuente at a league meeting, and he knew the football situation at Memphis was bleak.

But Fuente gradually built the Tigers into winners. They went 4-8 and 3-9 during his



As the Hokies' new head football coach, Justin Fuente will be inheriting a program with 23 consecutive bowl berths—and a passionate fan base that loves football.

first two seasons there, but went 10-3 last season and won the Miami Beach Bowl. They finished ranked in the top 25 of both The Associated Press poll and the Amway coaches' poll for the first time in school history.

“Very rarely in coaching hires do you get this: A four-year window snapshot where you can directly attribute it to that coach and that staff, meaning a lot of places you come to, they’re inheriting players and quarterbacks,” Babcock said. “They’re [Fuente and his staff] doing this, all of that, and I know Justin would defer the credit, but to take Memphis—and you guys know the stats, they won, I believe, five games total in the three years before they got there. They started with 51 scholarship players in the first team meeting, and you can have 85. They won the first conference title at Memphis in 40-plus years while stepping up from Conference USA, [had its] first 10-win season since 1938, and in 2014, Coach Fuente was [conference] Coach of the Year. Most wins in a two-year period. They had a first-time-ever national ranking at the end of the year by The AP and USA Today [Amway] in 2014, and then this year as high as 12th or 13th and on to beating Ole Miss.

“Coach Fuente got this job in large part for much more than beating Ole Miss, but I remember what I thought of when I saw the Memphis stats and the data, and to watch what they’ve built in four years, and to do that, that’s when I started to think of Justin as the right guy.”

Fuente was widely sought after during what has been termed by those most knowledgeable about college football as one of the craziest offseasons in recent memories. Numerous high-profile “Power 5” schools are making coaching changes, including Southern Cal, Georgia, South Carolina, Missouri, Miami, Virginia and others.

Fuente said a dozen schools approached him or his representatives. He was only interested in one job—Virginia Tech.

“I’ve admired this program from afar for many years, on television, the way the players have played, the way the fans have cheered, their traditions, the wins, the losses, the facilities, the support, the league changes, and I’ve always wanted to be a part of something like that,” Fuente said. “The thing about this job is it comes with all of those things wrapped up in a community that I cannot wait to raise my three girls in, and that was a huge contributing

factor to me. I don’t say that disparagingly about any place that I’ve ever lived. I’m just very thankful for the opportunities I’ve had beforehand and thankful for this opportunity.

“This is absolutely the job that I was interested in. I had really no interest in anything else, just this, because of what it has been and what it can be and the community that comes along with it.”

Fuente, though, will be transitioning into a totally different situation. Unlike the program at Memphis in nearly every respect, the Hokies will be going to their 23rd straight bowl game and haven’t incurred a losing season since 1992. Beamer, his staff and his players over the years have established a culture of winning.

He inherits a good situation at Tech. The Hokies return many key components from this season’s squad, including players like Isaiah Ford, Bucky Hodges and Chuck Clark.

“It’s certainly a different dynamic,” Fuente admitted. “That’s part of the reason why the next couple of weeks are so valuable. You get a little bit of a pulse by observing about the mindset of the team. You get a feel for the squad, but it’s not the same situation. You’d be foolish to say

Continued on page 18

that you're going to take exactly the way you approached problem A and plug it into the next one that comes along. I think it is different."

Fuente met with the team and the man he would be replacing the Sunday following Tech's win over Virginia. He said it was intimidating walking into Beamer's office and seeing all the conference and national Coach of the Year Awards, but Beamer made him feel welcome.

The two even talked about Murray State, where Beamer once coached and Fuente graduated.

"I just felt so great sitting in there and getting a chance to visit with him, and obviously, we all know you don't replace a legend in coaching," Fuente said. "You hope to build on what he's already done. You hope to continue to operate in the same manner with the same principles and the same integrity that he's done for so very many years here."

Fuente brings to Tech a philosophy on offense that has been productive during his time as a coach. This season, Memphis ranks seventh nationally in scoring offense (42.7 ppg), 12th in total offense (510.4 ypg) and 14th in passing offense (324.4 ypg).

Prior to taking over at Memphis, he worked for five seasons at TCU. He spent his first two years as the running backs coach before moving into the co-offensive coordinator role. He coached current Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton for two seasons.

TCU finished in the top 10 nationally in scoring offense all three seasons during his time as the co-coordinator. The Horned Frogs also finished in the top 20 in rushing offense all three seasons.

"Justin Fuente is a great leader," Patterson said in a statement. "He does an unbelievable job of recruiting, getting kids to play hard, rolling up his sleeves and doing things you need to do to be successful. He's also a great listener and high-quality person who cares about kids."

Fuente already has started assembling his staff, and it starts with current Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster, who has agreed to remain aboard with Fuente. Foster has been on Beamer's staff all 29 years and wanted to remain in Blacksburg.

Fuente and Foster met for roughly 90 minutes the week before Fuente's hiring, and Foster came away excited. He had never met Fuente, but the two share an equal admiration for Patterson.

"It's going to be exciting," Foster said. "To work against that kind of offense when we do spring ball and fall camp and those things ... there are a lot of things I can continue to learn and grow from. I can pick their

JUSTIN FUENTE
FILE

PERSONAL

Born: July 30, 1976
Hometown: Tulsa, Oklahoma
Wife: Jenny
Children: daughters Cecilia, Caroline and Charlotte

EDUCATION

High School: Union High School (1995)
College: Murray State (B.S. in finance, 1999)

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Oklahoma (1996-97)
Murray State (1998-99)

COACHING EXPERIENCE

2001-03 quarterbacks coach, Illinois State
2004-06 quarterbacks coach/offensive coordinator, Illinois State
2007-08 running backs coach, TCU
2009-2011 quarterbacks coach/co-offensive coordinator, TCU
2012-15 head coach, Memphis (Record: 26-23)

brain and see what gives them fits and vice versa. I'd like to think it's a great fit, and hopefully, that's how Justin feels keeping me around.

"I'm excited about the next chapter. What we've done here, we've leveled off the past couple of years, but it hasn't been that long ago that we were playing in the Sugar Bowl. I'm excited about where we can go. Our expectations aren't going to change. We're going to work to be the very best we can be and win championships. I've felt all that in talking to him."

Fuente also has kept defensive line coach Charley Wiles and secondary coach Torrian Gray, and he has brought two coaches with him from Memphis – tight ends and special teams coach James Shibest and Holmon Wiggins, who coached receivers at Memphis. Those two were at the press conference and plan to recruit for Tech immediately.

Tech's current coaching staff will coach the team in the bowl game, while the incoming staff will work out of the press box at Lane Stadium. Athletics department officials already have set up computers, printers and phone lines there.




Tech AD Whit Babcock (right) and new football coach Justin Fuente first crossed paths when Babcock was the AD at Cincinnati and Fuente was the coach at Memphis. Now the two will work together in Blacksburg.

"Absolutely, I will stay out of the way," Fuente said of the Hokies' bowl preparations. "I think it's an awesome benefit to get to be around and see and watch the kids interact and get a chance to not be – quite honestly, not be in charge of it, but just be able to sit back and observe and watch. I think it's a huge advantage."

The job brings Fuente to the East Coast for the first time in his career. All of his experience is from the Midwest and Southwest. A

native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, he played two seasons at Oklahoma before transferring to Murray State. He then coached at Illinois State, TCU and Memphis before landing in Blacksburg – the place he wanted to be.

"I'm incredibly humbled by this opportunity," he said. "I cannot wait to get started. I have a deep respect for Virginia Tech and for this community. Thank you, Whit, thank you, President [Timothy] Sands, for letting me be the next football coach here." 

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GO Hokies!

Bobby Ross (center) put together a great staff when he took the head coaching job at The Citadel in 1973 — a staff that included Frank Beamer (to Ross' right) and Ralph Friedgen (to Beamer's right).



ROSS STARTS BEAMER ON *PATH TO GREATNESS*

Bobby Ross, who won a share of the national championship while at Georgia Tech and also coached in the NFL, gave Frank Beamer his first full-time coaching job — and watched as Beamer went on to make the most of it

by Jimmy Robertson

To understand how much Frank Beamer means to Bobby Ross and his family, just consider the following: Ross' granddaughter, a member of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, delayed her Thanksgiving break by a day just so she could be in attendance for Beamer's final home game.

There's more. Ross used to send his middle son to Beamer's football camps when the outgoing Hokies' head coach worked at Murray State.

"I was in the pros [with Kansas City], and I put him on a Greyhound bus," Ross said. "It would be about a 10-hour drive. He'd get to that camp, and he loved Coach Beamer. He really did. He wanted to be around that program as much as he could."

Of course, Beamer and Ross and their families are intertwined for another reason — Ross gave Beamer his first full-time coaching position back in 1973.

Ross, now 78, retired and living outside of Richmond, told several stories about Beamer and the old days during a 30-minute phone conversation recently. The two met while on Jerry Claiborne's staff at Maryland — Ross served as the linebackers coach, while Beamer was a graduate assistant.

"Coach Claiborne also brought in Frank as a graduate assistant," Ross said. "Obviously, the main reason was that Frankie had been a great player for him, but he also knew what type of person Frankie was and that he would make a great football coach. That's where we first met, and I knew from the very beginning that I was working with the defense and coaching linebackers, and Frank and Ralph Friedgen were our graduate assistants with the defense. You could see from day 1 that Frankie was going to be a very special guy as a coach."

Ross worked at Maryland for one season before landing the head job at The Citadel — his first head coaching job. He wasted no time in hiring Beamer as an assistant coach.

The two of them actually left for the Charleston, South Carolina-based military school on the same day around Christmas 43 years ago. In fact, Ross has a photo at his Richmond home of the two of them before they boarded the plane to go to Charleston.

Ross also hired Friedgen to join him, and he hired Jimmie Laycock, currently the head coach at William & Mary, too.

"I knew they were all going to be good," Ross said. "I knew Frank was going to be a

special coach. His work ethic was special. He had a great way with people — I'm talking all people in the athletic department. He was highly respected by everyone. He got along quite well with his players, but also took a real strong interest in them.

"He did an outstanding job. My first year, I didn't name any coordinators. I had to get a feel for things and for people. After that first year, I named Frank our defensive coordinator and began to see how special he was. He coordinated our defense. He knew it quite well. I knew then and there that I had something very special."

Ross and his group of young assistants got along very well, even during trying circumstances. The school lacked the resources to be competitive, and attending a military school wasn't a popular option in the early 1970s, specifically with the Vietnam War going on at the time.

"It made recruiting very tough, but Frank and those guys were very hard workers and brought in some excellent players," Ross said. "Those guys got on the road. They didn't fuss about anything. We didn't have a high budget. Their wives chipped in — I think they did a lot of tutoring. They all lived

in pretty much an apartment complex and had players over to eat. They just jumped in feet first, and Frank was always looking to find solutions for our problems in the program."

While there, Beamer learned how to be more than a coach to his players. He learned that being a coach also required being a mentor, a counselor and a father to certain young men who needed those things at certain times.

Beamer made an impact on his players, and one young man comes to mind, according to Ross. This young man struggled early on at The Citadel, but Beamer took him under his wing, playing racquetball with him and spending time with him. The result was positive.

"The youngster became a very good football player, but he was also a good student and accomplished a lot in the time he was at The Citadel," Ross said. "He got his degree. He was very special, and that epitomized Frank. He could be firm. He knew how to be firm. He wasn't just a good, ol' folksy guy all the time. But because he was that, the players loved him and respected him. He had a real strong interest in his players. He cared — and the players knew that."

Ross coached at The Citadel for five seasons before heading off to the NFL in 1978. That year, he received an offer from Marv Levy to be the special teams coach of the Kansas City Chiefs.

Beamer, though, stayed at The Citadel one more season, working for Art Baker. Then he decided to go to Murray State to work for Mike Gottfried, who named Beamer as his defensive coordinator. Beamer held that job for two seasons before getting the head coaching job at Murray State after Gottfried left following the 1980 season.

"He did quite well," Ross said of Beamer. "He really turned that program around very rapidly."

Ross stayed in the pros for four years before coming back to the college game in 1982 as the head coach at Maryland. He stayed there for four seasons, but resigned following the 1986 season because of a lot of uncertainty within the university and the athletics department.

Dutch Baughman, the athletics director at Virginia Tech, tried to hire him, but Ross wasn't ready to get back into coaching, and he recommended Beamer for the job. Baughman hired Beamer, and the rest is history.

Ross later wound up at Georgia Tech, and he and Beamer coached against each other one time — in 1990. The Yellow Jackets got a field goal in the waning moments to win 6-3 and ended up winning a share of the national championship that season.

"I didn't like it," Ross said in response to coaching against Beamer. "I've said openly that I don't like playing against friends. I knew his football team would be very well


prepared and that they would be tough, tough-minded. I kept preaching that to my players throughout the week. It was a tough, hard-nosed football game. It was a sigh of relief to have it over with."

On Nov. 1, Beamer announced his plans to retire at the end of this season following 29 years at Tech. He now enters a different phase of his life.

Ross knows that feeling. He himself coached off and on for more than 40 years before retiring in 2006, and he offers his good friend some advice on his future.

"Nothing is going to replace football, but he'll possibly be asked to serve as a consultant on some things," Ross said. "That could happen. He'll probably become affiliated with several boards, that type of thing. Things will surface for him, and eventually, he can get wrapped up in that. He'll still have a desire for football — I still enjoy going to football games. I enjoy going to games at Tech."

"The main idea is to stay busy. That was very important for me. Don't sit around thinking about what you're missing. Establish some things in your life, and then get on with your life. He'll get some opportunities, I'm sure."

Ross gave him that first opportunity. Given what Beamer's accomplished in his 40-plus years in the coaching profession, he'll forever be grateful. 

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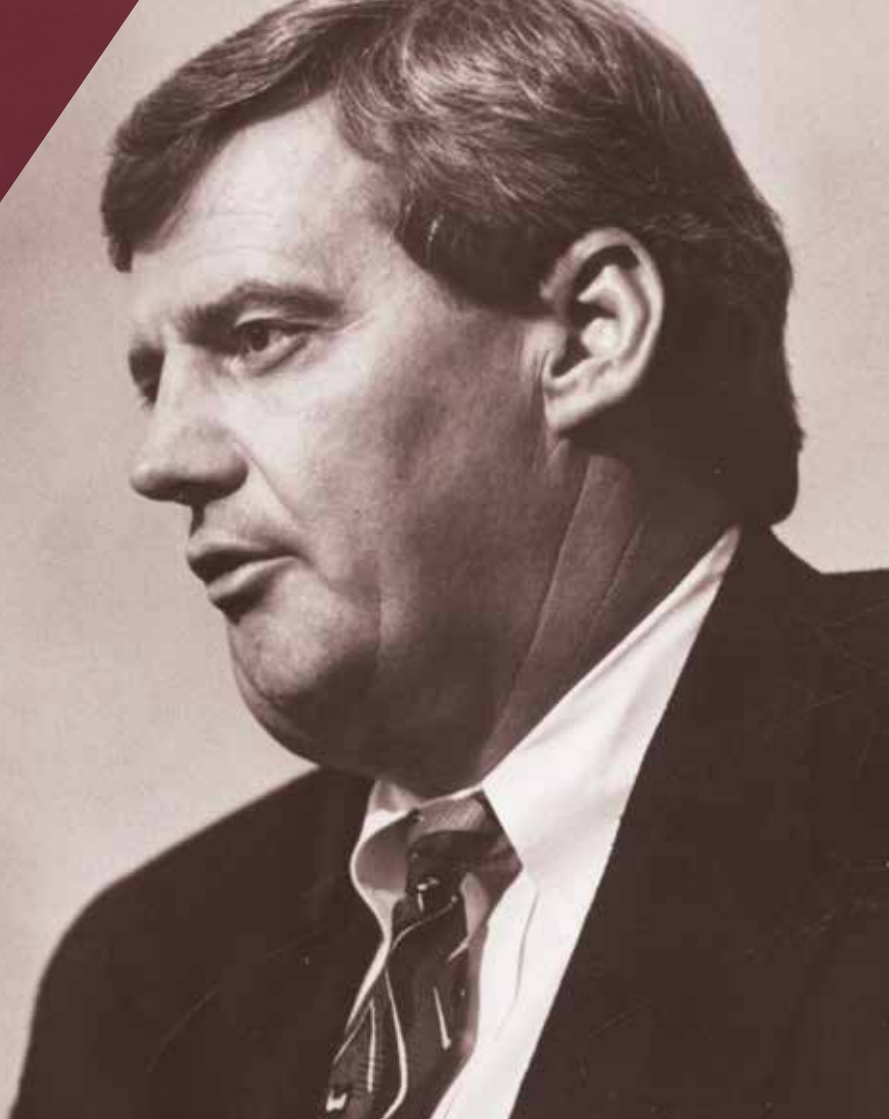
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CHARACTER AND VALUES LED BAUGHMAN TO *HIRE* BEAMER

Former Tech AD Dutch Baughman had a short tenure in Blacksburg, but he made a hire that changed the athletics department — and the university — forever
by Jimmy Robertson



He heard the news on Nov. 1 that Virginia Tech head football coach Frank Beamer planned on retiring at the end of this season. But what transpired the following morning caught him off guard.

Dale “Dutch” Baughman heard the phone ring and expected nothing out of the ordinary. Perhaps it was a colleague in the profession, or maybe a dreaded telemarketer.

Instead, it was Beamer, calling the man who hired him as the football coach at Virginia Tech two days before Christmas in 1986. Beamer thanked Baughman, and he explained his reasoning for retiring.

Beamer’s call came as no surprise to those who know him—the man who never forgot his roots, his manners and those who afforded him with opportunities.

“We had the nicest conversation about our friendship and how well he’s done and what occurred 29 years ago,” Baughman said via phone from his home in Southlake, Texas. “He is a first-rate person, and that was the convincing element during our initial interview. It’s certainly been the consistent character trait for all the years I’ve known

him. It was a great moment for us to share and kind of him to reach out.”

The tenure of Dutch Baughman as the athletics director at Virginia Tech lasted six months, but his decision to hire Beamer changed not only a football program and an athletics department, but also the university.

Baughman himself got the AD job at Tech on Dec. 11, 1986, replacing outgoing AD and football coach Bill Dooley, who weeks later led the Hokies to a Peach Bowl win. Dooley resigned in what many remember as a tumultuous time that involved NCAA violations. Baughman, who had been working for the Southwest Conference, knew he was going to be getting the job at Tech and knew he needed to hire a football coach. So he began the process even before he arrived on campus.

Baughman went after Bobby Ross, who had resigned as the head coach at Maryland following that season. Baughman met Ross in Richmond to discuss the Tech job, but Ross thought it was too soon to jump back into coaching.

Baughman also had Beamer, the coach at

Murray State at the time, on his radar. Yet the conversation with Ross immediately pointed Baughman toward Beamer’s direction.

“I remember asking Bobby the question, ‘If you were to be the candidate for the new head coach, tell me about your staff,’” Baughman said. “The first thing he said he’d do was hire an assistant head coach. Back then, that was not really a known or popular position, but he was so sure of it. I asked him, ‘Well, do you have someone in mind?’ and he said, ‘Yeah, it would be Frank Beamer.’

“In having heard Frank’s name in several other places, I knew that he was capable, meeting all the elements of the profile [for the position]. But when I heard his name mentioned by Bobby Ross, that validated a lot of the research I had done and so forth.”

Baughman contacted Beamer and later met Beamer and his wife, Cheryl, at a hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. The three of them chatted for a while, and then Cheryl excused herself to allow the two gentlemen to talk about the position.

What technically was supposed to be an interview turned into a conversation—one

that sold Baughman. The two briefly talked about football, but mostly talked about values and handling certain scenarios, and Baughman left impressed with Beamer’s responses.

Baughman certainly put an emphasis on toughness, discipline and football knowledge, having once served as a graduate assistant football coach under legendary Woody Hayes at Ohio State – a man known for such traits. But Baughman, a former Marine, felt values, such as integrity and character, were more important.

“What I had learned at that point in my career was that you hire on personal character,” Baughman said. “Every time, you hire on personal character. One of the main reasons is that you’re in a position to hire a person that’s going to have incredible influence over the lives of student-athletes first and foremost, and then there’s coaching staff and parents and faculty and staff and so on.

“The personal character criteria was the most important, and that was the decision maker. That made the difference. After the meeting in Nashville, there was no doubt in my mind that this was the man that we wanted.”

Unfortunately, Baughman never witnessed Beamer coach a game as the AD at Virginia Tech. He resigned six months later following Beamer’s Christmas hiring after a rift with university officials involving an NCAA investigation into the Hokies’ men’s basketball program.

But Baughman kept in close contact with Beamer over the years, and he made several trips to Blacksburg to take in games. He never announced his arrival and always stayed in the background, preferring to be respectful of the current ADs at the time — Dave Braine, Jim Weaver and now Whit Babcock.

Baughman later served as the AD at Oregon State and then became the executive director of the Division I-A Athletics Directors Association, a post he held for nearly 20 years


before retiring this past January. Each year, he re-lived the story of hiring Beamer, as both future ADs and current ADs wanted advice on how to an eventual legend.

“It seemed that every year, as the team would have success and go to a bowl game, I don’t know how many years went by where someone would call me and say, ‘Tell me the story about when you hired Frank,’” Baughman said. “Well, the story had been told so many times, but it was very nice not to be with Frank on a daily basis and yet still be connected and share in that excitement and joy. Every time I would re-live that experience, it was not only a tribute to Frank and the Hokies, but it also made me feel real good, too.”

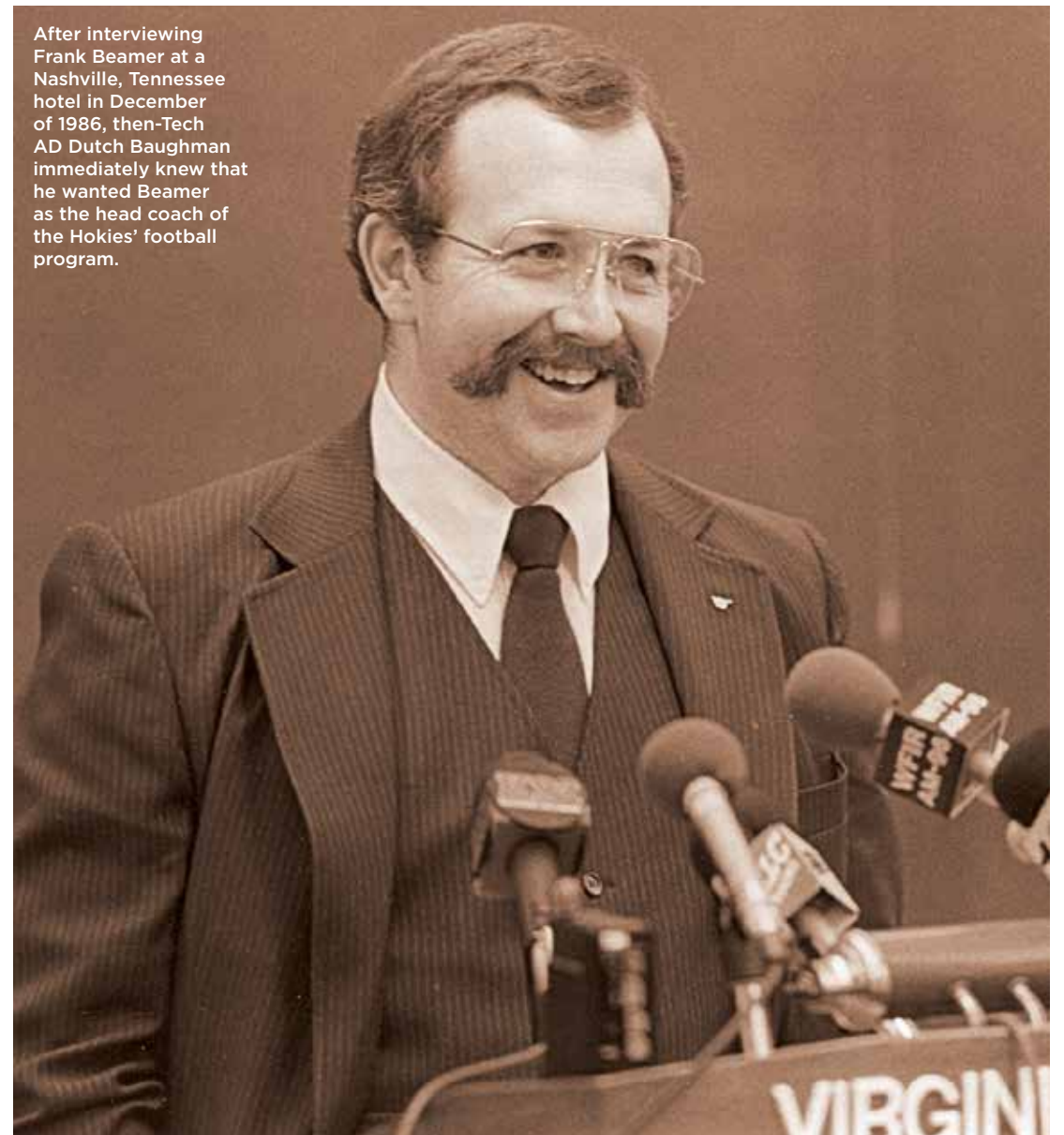
Baughman was unable to attend Beamer’s final home game at Lane Stadium, but hopes to make it back to town for any future tributes to the legendary coach. As the years clicked

along, he knew Beamer’s retirement to be imminent.

But Beamer’s decision left Baughman feeling the way many in Hokie Nation feel — disappointed and sad, yet thankful that the coach gets to leave on his terms.

“I feel sadness to step away from something I’ve been dedicated to for 45 years or whatever it is, and now to see Frank retire at the same time, that’s part of the empathy I have with the decision that he and Cheryl made and the announcement and the thoughts he has going forward,” Baughman said. “There is a happiness. There is an enormous congratulations for being able to sustain 29 years, but there is also a sadness because there is a dire need for people in that position, not only at Virginia Tech, but all over the country, that will continue to influence the lives of student-athletes the way Frank did.” 

After interviewing Frank Beamer at a Nashville, Tennessee hotel in December of 1986, then-Tech AD Dutch Baughman immediately knew that he wanted Beamer as the head coach of the Hokies’ football program.



Long Winding Road

ENDS IN

BLACKSBURG

for

BREWER

Virginia Tech head coach Frank Beamer offered quarterback Michael Brewer an opportunity—and the transfer from Texas Tech is grateful for it

By Jimmy Robertson

Every time I'm out in Blacksburg, people come up and ask me what it's like to play for Coach Beamer, and if he's really as good a man as advertised. The answer is always yes—and then some. On my visit, I remember he sat down next to me at breakfast and talked about tons of stuff, very little of it football. He asked how I was doing through the transfer process and about my siblings. People say Coach Beamer implements a family atmosphere in his program, and in that chat, I knew it was real. I was blown away the first time I heard that 25 sets of brothers had played for him. After getting to know him, I'm not surprised that whole families would buy in.

I committed on my visit because the more I thought about it, the more I realized an opportunity to play for someone like Coach Beamer doesn't come around very often. When I told him, he shot right out of his chair—I didn't know he could move like that!—came around his desk and gave me a big hug. It was like we had known each other for years. That's when I knew I made the right decision.

(Virginia Tech quarterback Michael Brewer, Nov. 19, excerpt from Campus Rush, SI.com)

football spotlight

Michael Brewer never grew up aspiring to be a writer. Like most Texas natives, he dreamed big, thinking of oil wells, and land management, and swinging J.R. Ewing-style deals.

But should he pursue it, Virginia Tech's cowboy boot-wearing, pickup-driving quarterback may have found an option as a wordsmith after his 1,300-word essay on retiring head coach Frank Beamer that appeared in Sports Illustrated's online "Campus Rush"—a digital complement to the magazine that is dedicated to focusing on the stories that make college football so special.

Brewer, who wrapped up his final regular season as a collegian by throwing two touchdown passes in Tech's win over Virginia in Charlottesville, penned a heartfelt missive about the Hokies' beloved head coach that appeared on Nov. 19 – and resonated with Hokie Nation. It may have secured Brewer's status on many fans' lists of favorite players.

Not that Brewer wrote the piece with a popularity contest in mind. He wrote it with humble intentions, as a personal and genuine tribute to his coach.

"I did an interview with SI about Coach Beamer, and the transfer process, and how I ended up here," Brewer said. "I had a lot of good things to say about Coach Beamer because that's pretty easy to do. A day or two later, they called back and had the idea of me writing a piece about Coach Beamer. They wanted, from the player's eyes, what Coach Beamer is like and from what we think about him from the locker room rather than just what you hear from the media.

"I was willing to do that. People always say it's easy to write about a subject in school when you know a lot about it. To write good things about a guy like Coach Beamer was easy. I could have made it a heckuva lot longer than that. I had to condense it down a little bit. He gave me an opportunity. Obviously, he's done so much for this university, and the athletic program, and the state of Virginia. It was something I wanted to do after they approached me about it."

Brewer felt—and still feels—that he owes Beamer a debt that can't be repaid, even through a well-written letter in one of the nation's premier sports publications. It's a debt that may never be repaid.

Two years ago, Brewer wasn't happy, stuck in a program with a head coach who did not recruit him. He made the decision to transfer from Texas Tech after his coach there, Tommy Tuberville, left to go to Cincinnati. The hard part came after that decision. He needed to find a home.

He wanted to go to the University of Texas, where his dad played, or TCU. But Texas Tech head coach Kliff Kingsbury and his staff played hardball. They forbid him from transferring to any school in the Big 12, any school in the state of Texas, or any school on Texas Tech's schedule for the next two years.

"That narrowed the options," Brewer said in an understatement.

Brewer's decision two years ago roughly coincided with Shane Beamer's annual trip to the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Alabama. He usually goes down for one day to watch practices and talk to coaches. This trip turned out to be fruitful – in more ways than one.

While there, Beamer ran into Clemson's coaching staff. He and Clemson coach Dabo Swinney swapped tales—the two used to run into each other on the recruiting trails when Beamer worked at South Carolina—and Beamer also got to meet Chad Morris, Clemson's offensive coordinator, for the first time.

Beamer flew to Charlotte later that night and started driving back to Blacksburg. As he started up Interstate 77, he checked his voicemail. He had received a message from Morris.

"He said there was a quarterback from Texas Tech named Michael Brewer whom he had coached in high school and who was looking to transfer," Beamer said. "He thought we ought to take a look at him. He knew the kind of people we had in this program and thought it would be a great fit and encouraged us to look into it."

Morris knew Brewer, having coached him at Lake Travis High School before taking a job at Tulsa (and later Clemson). He became close with the Brewer family and wanted to see Michael in the best possible situation— but he lacked a scholarship to bring him to Clemson.

By the time Beamer had gotten to Statesville, he had called offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler. Tech needed a quarterback, as three-year starter Logan Thomas departed, leaving the Hokies with untested and inexperienced Mark Leal and Brenden Motley. The possibility of a transfer intrigued them.

Continued on page 26

“If I had to go back and do it all over again, I’d do it just like this — be here in Blacksburg, playing for Coach Beamer and playing with these teammates. This place means a lot to me because of the response I’ve gotten by coming here. The people here in Blacksburg and the rest of Hokie Nation have accepted me and taken me in as one of their own. I’m truly grateful for that and appreciative of that.”

— Tech quarterback
Michael Brewer

Long Winding Road Continued from page 25

None of Tech’s staff had heard of Brewer. Pursuing him meant trusting Morris. No one questioned Brewer’s credentials as a person, but he needed to be able to play — and there was little film available.

“At the time, Chad’s name was being mentioned for the Louisville job, and he said, ‘If I had gotten the Louisville job, I was going to take him [Brewer] with me to Louisville,’” Beamer said. “He said, ‘If I had gotten a head coaching job, I would try to take him with me.’ The more and more we researched Michael, knowing the family and the background, he was certainly a guy we wanted to pursue.”

Brewer and his family made the long journey from Texas to Blacksburg for an official visit. Conversations with Loeffler and Frank Beamer went well. So, too, did those with the players.

But those were just a couple of the things that enticed Brewer to travel halfway across the country and go to school.

“A lot of things go into it,” Brewer said. “Two of the big things that stood out to me were, No. 1, Coach Beamer. Getting the chance to play for a legendary coach like Coach Beamer and then after sitting down

and talking with him, it was a great experience. You just really want to be around a guy like that and the family atmosphere that he’s built here and continues to build.

“Second, the defense. Having a defense like that means you don’t have to be perfect on offense. Coming from a system in the Big 12, you have to score a lot of points, and a lot of times, it [the game] turns into a track meet. Here, it’s not like that. It takes a lot of pressure off the offense. I always thought that if Virginia Tech could take that next step offensively, they could be a heckuva team with the defense and special teams.

“Those were some of the reasons I thought it would be a good idea to come here.”

Brewer committed on his visit. He arrived in Blacksburg in early June, won the starting job at quarterback, and he started every game last season. He threw for nearly 2,700 yards, with 18 touchdowns and 15 interceptions.

He won his teammates over with his toughness more so than his numbers. He suffered a shoulder injury against Virginia in last year’s game at Lane Stadium, but with a bowl bid on the line, he gutted it out, throwing for 235 yards and two touchdowns in the Hokies’ 24-20 win that sealed a bowl berth.

“When you’re the quarterback, sometimes you have to play through some injuries and some pain, but that’s not really something I talk about,” he said. “I got hurt a little bit and played and ended up winning the game. That’s just part of my job.”

Brewer, who missed five games this season with a fractured collarbone suffered in the season opener against Ohio State, took another shot in the first half of this year’s game against the Cavaliers. He stayed on the turf for quite some time before finally getting up and walking off the field. He never missed a snap.

His teammates never expected anything less from the 195-pounder.

“I’ve seen him take so many hits at this point,” Tech fullback Sam Rogers said. “I just know he’s going to get back up. When he went down against Ohio State, I was like, ‘Ah, he’s going to be fine. It’s Michael. He’ll be fine.’ Once he gets hit, it sucks. But I know he’s going to get back up. He’s the toughest guy I’ve been around.”

That toughness also has won him the respect of the man whom he respects so much — Frank Beamer.

“He’s a tough guy,” Beamer said. “He’s my kind of quarterback. The guy is made out of the right stuff. He’s smart, he competes, and you’re going to get his best effort. He’s my kind of guy.”

Brewer has one more game left to play in a Tech uniform. Before the bowl game, though,



Michael Brewer will leave Virginia Tech ranked in the top 10 in school history in touchdown passes, but more importantly, with two wins over Virginia as the starting quarterback.

he expects to be finished with his coursework toward a master’s degree in instructional technology management—he received his undergraduate degree in resource management from Texas Tech.

After that, he’s unsure of his future. He may get into coaching or he may try to pursue a career in his field of study. He may stay in Blacksburg or he may go back to Texas.

Regardless of where he ends up, he has no regrets about being at Virginia Tech the past two years.

“If I had to go back and do it all over again,

I’d do it just like this — be here in Blacksburg, playing for Coach Beamer and playing with these teammates,” he said. “This place means a lot to me because of the response I’ve gotten by coming here. The people here in Blacksburg and the rest of Hokie Nation have accepted me and taken me in as one of their own. I’m truly grateful for that and appreciative of that.”

And of the opportunity afforded to him. Frank Beamer has given players opportunities over the course of his 29 years in Blacksburg. Michael Brewer is the latest of many who took advantage of this.

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Silver Anniversary OF A Perfect NIGHT

Twenty-five years ago, Virginia Tech wore all-maroon uniforms, painted their shoes black and then pounded rival Virginia at Lane Stadium, handing head coach Frank Beamer his first win over UVA — and setting the stage for the great things that later came

by Jimmy Robertson

By most measures, it was practically a flawless late-fall afternoon in Southwest Virginia.

The sun possessed that autumn glow. A stiff and consistent breeze brought a chill, but not necessarily a biting cold. It was just enough to let one know that a new season was approaching.

The trees, for the most part, stood naked, having shed their leaves and creating a carpet of gold and scarlet. The moon popped out, quietly hiding in a blue sky and waiting to be turned on by the sun's setting.

The weather was perfect for tailgating, and Hokie Nation made the season's final pilgrimage to Blacksburg to see their beloved close out the campaign.

The year was 1990, the team's record was 5-5, and a win over bitter rival Virginia would produce a winning season, a source of warmth for the coming winter's cold.

Tech's players knew their future lot. This game marked the end of the year for them, and the Hokies viewed themselves as a rest area for the Cavaliers, who were on a drive to New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl, gaudy national ranking in tow. In those days, bowl invitations went out well before season's end.

So the Hokies were going all out for this one. They convinced their coach to let them wear all-maroon uniforms. Then they took matters into their own hands, as the seniors, an outfit led by the likes of Archie Hopkins, Nick Cullen, Al Chamblee and Jimmy Whitten, hatched a shrewdly devised scheme to wear coveted black cleats.

That marked the start of what turned out to be one of the most magical evenings in the history of Virginia Tech football. On Nov. 24, 1990, with the nation watching and the largest crowd ever assembled for an event in the Commonwealth, the Hokies won what they termed as their "bowl" game, giving head coach Frank Beamer his first win over the school's rival and starting an undeniable legacy.

In early November, Beamer announced his plans to retire at the end of this season, concluding a 29-year tenure at Tech and a 35-year head coaching career. He has enjoyed tremendous success during his nearly three decades at Tech, particularly against Virginia. Of all the victories over the Cavaliers, though, none may have been sweeter than the 1990 victory.

Twenty-five years later, he and those who played in the game vividly remember what took place.

It's Gotta Be The Shoes

Lester Karlin was in year No. 12 of what ended up being a 36-year career as Tech's equipment manager. For him, this pending game with Virginia resembled any other game. He and his crew set up the locker room, made sure the appropriate items for the sideline sat in their proper places and handed out gameday attire to players.

The Hokies went out for early pregame warm-ups for the Virginia game and came back to the locker room before heading out one final time. They shed their white pants in favor of the maroon ones—a surprise to fans, who hadn't seen all-maroon outfits since 1984. Then a multitude of players disappeared. The locker room, save for a few, was eerily quiet.

One of Karlin's minions came up to him and told him he needed to go outside. "You need to see this," he said. "They're out there spray painting their shoes."

Karlin marched outside and what he saw left him with a single reaction.

"I was pretty well pissed," he said. "They got black spray paint all over the benches and on their socks and shoes."

Tech's players, led by those seniors, had cans of black spray paint in their hands, spraying their white Converse cleats. Black cleats became the rage in the late 1980s, with a lot of big-time schools going in that direction. Tech officials, a little late to the party, planned on making the change the following season as part of a new agreement with Nike.

For the seniors, though, it would be too late. They, along with the underclassmen, saw this game as the perfect opportunity to do something like this.

Vaughn Hebron, a sophomore at the time, said there was one caveat — they needed to get quarterback Will Furrer on board.

"Will was pretty straight-laced," Hebron said. "If we didn't get everyone on board, then it wouldn't look right."

Furrer, however, doesn't quite remember the story this way.

"Vaughn told you that?" he asked. "I think he's pulling your leg. I think, by that point in my career, I was smart enough to know that if my offensive line and running backs and receivers told me to do something, then I did it."

Regardless, Furrer hopped on board, which comforted the group. After all, the quarterback serves as the leader of a team, and the left-hander from Bellevue, Washington definitely led this squad.

"Will was all about it," Hebron said. "Once he realized everyone was involved and this was something we really wanted to do, he jumped on it. It was cool. That really excited us. When we convinced him to do it, we knew it was the right thing to do."

After seeing the mess, Karlin knew nothing could be done. So he sought out Beamer to deliver the news.

He found Beamer in his office, firming up some last-minute details to the game plan. Beamer's reaction wasn't quite what Karlin expected.

"Lester was getting all crazy on me," Beamer said, with a laugh. "I remember telling him something like, 'If it helps us win, let 'em go.'"

A Fast Start

ESPN folks arrived days beforehand to set up their cameras, as the game was to be shown to the nation. A young Sean McDonough would be handling the play-by-play duties and underrated Mike Gottfried took on the color commentary. Gottfried knew Beamer well, having coached with him at Murray State. Kevin Kiley handled the sideline reports.

Tech came into the game with a 5-5 record, having played a brutal schedule that included games at then-No. 2 Florida State (a 39-28 loss) and at then-No. 7 Georgia Tech (a 6-3 loss). The Hokies had lost three games by a touchdown or less, including that excruciating defeat at Georgia Tech in their previous game. But they had two weeks to get ready for UVA, with an off week before the game—and prepared accordingly.

Virginia came into the game ranked No. 17 in the nation, with an 8-2 mark and the aforementioned Sugar Bowl bid in hand. It reached the pinnacle of its season on Oct. 14 when Associated Press poll voters ranked the Cavaliers No. 1 nationally after their 7-0 start.

But the Cavaliers entered the Tech game struggling. They had lost two of their previous three games, seeing their dreams of an undefeated season end with a 41-38 loss to Georgia Tech and then receiving a double whammy from Maryland, which beat the Cavaliers 35-30 and dislocated UVA quarterback Shawn Moore's thumb in the process. That left their offense in the hands of junior Matt Blundin.

UVA's wounded status mattered little to Tech fans. Tech officials brought additional bleacher seating for this rivalry game, and a crowd of 54,157 squeezed into Lane Stadium.

Tech's captains walked with purpose to midfield for the coin toss.

The Hokies won the toss, and as is Beamer's traditional custom, elected to defer their decision to

the second half. Virginia decided to receive, and Tech elected to defend the south goal, taking the wind in the first quarter.

That turned out to be a pivotal decision. Few remember this, but the wind played a major role in this game, with gusts reaching 15-20 miles per hour. Playing with the wind in the first quarter allowed Tech offensive coordinator Steve Marshall to be aggressive from the start.

In contrast, UVA seemed to struggle going into the wind. Derek Dooley, former Tennessee head coach and current Dallas Cowboys receivers coach, dropped passes on the Cavaliers' first two possessions, perhaps serving as a microcosm of things to come.

On their second possession, the Hokies went for the big play — and got it. Furrer carried out a beautiful play-action fake to pull UVA safety Keith McMeans to one side and then threw a strike to Bo Campbell for a 49-yard gain to the Virginia 15. Three Tony Kennedy runs later, the Hokies were left with second-and-goal from the 3, and Mark Poindexter scored his first career touchdown on a 3-yard run to give Tech a 7-0 lead.

"As a unit, both offense and defense, we had a strong belief going in that we could win that game," Furrer said. "We had put in the work with Coach [Mike] Gentry, and the coaches, Coach [Bud] Foster [Tech's outside linebackers coach] and Coach [Rickey] Bustle [Tech's quarterbacks coach] believed in our potential — and I'm not sure we had lived up to it yet."

"We recognized Coach Beamer's passion and belief that we could bring the capital of Virginia sports from Charlottesville to Blacksburg. We were tired of being close, and we were tired of being everyone's Homecoming game. So our defense came out and hit them in the mouth, and our offense was a force. It all came together."

Continued on page 30

Perfect NIGHT

Continued from page 29

Beamer and His Mentor

Few remember this, too, but Jerry Claiborne was in the house for this one. Claiborne got his first head coaching job when hired by Frank Moseley to take over the reins at Tech, and he coached from 1961-70. He coached Beamer, who played at Tech from 1966-68.

Beamer surprised his mentor, who had gotten out of coaching the previous year, with a rather bold call on the Hokies' next drive following their touchdown.

Furrer had gotten Tech to the Virginia 23, but back-to-back plays lost six yards, leaving the Hokies with a fourth-and-11 from the UVA 29.

Rather than have kicker Mickey Thomas attempt a career-long 46-yard field goal—with the wind at his back—Beamer elected to go for it. Following a timeout, Furrer saw man coverage on Cullen in the slot, so he changed the play. He found Cullen on a post route, and Cullen, who beat McMeans on the play, made a sliding grab in the end zone for a 29-yard touchdown.

"He was in the slot to the right," Furrer said of Cullen. "It was a double move. Nick was hell on cornerbacks, but he really caused free safeties trouble. It was a little scary because I almost skipped it off the ground. He made a great catch."

The play, which gave the Hokies a 14-0 lead with a little more than three minutes left in the quarter, still sticks with Beamer mostly because of Claiborne's reaction afterward.

"Coach Claiborne was a conservative guy," Beamer said. "I remember him telling me, 'I'm really surprised you went for that first



Mark Poindexter (17) and Eugene Chung (right) celebrated after Poindexter scored the first touchdown of the game and the first of his career in the Hokies' 38-13 win over UVA in 1990.

down. That was kind of a gamble.' I told him, 'Well, I just had the feeling that it was the time to do it.'

"Since then ... you go a lot on your gut feeling. Sometimes, it's worked out, and sometimes, it hasn't. I've done that quite a few times since that night. It worked out well that night."

Plays of the Game

Tech's defense certainly got into the act, too. A group led by Hopkins, Chamblee, Rusty Pendleton and Damien Russell forced a Blundin fumble late in the first quarter that led to another Tech drive. The Hokies drove 59 yards in 12 plays and settled for a 21-yard field goal by Thomas with 10:17 left in the first half.

That was a bonus, since he was kicking into the wind, as the Hokies took a 17-0 lead. But one of the big plays in the game was forthcoming.

Tech's defense forced UVA to a three-and-out on the ensuing series, as Furrer and the offense went back to work. The Hokies drove to the UVA 33 and faced a third-and-10 situation that led to another timeout.

Coming out of the timeout, Furrer threw a ball toward tight end Greg Daniels that appeared to be too long. But Daniels made a diving grab in the end zone for a 33-yard touchdown and a 24-0 Tech lead with 5:20 left in the half.

The play probably sealed the game for the Hokies.

"I remember calling the timeout because something didn't feel quite right," Furrer said. "Coach Bustle asked me, 'What do you want to call?' I told him the play, and he said, 'Good, that's what I was hoping you'd say.' So I made that throw, and Greg made an amazing catch."

UVA finally got on the board with a touchdown late in the first half on a shovel pass from Blundin to tailback Terry Kirby, but fittingly on this evening, the Hokies' Bernard Basham blocked the extra point. The Cavaliers trailed 24-6 at the break.

Furrer and the offense dominated the first half. He completed 10 of 12 for 201 yards in the first 30 minutes, and Tech did not turn the ball over.

"The first half, we were just really in sync," Furrer said. "We just came out and executed, and it wasn't just me throwing the ball. It was Bo and Vaughn and Greg and the offensive line. We had the previous week off, and we put in a lot of film study. Those extra three or four days made a world of difference."

UVA tried to get back into in the second half, but each time, the Hokies' defense stood tall.

On the Cavaliers' first possession, Blundin threw a deep pass toward Terrence Tomlin, but Tech's Tyronne Drakeford made a fantastic interception to kill that threat. Then, after the Cavaliers cut the lead to 24-13 on a 66-yard pass from Blundin to Herman Moore—a pass that should have been intercepted by Drakeford, who took a poor angle on the play—UVA threatened again, driving to the Tech 14.

But the Cavaliers' Gary Steele fumbled, and Pendleton recovered at the 17. That play probably was the biggest play of the game, as UVA did not come that close to scoring the rest of the night. After the play, UVA coach George Welsh immediately grabbed his hat and slammed it to the turf.

Starting with that fumble, Virginia turned the ball over on four straight possessions, with Drakeford—a freshman—adding another interception, along with an interception by Jerome Preston and a fumble recovery by Basham.

"It worked out well," Drakeford said of his night. "I was playing with some good defensive



Tyronne Drakeford (right) and Damien Russell celebrated after one of Drakeford's two interceptions in Tech's 1990 victory over the Virginia Cavaliers.

backs, with Damien Russell back there—and he was one of the best safeties to come through Tech as far as I'm concerned. Those guys made me feel good, made me feel comfortable as a freshman. They told me just to go play and enjoy myself."

Tech put this one away with two fourth-quarter touchdowns. On one drive, Hebron—who missed the previous two games with a groin injury—carried the ball eight straight times. The final carry was a 9-yard touchdown run that gave Tech a 31-13 lead with 9:51 left.

With a little more than three minutes to go, Furrer threw a 3-yard touchdown pass to Poindexter following Basham's recovery of a muffed punt. That accounted for the final margin.

Virginia went into the game averaging 42 points and 542 yards per game. It finished with 13 and 374 against Tech's defense—not to mention five turnovers.

Offensively for Tech, Furrer threw for 254 yards and three touchdowns, while Hebron, getting the bulk of the work after Kennedy injured his shoulder in the first half, rushed for 117 of his 142 yards in the second half. He finished with 31 carries.

"The groin nagged me all year long," Hebron said. "So it was a big question mark whether I would play, and not only if I would play, but how effective would I be."

"For me personally, I was just happy to be a part of it, being on the field and being a part of something like that. I didn't know what I'd be able to provide on the field. I went out there, and I felt great. Coach [Billy] Hite [Tech's running backs coach] put me in there the first time and I did well, and he rode me from

Continued on page 32



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Perfect NIGHT

Continued from page 31

then on out. It really worked out for me and obviously for the team.”

With two minutes left, students started jumping over the wall in the north end zone and lining up at the back of the end zone, ready to storm the field. Rodd Wooten, the Hokies’ backup quarterback, lined the team up in the victory formation with 58 seconds to go, taking the final two snaps.

As the horn sounded, the fans rushed onto the field.

And the goal posts came tumbling down.

The Aftermath

Virginia got Moore back for the Sugar Bowl matchup against Tennessee, and the Cavaliers suffered an excruciating 23-22 setback to the Volunteers. They finished the 1990 campaign with an 8-4 record.

Tech finished at 6-5, and some argue that the Hokies were the best 6-5 team in the nation.

Perhaps more importantly, the win showed Hokie Nation that its football program could beat its rivals to the northeast. It marked Beamer’s first win over the Cavaliers in his four seasons—and the previous three losses came by a touchdown or less.

In addition, the win gave Beamer and the program some much-needed name recognition. The entire nation saw a quality, well-disciplined team destroy another such team in front of a boisterous fan base.

The country, especially recruits [of whom there were 50 in attendance], was no longer asking, ‘Virginia who?’

“When I mention Virginia Tech now, everyone knows Virginia Tech,” said Hebron, who owns and runs a gym north of Philadelphia. “They don’t get it confused with UVA. To me, that’s not a small thing. Not one time when I used to say ‘Virginia Tech’ did people not get confused with something else. Now, you mention ‘Hokies’ or ‘Virginia Tech,’ everybody knows. That was definitely one of the first games in which that started to happen. It was the first of many that created Virginia Tech as a household name.”

Furrer, now a senior vice president for Q2 Holdings in Austin, Texas, agreed.

“I think that game was bigger than a bowl game,” he said. “I think we established our position in the state, and it put Coach Beamer and Virginia Tech in a place where it should be.”

The win, and the direction the program was trending, led to the Hokies’ entrance into the Big East Football Conference. After years of playing as an independent, Tech received that invitation in 1991, along with Miami, Rutgers and West Virginia.

The invitation came during a time of uncertainty and probably saved the school’s football program. It, and Beamer’s leadership,


led to an unprecedented run of success spanning more than two decades.

“There is no question that, at the time, we needed something like that,” Beamer said, referring to the win. “That was a gigantic boost. Just to beat Virginia, with the success they had had and they were going to the Sugar Bowl, and to beat them the way we beat them ... there’s no question that was a big, big win for Virginia Tech.”

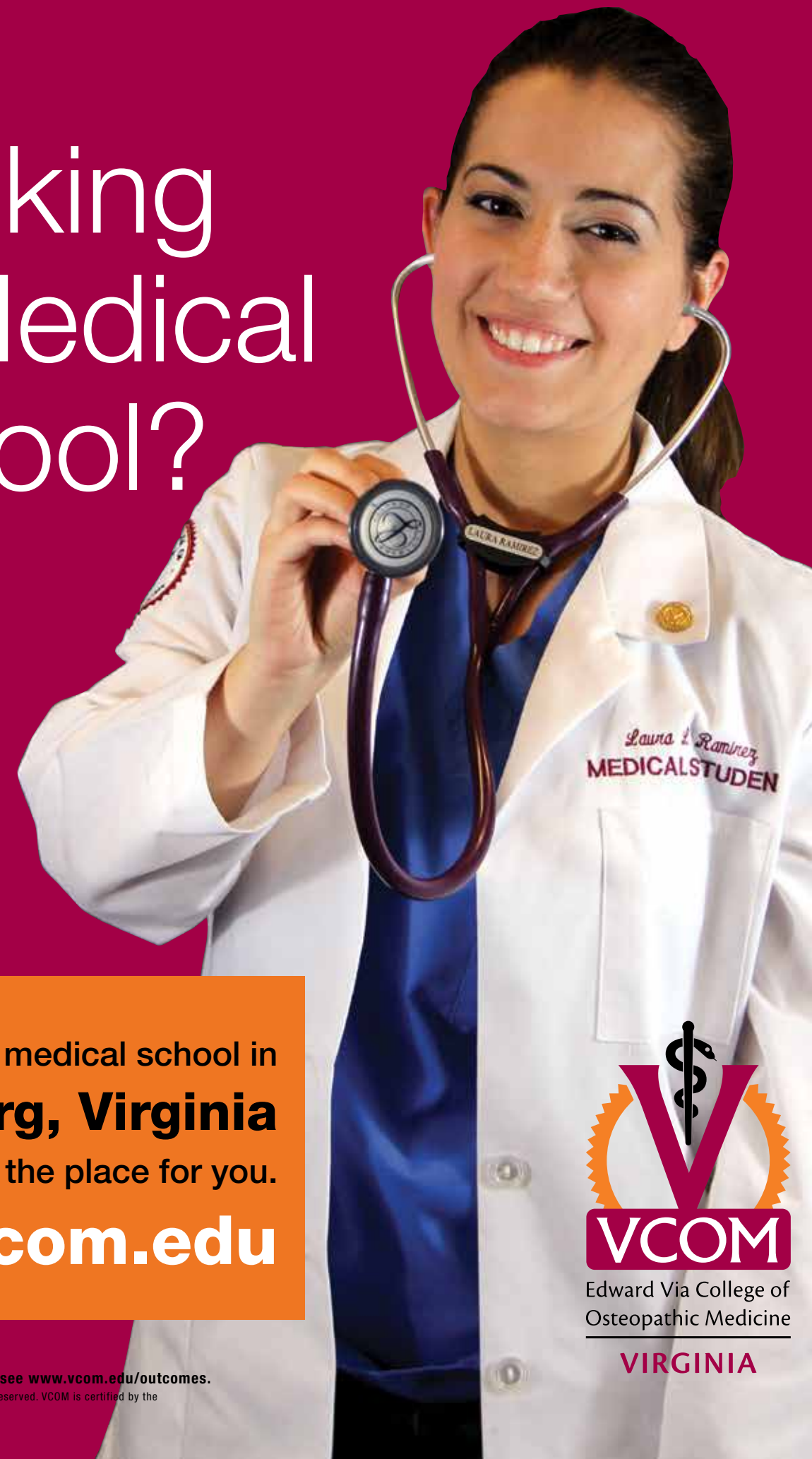
That night occurred 25 years ago on Nov. 24, just four days before the Hokies closed the 2015 regular season in Charlottesville. Those who played in it remember it well – and they’ll never forget.

“It feels just like yesterday,” said Drakeford, who works in Gainesville, Virginia, as a regional director for The Boys and Girls Club of greater Washington. “I remember a lot about that game. It doesn’t seem like it’s been that long. Whenever you’ve done something special, you have a tendency to remember a lot more than what you probably originally thought.”

By the time the players had gotten back to the locker room and the coaches their offices on that memorable night, students were carrying the goal posts toward downtown, with plans on parading them through Main Street.

A perfect moon illuminated their path and provided light for a long night of revelry. It marked the end of a perfect late-fall day, and all knew the sun’s early-dawn light would bring forth a new day—and a changed football program at Virginia Tech. 

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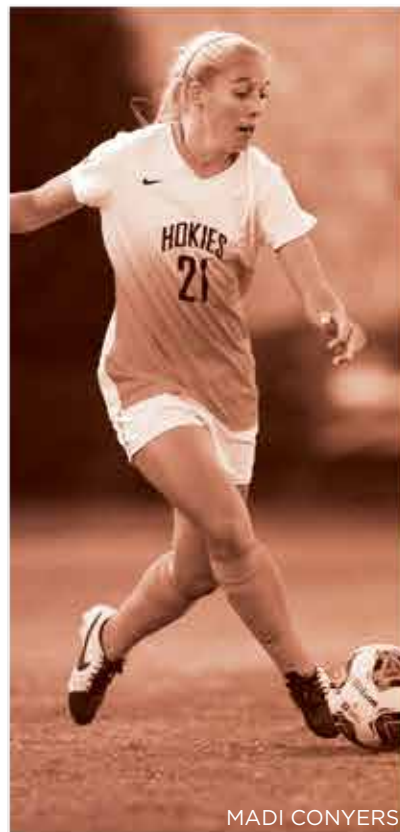
GREAT SEASON ENDS IN DISAPPOINTMENT FOR HOKIES

The Tech women's soccer team fell 1-0 to Ohio State in the NCAA Tournament, but the Hokies' senior class departs as the winningest in program history

by Jimmy Robertson



MURIELLE TIERNAN



MADI CONYERS



ALIA ABU EL HAWA



CANDACE CEPHERS

The cold reality of sports is that, sometimes, the best team doesn't win.

And unfortunately, the Virginia Tech women's soccer team became an example of that.

The Hokies dominated the action against Ohio State in the second round of the NCAA Tournament, but the Buckeyes got a goal in the 78th minute and held on for a 1-0 victory over Tech in State College, Pennsylvania on Nov. 20.

The loss marked the end of the season for the Hokies, who went into the tournament ranked No. 14 nationally and as a No. 4 seed. Tech finished its season with a 15-4-2 record.

"It's sometimes a cruel game," Tech coach Chugger Adair said. "That's how it goes. I thought we were dictating the tempo and the possession and the flow of the game. They [Ohio State] played smartly to their credit. They defended well as a team and limited a lot of quality chances for us. In those games, when teams do that, it's our responsibility to open up the game a little bit and create, and we didn't do a very good job at that phase of the game. That was very frustrating.

"Once we gave up that late goal, which was unfortunate because a lot of things happened on that play, we had urgency and picked up the intensity. We hit the cross bar and missed a couple of chances that we'd like to have back. It was just very frustrating."

The loss also marked the end of the most decorated senior class in the program's

history. Five seniors — Ashley Meier, Jordan Coburn, Morgan Conklin, Courtney Stutts and Delia Maresco — leave as the winningest class in school history. The five of them combined to lead the Hokies to 63 wins over the past four seasons, including the program's first College Cup appearance, which came two seasons ago.

But this final match will sting for a while. Tech held possession of the ball for the majority of the match, and the Hokies out-shot the Buckeyes a staggering 20-5. They also held a 4-2 advantage in shots on goal.

But they couldn't put the ball in the net. Tech had multiple shots drift wide of the post in the second half. Madi Conyers settled and had an open shot off a Coburn corner kick that went a few yards wide. In the 72nd minute, Candace Cephers had a header off a short cross that rolled past the far post.

Five minutes after Cephers' miss, the Buckeyes struck when Nichelle Prince had a shot deflect off Conklin's leg and into the net.

"I thought we had a good game plan and played some pretty good soccer," Adair said. "However, we struggled to take our chances and score goals. We lacked a little passion in front of the goal, and that was the difference. We were definitely the aggressor with shots, 20-5, and unfortunately, it didn't fall for us. And then we gave up a goal at a bad time."

After Prince's goal, the Hokies began pushing up and applying more pressure on the Buckeyes and recorded 10 shots in the

final 12 minutes of the match. In the 85th minute, Meier had two shots inside the penalty box blocked by Buckeye defenders before passing to Kallie Peurifoy, whose shot sailed high. The closest Tech came to scoring late in the match was a free kick from 25 yards in the 87th minute that Coburn hit over the wall but eventually hit the crossbar and came back into play.

In the 89th minute, Cephers forced a save from Jillian McVicker, and the last shot for the Hokies was a header from Coburn in the 90th minute that went wide, sending the Hokies to their first loss against a non-ACC opponent this season.

"I'm disappointed in the end, but if you look at the season, I was pleased with our results," Adair said. "We won a number of games that were big games. When you look at the Elite Eight, we had beaten two of them [West Virginia and Duke] and then had a draw against Florida State. We had a win and a draw against two teams in the Final Four [Duke and Florida State]. We did a good job of winning some big games. North Carolina and Clemson were games that could have gone either way, and we lost, one at home and one on the road.

"Going into the tournament, we had lost to UNC, Clemson and Notre Dame. Those are all quality teams. We didn't really slip up until the NCAA Tournament."

Tech, which finished fifth in the ACC this past season and blasted Cincinnati 4-0 in the

first round, now must look to next season. Replacing those five seniors will be difficult, especially Meier, a four-time All-ACC choice. She leaves with 30 career goals — the second-most in school history behind current teammate Murielle Tiernan — and she also ranks second in career points with 73 and third in matches started with 85. Also, Coburn earned All-ACC honors three times and started every match in which she played in her career (87).

"They've been the most established and successful in their times here at Virginia Tech," Adair said of the seniors. "They've been to the Final Four, the Sweet 16 and the


NCAA Tournament all four years. It's going to be difficult to replace them, for sure."

Tech figures to finish in the top 20 nationally in scoring offense (2.24 gpg) and total goals (47) and in the top 30 nationally in points per game (6.10) and total points (128) — the season had not concluded at press time.

But the Hokies do return their top three goal scorers and eight of their 11 starters in the Ohio State match, led by first-team All-ACC choice Tiernan, who scored 14 goals this past season — a number that ranks in the top 20 nationally. Alani Johnson and Laila Gray scored nine and seven goals, respectively.

Tech also returns goalkeeper Kaylyn Smith, who allowed 21 goals in 21 matches and recorded 72 saves.

"We've got a good nucleus coming back," Adair said. "The freshmen and sophomores that contributed this year are only going to get better as we grow and try to work this offseason. We've already met about preparing for next season and putting the work in to get back to the NCAA Tournament and try to put a run together."

With that returning group, Tech should have high expectations yet again. Hopefully, a ninth straight NCAA appearance will be in the works. 






Wolff and staff sign two during fall signing period

Kaela Kinder and Genesis Parker provide future quickness and depth to the Hokies' backcourt

From Tech's Strategic Communications office

Virginia Tech women's basketball coach Dennis Wolff and his staff signed two backcourt players during the fall signing period, adding future speed, quickness and depth at the guard positions.

The class consists of Kaela Kinder, a 5-foot-10 guard shooting guard from Inwood, New York; and Genesis Parker, a 5-9 combination guard from Bristow, Virginia.

Parker, who plays at Stonewall Jackson High School, averaged 20 points per game and shot 81 percent from the free-throw line as a junior. The left-handed guard picked the Hokies over offers from Georgia, George Mason, George Washington, VCU and St. Joseph's.

ESPN HoopGurlz ranked Parker as the No. 62 prospect nationally and the No. 18 guard prospect in the 2016 recruiting class. She earned first-team All-Met honors from The Washington Post and first-team All-Group 6A honors following a junior season in which she led Stonewall Jackson to the state championship game in Group 6A—Virginia's highest classification. Stonewall Jackson lost to Cosby High, but Parker scored 11 points and dished out four assists in the game.


"Genesis is a talented combo guard," Wolff said in a statement released by Tech's Strategic Communications office. "Her quickness is very good, and she has great athletic ability. One of the things that has stood out to me is her terrific ability to get past her man."

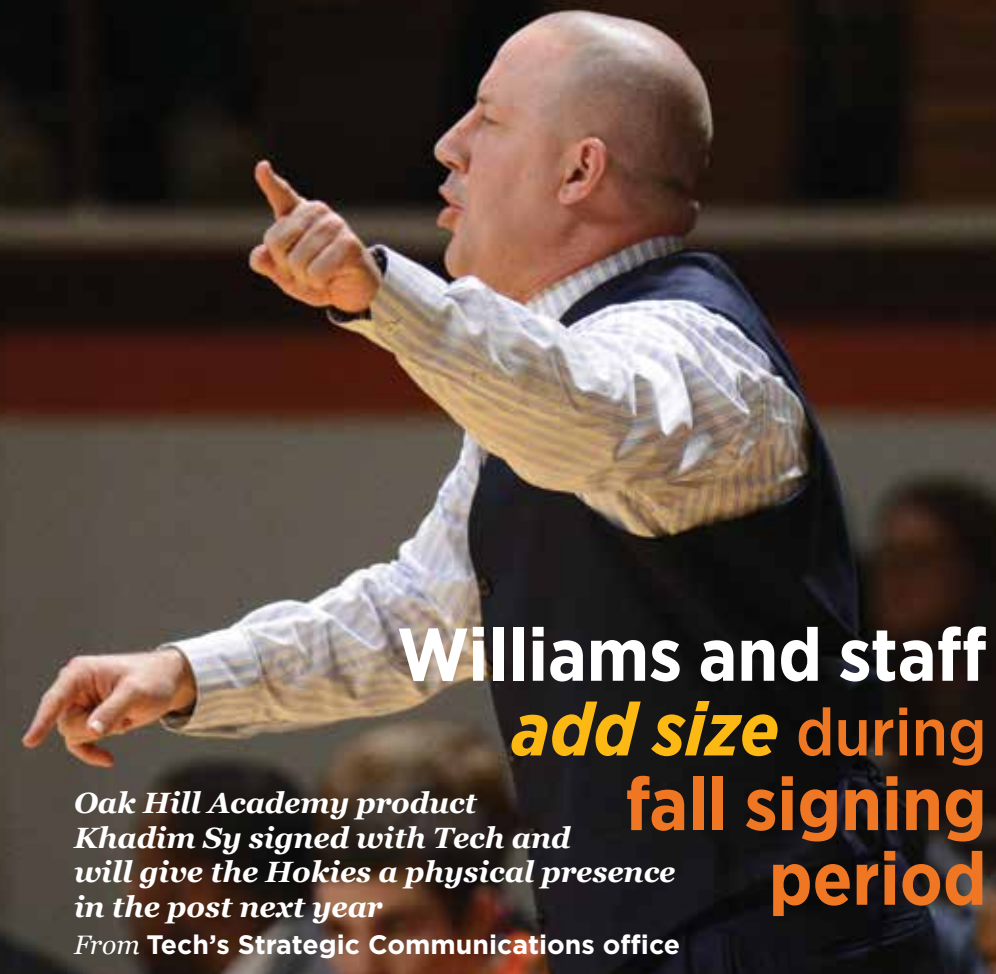
Kinder plays at Christ the King Regional High School—the same high school that produced former Tennessee standout and former WNBA great Chamique Holdsclaw—and led her team to its second straight CHSAA Brooklyn/Queens Division I crown as a junior last season. In the CHSAA championship game against Archbishop Molloy, Kinder scored 19 points and grabbed 16 rebounds.

Kinder also led her team to the state title game in which Christ the King lost 66-52 to Long Island Lutheran.

Kinder chose the Hokies over Providence, while also securing offers from the likes of St. John's and Seton Hall. She averaged 13.8 points and nine rebounds per game as a junior last year, earning first-team honors to the New York Daily News' All-Queens girls' basketball squad. ESPN HoopGurlz rated her as a three-star recruit and the No. 25 guard prospect in the nation.

"Kaela is a versatile two-guard," Wolff said. "She plays on a very good high school team and has shown what an excellent defender she is. Throughout her career, Kaela has continued to improve as an offensive player."

Wolff and his staff still have scholarships available to sign prospects in the spring. 



Williams and staff add size during fall signing period

Oak Hill Academy product Khadim Sy signed with Tech and will give the Hokies a physical presence in the post next year

From Tech's Strategic Communications office

Virginia Tech men's basketball coach Buzz Williams added size with the lone scholarship at his disposal by signing Khadim Sy (pronounced ha-deem see), a 6-foot-10, 245-pound post player from Dakar, Senegal during the fall signing period.

Tech's current roster features just one senior—Shane Henry—which forced Williams and his staff to be very selective during the recruiting process. He elected to sign Sy to fill what will be Henry's vacancy in the post.

Sy will be the fourth player on Tech's roster who is 6-10 or bigger. He averaged 6.5 points and six rebounds per game last season for national power Oak Hill Academy in Mouth of Wilson, Virginia.


"We are excited to add an Oak Hill alum to the Hokie family for the first time in more than 30 years," Williams said in a statement released by Tech's Strategic Communications office. "Khadim has been coached at an elite level since he arrived in the States and fills a need we had in our second class."

"Throughout the two years we have recruited him, he has continued to improve at a consistent rate as a player, and I believe

his ceiling is very high. More importantly, he has the character and work ethic that we want those in our program to be about on and off the floor."

Sy, who moved into the starting lineup this season for Oak Hill, picked the Hokies over Purdue, Georgia Tech and Kansas State. ESPN.com, Scout.com, and Yahoo.com listed him as a three-star recruit. ESPN.com ranked him as the No. 10 prospect in Virginia. He played last summer for Upward Stars AAU team.

"I'm so happy to be a Hokie today," Sy said in a statement released by Tech's Strategic Communications office. "Oak Hill has been my home for three years, and now Blacksburg will be my home for the next four. I can't wait to play for Coach Williams and his staff and compete in the ACC—the best basketball conference in America."

The 2016-17 Tech squad will feature five scholarship seniors—Johnny Hamilton, Devin Wilson, Ty Outlaw, Seth Allen and Zach LeDay—which will leave Williams and his staff with numerous vacancies to fill with the 2016 recruiting class. 



KHADIM SY

Photo courtesy of Rivals.com

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Logan Stevens, who started his diving career as a kid, won a silver medal at the ACC Championships last year and has high expectations for the remainder of this season

by Jimmy Robertson

DIVING IN AT TECH

“It was so scary,” Stevens said. “I had never fallen from that height

before, especially landing on my head. I didn’t know what to expect. It felt like it took forever, but it only took a couple of seconds. It was crazy.” Crazy best describes how he got involved in diving and how he wound up at Virginia Tech, where he has become arguably the top diver in Ron Piemonte’s tradition-rich diving program. Piemonte, who came to Tech 10 years ago, has coached six Hokie divers who have earned medals at the ACC Championships, including Stevens.

That Stevens always wanted to be a diver seems odd. After all, he grew up in Covington, Kentucky, right across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, and kids in Kentucky normally bleed blue. They dream of playing basketball for the Wildcats—pretty much everyone in that state loves the Wildcats. Just ask Stevens’ parents, Steve and Marilyn. Both are University of Kentucky graduates.

But Logan Stevens found a different calling, and it came one day when he and his older brother, Stewart, were bouncing on the diving boards at the local pool. An observant lifeguard spotted them and asked Stewart to come out for the summer league team. The younger Stevens was determined not to be left out.

“I begged my mom to be on the team, too, because I wanted to do everything my brother did,” Stevens said. “So I always thank him for getting me hooked.

“I tried a bunch of sports, ones that every kid tries. But diving, I was just good at it, and it was something I enjoyed doing. There are so many things you can learn from diving. I just excelled at it better than any other sport I tried.”

His first attempts occurred while he attended elementary school. He became quite good, and by the time he reached middle school, he received an invitation from the high school’s coach to come out for the varsity squad – as a sixth grader. He was the only sixth grader on the varsity team.

The rules in Kentucky allow middle school divers to participate on the varsity level provided they have the correct amount of dives and level of difficulty. Stevens and his high school coach worked on that, and he received his first varsity letter – as an 11-year-old.

“I lettered for seven years, so that was kind of cool,” Stevens said. “It was intimidating diving with the high school kids and competing against them. It was more intimidating than awkward. My teammates, though, were great. They didn’t treat me any differently. They tried to encourage me to learn more difficult dives to compete with the high school kids.”

Stevens got real serious about his diving as a seventh grader when he attended a camp at Miami. While there, he met a coach named Mike Grapner, who ran the camp and invited Stevens to join his club team. He received an enthusiastic “yes.”

In the summer following his seventh grade year, Stevens competed in his first USA competition. The results weren’t great, but the top 12 got a medal, and since only 12 competed in the ages 13-14 division, Stevens received a medal.

“That was all that mattered to me,” he said, laughing.

Undeterred, he went on to become a terrific high school diver, and he started attracting attention from college recruiters. The University of Kentucky coaches contacted him, which, of course, pleased his family.

Anxious to do something different, though, he broached with his parents the possibility of going to a different school besides Kentucky. He dropped subtle hints at first before cautiously bringing up the topic in what turned into a serious conversation.

“On my parents’ side, all their siblings and parents went to UK,” he said. “I was the only one in my family who didn’t go. But they were absolutely supportive of me. They told me, ‘Go where you want.’ They still made me look at Kentucky for diving, but Virginia Tech had a much better program.”

Before he found his way to Blacksburg, he took recruiting visits to West Virginia, where Grapner had landed a job, and Florida State. He really enjoyed his visit to Florida State, but his recruitment turned a little weird.

While there, one of Florida State’s assistants inexplicably told Stevens to check out Virginia Tech.

“Florida State was my No. 1 before I came here, and I went on a trip there and the assistant coach there said, ‘Before you finish recruiting, I want you to go to Virginia Tech and check out the campus. Just drive through on your own and check it out,’” Stevens said. “It’s a weird story. I went to his diving camp, too, so we knew each other. I think he knew that he wasn’t going to be there when I got there—he left after my freshman year. I’m not sure why he told me that, but I thank him for that.”

Stevens made the trek to Blacksburg, and in a story that is not uncommon, he fell in love with Virginia Tech’s beautiful campus, high-quality academics and friendly people. The stunning Christiansburg Aquatic Center, home of the school’s swimming and diving programs, also impressed him.

Under Piemonte, Stevens has gotten better each year. His sophomore season, he earned 46 points at the ACC Championships, helping the men’s team to its first ACC title. He finished 10th on the platform, 12th in the 1-meter and 13th in the 3-meter events.

Last season was his best yet. Stevens won a silver medal in the 3-meter event at the ACC Championships and nearly won a bronze in the platform event, coming in fourth. He qualified for his first NCAA Championships.

Now the question is: Can he improve upon last season? Tech divers were the difference in

diving spotlight

the race for the 2014 ACC team championship won by the Hokies, and Stevens hopes to lead a young men’s squad—with just four seniors—to a similar outcome this season. Hopefully, personal acclaim comes with that.

“My expectations are high,” he said. “I want to repeat last year. That would be the ultimate goal, or maybe do better. Maybe break my personal record again. I want to be consistent, not many make any dumb mistakes, and really savor my last year of diving.”

Stevens graduates next May with a degree in geography and minors in both meteorology and communication. He wants to go to graduate school at Tech before embarking on a career in medical geography, which studies the effect of locale and climate on health.

Whatever he ends up doing probably won’t beat the rush of climbing the steps to the top of a 10-meter platform—and then attempting to defy gravity.

“I enjoy platform because you get that thrill of falling 30 or 40 miles per hour from 10 meters,” Stevens admitted. “The three-meter has proven to be my best event. I enjoy the three-meter, but I think I enjoy the platform the most. It’s a constant adrenaline rush.”

It’s a rush he’s now come to love. But winning a gold medal at the ACC Championships ... that would provide a rush never to be equaled in his world.

Continued on page 40



Logan Stevens was part of a diving contingent that earned 267 points at last year’s ACC Championships and helped the Tech men’s swimming and diving team to a third-place finish.

Getting To Know LOGAN STEVENS

Q: It's Friday night after the season, what are you doing?

LS: "Does homework count? Just kidding. I like to hang out with my teammates. When I don't have homework, I like watching TV or doing anything with friends."

Q: What's your favorite TV show or movie?

LS: "Lost, by far. I like the mystery of the whole season. They don't tell you anything that is going on until later in each season. They don't tell you any big thing until the end of the last season. You're always, 'What's happening?'"

"My favorite movie is Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby. Will Ferrell is just hilarious."

Q: What's your favorite food?

LS: "London broil at West End. You can't really go wrong at West End."

Q: What is your pre-dive routine?

LS: "When I'm in a meet and about to do a dive, I'll have my headphones in and replay the dive in slow motion in my head. I really focus on when to do what when I'm in the middle of the air. It took a while to learn how to do that. But that's what I do. *Continued on next page*"

"It's more about staying relaxed. I don't want to get too pumped up because I'll over-do or under-do the dive. I just want to stay focused and visualize the dives I'm doing. That's the only thing I think about at meets. I'll listen to Apple radio at times, and that calms me down, but visualizing is a very important part of getting into meet mode."

Q: If you could trade places with someone for a day, who would it be?


LS: "Ron [Piemonte, Tech's diving coach]. He lives on a beautiful lake [Claytor Lake] with a bunch of water toys."

Q: Why do you have an interest in medical geography?

LS: "I had a medical geography class my sophomore year, and it was one of the best classes I've taken here. We learned a lot about disease transmission and why there are certain diseases in certain areas of the world."

"I'm doing undergrad research with one of my medical geography professors now, and I'm using a lot of GIS [Geographic Information Systems] to look at Lyme disease in this area. I'm figuring out why it's so prevalent and growing in this area. I want to do something in the future with GIS and remote sensing and diseases. I wouldn't mind working for the CDC [Center for Disease Control]."

Q: In 10 years, where do you see yourself?

LS: "Working at maybe the CDC and being a GIS [Geographic Information Systems] analyst or a remote sensing analyst for disease control." 



Once his diving career ends, Logan Stevens plans on pursuing a career in medical geography and studying the effect of locale and climate on the health of people in a specific region.

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CORRAL TALENT DURING FALL SIGNING PERIOD

From the Strategic Communications Office

Thomas signs three in latest softball class

Tech softball coach Scot Thomas inked three prospects to letters-of-intent during the fall signing period—a class that adds versatility and talent. The group includes Taylor Barnes from Scottsburg, Virginia; Taylor Clark from Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania; and Carrie Eberle from Charlotte, North Carolina.

“I think this is a really good class,” Thomas said. “Sometimes, classes ... they kind of complement other classes. They’re not what you would call ‘big impact classes,’ where you would bring in five or six. In this case, we’re bringing in three quality players. They’ll impact in their own way because they’ll bind the classes together and fill in the gaps. It’ll be nice because we have a couple players who could be pitchers or do some other things.

“Overall, it’s a talented class. It’s a group that can compete and make an impact right away given the other classes surrounding them.”

Barnes plays at Halifax High School and earned second-team all-state honors last season. She also earned all-conference and all-region honors. She serves as a utility player and a pitcher, earning all-state honors as a pitcher.

“Taylor Barnes is the lone one out of Virginia right now,” Thomas said. “She’s a utility player, and we’re not sure where she’s going to fit in, but I think she’ll have a big impact. She’s done really well from a pitching standpoint at the 18-and-under level, and we know, athletically, she’s going to get it done.”

Clark plays shortstop for Mechanicsburg Area Senior High School and hit .468 as a junior, leading her team to a second-place finish in its division. She earned first-team all-conference honors for the third consecutive season.

“Taylor Clark is an athletic softball player who can hit the ball, and we’ll see where she fits in defensively, whether that’s middle infield or wherever fits best in our lineup,” Thomas said. “I’m excited about her because I think she has a big upside as an athlete.”

Eberle—whose parents are Virginia Tech graduates—is a pitcher and a first baseman at Charlotte Catholic High School, where she twice has earned all-state honors. As a junior, she won 12 games, striking out 147 in 141 innings. She also hit .543, with four homers

and 21 RBI that season.

“Carrie Eberle is someone we’re looking at as a pitcher,” Thomas said. “Her upside is probably the exciting part of her because she has a nice frame. She’s also able to hit the ball really well, so we’ll see where her bat impacts the lineup. She’ll be a nice piece to put into our lineup and pitching rotation.”

Dresser signs latest crop of talent

Tech wrestling coach Kevin Dresser announced the signing of five prospects to letters-of-intent during the fall signing period—a group that includes two from the state of Virginia.

The class consists of T.J. Allen from Mechanicsville, Virginia; Joey Prata from Richmond, Virginia; Jarrett Degen from Belgrade, Montana; Brent Moore from St. Paris, Ohio; and Kyle Norstrom from Brandon, Florida.

Allen wrestles as a member of the Hanover High School team and helped lead Hanover to the 2014 state championship and a runner-up finish in 2015. He finished second at 182 pounds in 2014 before winning the state championship at 195 pounds this spring. He will wrestle at 174 or 184 pounds for the Hokies.

Prata wrestles at St. Christopher’s School and is a two-time National Prep Champion. He also took first place at the 2013 Greco Nationals in Fargo, North Dakota. He finished fourth at the 2015 Freestyle Nationals, second at the Beast of the East and seventh at the Ironman. He will wrestle at 125 pounds.

Degen wrestles at Belgrade High School and is a three-time Montana high school state champion. He also brings two NHSCA championships to Tech, where he will wrestle at 141 or 149 pounds.

Moore wrestles at Graham High School, where he won the Ohio state championship as a junior. Finishing as the 2014 Flo National Champ, he added a runner-up finish at the Super 32 in 2015. A two-time top-five finisher at the Ironman, Moore will wrestle at 141 pounds.

Kyle Norstrom is the younger brother of current Hokie Kevin Norstrom. He is a four-time FHSAA state champion, and he has two top-five appearances at the Super 32 in 2013 and 2014. Between 2012-2014, he won five different national championships. Norstrom is a two-time member of the FILA

Cadet GR World Team, as well as a 2013 FILA All-American. He will wrestle at 125 or 133 pounds.

Riley inks one to volleyball program



Tech volleyball coach Chris Riley had just two seniors on this past season’s team, so with nearly everyone returning to the program, he only signed one prospect to a letter-of-intent during the fall signing period. Carol Raffety, from Novato, California, will join the Hokies next season.

Raffety is a senior at Marin Catholic High School, where she is an outside hitter for coach Jake Spain. She has received four varsity letters, earning all-league honors each year as well as being named MVP following her junior year. She helped the team to the league championship for the first time in seven years.

Raffety also played club volleyball for Spain on the Absolute Volleyball Club, a team that qualified for the Junior Olympics twice. She was named to the all-tournament team after her squad won the bronze medal in her first appearance.

“Carol Raffety is a really great ball-control player whom we’re looking to make an immediate impact on our team,” Riley said. “We’re hoping she can bring a consistent level of serve-receive and the ability to play on the outside. She’ll be a very good L2 for us at this level and give us the ability to pass half the floor. We’re really looking forward to her consistency coming in.”

Women’s golf program adds three more

The Tech women’s golf program added three more to the fold, as head coach Carol Robertson announced the signings of three prospects to letters-of-intent on Nov. 11. The class includes Kristin Hearp from Roanoke, Virginia; and Jessica and Sarah Spicer, twins from Durham, North Carolina.

“The 2016 signees have us really excited about what they can bring to this budding program,” Robertson said. “We continue to work hard on setting both a solid foundation and culture. Jessica, Kristin and Sarah certainly have the characteristics to raise this team to a higher level on and off the golf course.”

Tech fans are familiar with Hearp, who will become a third generation Hokie. She played on the Poindexter team for Virginia against Maryland for four years and spent three years on the Virginia/Maryland vs. North Carolina/South Carolina team. In 2013, Hearp set the course and tournament record at Ole Monterey Golf Club, shooting a 62 on the first day of the Metro Invitational. She went on to win the Metro Invite in back-to-back years. She was the VSGA Junior girls champion in 2014 and Player of the Year in 2014. She claimed runner-up honors in 2015.

Harper was a two-time captain at Hidden Valley High School, and in 2014, led her team to its first ever state championship. A four-time member of the Roanoke Valley All-Metro golf team, Hearp was named the Timesland Player of the Year in 2015. She has multiple tournament wins as part of her impressive resumé, including the Junior Valentine and Roanoke Valley Women’s Hall of Fame tournaments.

Jessica Spicer, a three-time, first-team member of the North Carolina all-state squad, qualified for the U.S. Girls Junior in both 2013 and 2015. The 2014 Carolinas Junior champion also was named the Carolinas Player of the Year in the same year. She received all-conference honors while competing for her high school earlier this fall.

Sarah Spicer, also a member of the 2015 all-conference team, won the 2015 Durham Men’s High School Invitational Championship and the North Carolina Women’s Amateur in the same year. A three-time, first-team member of the North Carolina all-state squad, she qualified for the 2015 U.S. Girls Junior and advanced to the match play rounds.

Men’s golf program signs three

The Tech men’s golf program, under head coach Jay Hardwick, sign three prospects

to letters-of-intent, including the program’s first recruit from Thailand.

The 2015 recruiting class consists of Tom Crow from Virginia Beach, Virginia; Tanner Owens from Milton, Tennessee; and Sarit Suwannarut from Bangkok, Thailand.

Suwannarut is a member of the Thailand National Team and was the No. 1-ranked amateur in Thailand and Southeast Asia at the end of the 2014 season. In the past two years, he has won 13 times and had eight runner-up finishes. He won the Thailand Amateur Open with scores of 69, 66, 69 and 72. This past summer, he traveled to the United States in an attempt to qualify for the U.S. Junior Amateur. He not only made it through the sectional qualifier, but shot 3-under-par in the stroke play portion of the championship to advance to match play.

“Sarit is one of the most talented players I have ever seen at this young age,” Hardwick said. “He has good size, is very athletic, and has prodigious length—all of which bode well for his future as a top collegiate player.”

Crow is a member of the National Honor Society at Cape Henry Collegiate School and was captain of his high school team the past two seasons. The 2014 Virginia State Junior champion was also the medalist in the 2014 Virginia State Junior Match Play

Continued on page 44

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TECH'S OLYMPIC SPORTS PROGRAMS *Continued from page 43*

Championship and a finalist in that same event this past summer. He finished third at the 2015 Sea Pines Junior Heritage and was a member of the Virginia team at both the Virginias/Carolinas Junior team matches and the Mid-Atlantic Junior Invitational in 2014 and 2015.

"Tom is not only a fine player, but also is extremely well liked by the other junior players in the state," Hardwick said. "He has a very outgoing personality that will be a real plus for team chemistry when he joins our program."

Owens is also a two-year captain of his team. He is the first player in Blackman High School history to advance to the state finals four times and finished in the top 10 three straight years. He owns the school's top two scoring marks, with rounds of 64 and 65, and has been the team MVP all four years.

In 2014, he won the prestigious Future Masters in Dothan, Alabama, with scores of 66, 69 and 69. He qualified for (and advanced to) match play at the U.S. Junior Amateur, where he defeated the No. 1-ranked junior in the world in the first round. He was medalist at the 2014 Tennessee PGA Junior qualifier (68 and 67) and advanced to the National PGA Junior. He finished second in the Tennessee Junior State Amateur and fifth in the Tennessee State Amateur, as well as posting several top-10 finishes in other national events. Following the summer of 2014, he was ranked the No. 1 player in the 2016 Class for Tennessee and fourth overall in the state.

"Tanner has achieved success at every level and winning is nothing new to him," Hardwick said. "He is very consistent, has a tour-quality short game, and should have a tremendous career at Virginia Tech."

Lacrosse program to bring in six



PAYTON BEACH

Tech lacrosse coach Megan Burkner went all over the Mid-Atlantic region to find players, signing six prospects to letters-of-intent — with five coming from different states and one coming from Washington, D.C.

"I'm excited to welcome this 2016 class to the Hokie family," Burkner said. "This is a strong group of girls who bring a high level of athleticism and drive to their play and will make an immediate impact next fall."

Mailynn Steppe is the only prospect from Virginia. The Gordonsville native plays as a defender for St. Anne's-Belfield. She also played club lacrosse for the Storm Elite 2016 under coach Christina D'Angelo.

In addition, Steppe was a standout basketball player at St. Anne's under Phil Stinnie, earning first-team all-state honors. Prior to St. Anne's, she lettered in lacrosse and basketball as a freshman at Godwin High School.

Sydney Gagnon plays for The Episcopal Academy in Downingtown, Pennsylvania. A team captain, the goalie is a three-year letter winner for coach Josie Ferri.


Gagnon was named the 2015 EA Defensive Player of the Year. Also for her efforts, she was named to the 2015 All-Main Line second team and the All-INTER-AC second team, and she helped lead her team to a runner-up performance at the 2015 PAISAA Pennsylvania Championship. She played club lacrosse for the Brandywine Majors under coach ChristyAnn Morello, and the team won the 2015 IWLC Champions Cup and the 2015 Lax Inception.

Jenna Martinelli, a defender, hails from Moorestown, New Jersey. She played at Moorestown High School and is a two-time letter winner for coach Deanna Knobloch. She played club lacrosse for South Jersey Select Lacrosse under coach KC Knobloch. Martinelli's brother, Alex, plays lacrosse at the University of Delaware, and her sister, Katrina, played lacrosse at Rutgers University.

Sarah Vanadia is a native of Medina, Ohio, where she plays at Medina Senior High School for coach Nikki Boltja. She scored more than 50 goals as a junior last season and earned first-team all-state Division I honors for the second straight season.

A three-time letter winner, Vanadia has been named a U.S. Lacrosse All-American. She has helped lead her team to two OLSA Division I state semifinal finishes and a OSLA Division I state runner-up finish.

Payton Beach joins the Hokies from Grasonville, Maryland, and plays at Kent Island High School, where she is a four-year letter winner for coach Bev Altig. She has been named All-Bayside Conference every season, and in her freshman season, helped the team to a district championship. She played club lacrosse for Maryland United Lacrosse Club under Elizabeth Eshlemen.

Mary Clare McCarthy signs with Tech out of Washington, D.C., where she plays at the Connelly School of the Holy Child under coach Sarah Aschebach. She is a four-year letter winner as a midfielder. She played club lacrosse for Capital Lacrosse Club for coach Christine Rogers. 



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