

inside

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HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

ONE LAST WIN

Retiring coach
Frank Beamer's 29-year tenure at Tech
comes to an end with a victory over
Tulsa in the Independence Bowl



WHAT'S INSIDE:

Vanessa Panousis is living life beyond the arc for the Tech women's hoops squad

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AN EXPLOSIVE FINALE FOR FRANK BEAMER

Frank Beamer's final game as Virginia Tech's head coach started with fireworks, as he jogged onto the field for a final time. Those continued throughout the Independence Bowl in Shreveport, Louisiana, with the Hokies outscoring Tulsa 55-52 to send Beamer out with one final victory.

Beamer finished his career with 280 coaching victories, the final of which came at the same stadium where he and the Hokies started their current streak of 23 consecutive bowl games. He departs with 238 coaching victories at Tech.

The win marked the 11th bowl win for Beamer, who won three of his final four bowl games. As a team, the Hokies won four of their final five games and finished 7-6 on the season, their 23rd straight winning season.

"I've got a lot to look forward to," Beamer said after the game. "My grandkids, I've got a wonderful wife—I'm not sure she's all for it, but we're going to spend a lot of time together now [laughing]—and then I've got some things that I'm interested in doing in the future. The next challenge, I look forward to it."



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Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...

A: The classic question we get so often. The "Spirit Yell," born in 1896, has evolved into a universal term for members of Hokie Nation. Our alumni, students, families and fans across the globe share in this spirit and loyalty, sticking together through good times and bad.

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because ...

A: We are recognized by others as a proud, cohesive group who shares a sense of pride and loyalty to Virginia Tech.

Q: What are your best memories of Virginia Tech athletics?

A: So many moments in the past 33 years. From the Kinzer kick in the 1986 Peach Bowl to the breakout Sugar Bowl win in 1995 to the national championship run in 1999, the football program has made many lasting memories for our family.

There are also fond memories of camping out to see [Dell] Curry and the boys battle Memphis State and Louisville in the mid-1980s. I was fortunate to see the wins vs. No. 1-ranked UNC in 2007 and No. 1-ranked Duke in 2011—both father/son experiences we will never forget.

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

A: To us, supporting the student-athletes at Virginia Tech felt like an obligation. As newly married, recent graduates, we remember our first donation of \$25 to the Hokie Club.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.

A: Football Saturday, clear blue skies, fall foliage and a win vs. an ACC opponent.

Q: Do you have any tailgating traditions?

A: While the parking locations have varied both at home and on the road over

the years, tradition is ensuring our family is together to share the experiences.

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

A: Supporting the athletics programs not only provides support to the student-athletes, but also we help build the powerful brand that is Virginia Tech!

Q: My favorite Virginia Tech sports are ...

A: Football, basketball and baseball, though we follow all of the programs representing Virginia Tech.

Q: Our all-time favorite Virginia Tech football players are ...

A: Bruce Smith, Antone Exum, Bryan Randall and Danny Coale.

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

A: Dell Curry.

DONOR IMPACT FALL 2015

This past fall, Virginia Tech student-athletes performed well on the field, off the field and in the community. Student-athletes from every single team participated in at least one outreach event, amassing more than 1,200 hours combined worth of community service. On the field and on the court, 21 student-athletes received postseason honors for their performances.

As donors to Virginia Tech athletics, your contributions are helping our student-athletes achieve success. Here is a list of those who earned honors this past fall:



◀ MEN'S SOCCER

Photo: Ricardo John (NSCAA All-South Region third team)
Other honored: Merlin Baus (VaSID All-State second team)

FOOTBALL ▼

Photo: Isaiah Ford (All-ACC first team, ACSMA and coaches)
Others honored: Adonis Alexander (Freshman All-American second team, Pro Football Focus); Ken Ekanem (All-ACC third team, Phil Steele); Wade Hansen (All-ACC first team, Pro Football Focus); Bucky Hodges (All-ACC second team, coaches); Luther Maddy (All-ACC first team, ACSMA); Corey Marshall (All-ACC honorable mention, coaches and ACSMA); Travon McMillian (All-ACC third team, ACSMA); Dadi Nicolas (All-ACC third team, coaches); Joey Slye (All-ACC second team, Pro Football Focus); Wyatt Teller (All-ACC second team, Pro Football Focus)



VOLLEYBALL ▲

Photo: Ashley Battle (VaSID second team)
Others honored: Lindsey Owens (VaSID first team, All-ACC second team); Jaila Tolbert (ACC All-Freshman Team)



▲ CROSS COUNTRY

Photo: Thomas Curtin (All-American, ACC champion)
Other honored: Stuart Robertson (All-Southeast Region)

WOMEN'S SOCCER ▼

Photo: Ashley Meier (All-ACC first team, NSCAA All-Southeast Region first team, VaSID first team)
Others honored: Jordan Coburn (All-ACC third team, NSCAA All-Southeast Region third team); Murielle Tiernan (All-ACC first team, NSCAA All-America third team, NSCAA All-Southeast Region first team, VaSID first team)



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Ford named team MVP

The Virginia Tech football staff announced the Hokies’ team awards for the 2015 season, and receiver Isaiah Ford was named the team’s most valuable player as voted on by his teammates. Ford also received the award for outstanding offensive receiver after a season in which he set school records for receptions (75), touchdown receptions (11) and receiving yardage (1,164). He became the first Tech receiver ever to catch more than 1,000 yards worth of passes and capped his season with a 12-catch, 227-yard performance in the Hokies’ 55-52 win over Tulsa in the Independence Bowl.

- Other award winners as voted on by the team included:
- Outstanding Defensive Lineman** – Luther Maddy
 - Outstanding Defensive Linebacker** – Andrew Motuapuaka
 - Outstanding Defensive Back** – Chuck Clark
 - Outstanding Offensive Lineman** – Wyatt Teller
 - Outstanding Offensive Receiver** – Isaiah Ford
 - Outstanding Offensive Back** – Travon McMillian
 - Outstanding Specialists** – A.J. Hughes and Joey Slye

The coaches handed out eight awards, which are named in honor of those who have represented the football program or the university in distinguished fashion. Here is the list of winners:

John William Schneider Award (given in memory of former player William Schneider, who was killed in an automobile crash. It goes to a player who excels in athletics, academics and leadership.) – Ken Ekanem.

Paul Torgersen Award (given in honor of late Tech President Paul Torgersen, who served the university with distinction for three decades in a variety of capacities. The award goes to a player who shows a commitment to hard work and great effort every time he takes the field.) – Michael Brewer.

Williams-Moss Award (named in honor of John E. Williams, a former Dean of the College, and Joseph S. Moss, a former player and coach at Tech. The award goes to the player who demonstrates the highest quality of leadership and character.) – Ryan Malleck.

Paul Frederick Cobb Award (this award is given in memory of former Tech player Freddie Cobb, who was awarded the Navy Cross for heroism in Vietnam. It goes to the most spirited player.) – Sam Rogers.

Lawrence R. White Award (this award is given in honor of the late Lawrence White, a former Tech linebacker who excelled in the weight room and was a positive role model for all Tech football players. It is given to the team’s most outstanding strength and conditioning athlete.) – Augie Conte.

Wes Worsham Award (named for longtime Tech supporter Wes Worsham, this award is given to a player who exceeds expectations and surprises everyone with his performance.) – Wade Hansen.

Edward G. Ferrell Award (this award is given in honor of the late Eddie Ferrell, whose hard work, sense of humor, devotion and unselfishness touched thousands of athletes during his 28-year career as a trainer at Tech. It is given to the player/players for hard work and unselfishness.) – Donovan Riley and Ronny Vandyke.

Outstanding Senior Award – Luther Maddy

The players on the 2015 squad also voted on the choosing of four players who will go down as the permanent team captains for this season. Those four players are Maddy, Malleck, Brewer and J.C. Coleman.

The coaching staff also selected letter winners for the 2015 season. That group includes the following players:

Adonis Alexander	Tremaine Edmunds	Dimitri Knowles	Steven Peoples
Jahque Alleyne	Trey Edmunds	Carson Lydon	Cam Phillips
Kevin Asante	Ken Ekanem	Luther Maddy	Darius Redman
Woody Baron	Brandon Facyson	Ryan Malleck	Mook Reynolds
Michael Brainard	Isaiah Ford	Corey Marshall	Donovan Riley
Michael Brewer	Desmond Frye	Jonathan	Sam Rogers
Drew Burns	Kendall Fuller	McLaughlin	Anthony Shegog
Joel Caleb	Johnathan Galante	Travon McMillian	Joey Slye
Chuck Clark	Eric Gallo	Charley Meyer	Alston Smith
Deon Clarke	Laird Gardner	Vinny Mihota	Greg Stroman
Kalvin Cline	Der’Woun Greene	Jamieon Moss	Colton Taylor
J.C. Coleman	Wade Hansen	Brenden Motley	Wyatt Teller
Augie Conte	Jeremy Haynes	Andrew	Ronny Vandyke
Eddie D’Antuono	Bucky Hodges	Motuapuaka	Jack Willenbrock
Seth Dooley	Sean Huelskamp	Dadi Nicolas	Nigel Williams
Josh Eberly	A.J. Hughes	Yosuah Nijman	Trent Young
Terrell Edmunds	Greg Jones	Parker Osterloh	

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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Looking ahead to 2016, Hokies with many parts returning, but need to find answer at quarterback

The clock has struck midnight, and the confetti has fallen. The fireworks have burst, and the celebration now complete. Toasts have been given, and champagne consumed.

Those phrases apply to virtually any New Year's Eve party, but they also apply to the evening of Dec. 26 when Hokie Nation held its own gala, reveling in style following a wild 55-52 Independence Bowl victory over Tulsa that sent beloved coach Frank Beamer out a winner.

Beamer retired with 280 victories, 238 of which came at Tech. He departed with 29 years of mostly wonderful memories while in Blacksburg.

The turn of the calendar marked the ushering in of a new year and new leader. Justin Fuente probably has a list of resolutions, as he embarks on his new job.

Finding a quarterback might be at the top of that list.

Make no mistake, football is a quarterback's game. Quarterbacks led Clemson, Michigan State and Oklahoma to college football's playoff. Ohio State, Mississippi State, Navy and Cal all rolled to bowl wins because of its quarterbacks. The quarterback position is why Houston won its bowl—and Florida State did not.

Michael Brewer departs Virginia Tech after throwing for 4,395 yards and 31 touchdowns in 21 games. No one will confuse Brewer with Michael Vick, Bryan Randall or Tyrod Taylor, but he averaged nearly 210 yards passing per game in his career—the most ever by a Tech quarterback.

So who replaces him? Tech fans got a snapshot of Brenden Motley when Motley started six games for an injured Brewer. He threw for 1,155 yards and 11 touchdowns, with seven interceptions. The Hokies went 3-3 in those starts.

Motley could be a good fit in more of a spread style attack, which Fuente and new offensive coordinator Brad Cornelsen tend to favor. He finished third on the team in rushing with 224 yards despite basically not playing in the final five games.

The other returning quarterback is Dwayne Lawson, who played sparingly in five games. Lawson possesses a lot of physical skills and potential.

Cornelsen, whose hiring became official Dec. 31, already has watched games from this past season just to get an initial evaluation.

"I see some talent," he said. "I see some guys that can make plays. I see a good core, a good group of guys that have played a lot and made a lot of plays."

"Off the cuff, we're going to have to develop some depth. There are several guys coming in at mid-term that are going to be critical to bring along. But I'm certainly excited about what I've seen so far."

In a pre-Christmas interview, Fuente admitted the Hokies needed depth at quarterback when evaluating the situation. He and his staff are bringing in two when classes start Jan. 19—6-foot-4, 220-pound junior college transfer Jérod Evans from Mansfield, Texas and Josh Jackson, a 6-1, 200-pounder from Ann Arbor, Michigan who

had committed to the previous staff.

Evans threw for more than 3,000 yards this past season, with 38 touchdowns and three interceptions in eight games for Trinity Valley Community College in Athens, Texas. Though not as tall, Jackson threw for 1,780 yards and 20 touchdowns his senior season at Saline High, and he also rushed for nearly 500 yards.

Cornelsen, though, isn't necessarily concerned with a quarterback's height. Other attributes are just as important, if not more so.

"You need a guy that's a competitor," he said. "You need a guy that's smart, that can make good decisions. That position on the field... the ball is in his hands every down. He's protecting the ball and making decisions."

"There are so many things that go into the position. You have to have a guy that's tough and competitive. When you start getting into the details of how tall or what style they can do, that's up for debate. You try to find the best guy you can find at the end of the day."

Spring practice starts in two months, and Fuente and his staff are bringing in eight new players to enroll when classes start, including two junior college transfers. Of course, all of Tech's players are new players to Fuente.

But he has some tools to work with—seven starters return on defense and eight on offense. In all, players with eligibility remaining scored 379 of the 403 points scored this past season.

He and Cornelsen just need to find which quarterback can lead this group. It's a tall task—and next New Year's Eve celebration probably hinges on it. **VT**



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behind the mic | with Jon Laaser

A New Year — and a new gamble

First and foremost Hokies, Happy New Year! I find that the dawning of a new year lends itself to self-reflection, and in turn, an attempt at self-improvement. These efforts at betterment oftentimes are listed as resolutions. Most will at least make an attempt, whether we list these life-changing ultimatums internally or post them for the world to see on social media. I'm not a big fan of resolutions, which is not to say I am not a fan of getting better, working harder, striving for more.

It is relatively easy to see how resolutions can become a negative, and rather than inspire, add to cyclical sameness. Many will resolve to eat better, work out more, or kick a long-standing vice. The issue I have with this is that most of these resolutions require other changes within ourselves that we haven't yet made. We may have an emotional attachment to food, or a vice. We may be too overrun with a career or family to spend two hours a day at the gym. When we inevitably have that first bite of a fast-food cheeseburger, miss a workout, or indulge in our vice of choice, we will feel as though as we have failed. Worse, that we are incapable of change. At that point, we become a Chicago Cubs fan and proclaim, "Wait 'til next year!" And the cycle continues.

Those who are successful in their new year's endeavors oftentimes look at them differently. I choose to look at a new year as an opportunity to establish new goals. If, throughout the year, a goal becomes unobtainable, I can adapt to a new or adjusted goal.

Two years ago, I was feeling stuck in life. I continued to feel that my work in baseball and other areas were well respected, but I didn't seem to be able to take the next step professionally or personally. I was surrounded by people whom I appreciated, but oftentimes I didn't feel challenged or pushed by accomplishing the same goals each season. I was winning the same race again and again, as I liked to put it, and it was eating me up.

Filled with holiday spirit and probably some champagne, I challenged myself on New Year's Eve to gamble on myself. It was a vague gauntlet and a frightening one. I had gambled on myself early in my career, and it had been rough. I knew the loneliness of moving across the country to climb another half rung on the ladder. And then, just when I got comfortable, doing it again the very next year. I knew the feeling of being broke and sometimes even hungry. But in those times, I also had an appetite for gaining respect, and

I enjoyed the camaraderie of others on their journey for similar results. No, I didn't know how I would gamble on myself now, but I knew I needed those feelings back.

The first step was the recognition that a long-standing relationship wasn't going to end in harmony. The end was crushing

A year and a half ago, Virginia Tech men's basketball coach Buzz Williams took a gamble that he and his staff could turn around the Hokies' fortunes, and they're on their way toward doing that.



and still hurts sometimes. The second was acknowledging that, to move forward, I needed to take a step back from a security standpoint. I opted to leave my full-time position with the Richmond Flying Squirrels to join a fledgling television network on a freelance basis. They endured setbacks in their development, and so did my wallet. The low point was getting my debit card declined at Chipotle. I imagine that has happened to a student or two.

Steadily, the pieces started to fall into place, but I couldn't have known the chips would fall in a way that would lead to Blacksburg. Without having handled it terribly in a prior opportunity, I probably wouldn't have had the patience to be the "new guy." I started to see the necessity for my emotional struggles when Frank Beamer retired, and I became more psychologist than play-by-play announcer.

I now know that I wouldn't change any of the experiences, friendships, challenges and setbacks for anything. I wouldn't be capable of eyeing 2016 the way I do without them. If I had to do it over again, I would place the same bet on myself.

I am not asking you to dramatically change your life. Many reading this laid down their bets years ago and have enjoyed wonderful lives as Hokies. Whether they have been teachers, mentors, coaches, athletes, students, fans, friends or all of the preceding, their risks

have led to great reward and fulfillment.

However, I did want to highlight a couple of men who are in the midst of their own gambles, as I am in the midst of mine. Justin Fuente is gambling on himself. You are not wrong to envy his position or his opportunity, but it comes with tremendous pressure for him and his family. The pressure is positive, as it is rooted in the enormous number of people invested in the results of his efforts. But it is pressure nonetheless. He is taking a step forward, a big one, and will be challenged in ways he probably can't entirely imagine. He wouldn't be here if he didn't believe that he would succeed. I applaud people who are willing to take on incredible risk to find their ultimate reward.

The same applies to Buzz Williams. All situations are different, but make no mistake—he took a gamble on himself to achieve a dream of leading a group of young men in the ACC. In a few short months, I have watched he and his basketball family recalibrate their efforts in response to injuries and unforeseen setbacks. I greatly enjoy chronicling their efforts.

This leads back to goals for this year, which will involve both of those coaches. Andrew Allegretta and I became fond of saying "survive and advance" through the first few weeks of my time here. More fitting would


have been "learn and advance." I am proud of our accomplishments this year, particularly with some of the sharp turns that were taken.

I also know that we have so much left to accomplish. I am hopeful we will take the confidence and knowledge from 2015 forward, as we strive to achieve some of it in 2016.

In year one, we introduced some new initiatives such as the venue and format for "Tech Talk Live," a new studio for "Virginia Tech Sports Today," and this very column.

As I continue to find my fit within the community, I endeavor to expand everything. We will take chances in our coverage of Justin Fuente's program. We will add an engineer for more crisp sound. We may tinker with off-site pregame elements. I look forward to re-imagining features for television that include new coaches, student-athletes and administrators. This is just the tip of the iceberg. We will probably need to buy some stuff. Mike Burnop and I may have a bake sale, so we'll have to learn how to bake.

I know we will not always find the mark on the first try, but I also know we will adjust and try it differently. Simply put, the goal will be to be bigger and better. I look forward to your feedback on these efforts, and I also look forward to hearing about your adventures!

Oh, and I should probably eat better, too! Ante up! 



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Tech student-athletes create and implement own community service initiatives

by Reyna Gilbert-Lowry

The Office of Student-Athlete Development coordinates outreach opportunities for Virginia Tech's more than 570 student-athletes. Natalie Forbes, coordinator of student-athlete development, facilitates these endeavors by serving as the liaison between the campus, local community and Hokie student-athletes. She organizes outreach initiatives for Hokie student-athletes on a regular basis, but this past semester, two upperclassmen student-athletes approached her about creating initiatives of their own. Both were enrolled in an advanced leadership class taught by Wanda Smith, associate professor of management in the Pamplin College of Business, and were given an assignment in which they were instructed to make a difference in someone's life through a leadership activity.

Jordan Coburn, a senior defender on the Hokie women's soccer team, knew immediately what she wanted to do for her "make a difference" project. Passionate about both soccer and working with children, Coburn thought back to the summer of 2013 when she traveled to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic with a group of student-athletes through the LDRS 1016 Global Citizen Leadership Course. During their time in Punta Cana, she and her classmates served as hosts for a sports camp for children in an underdeveloped region of

the country. She wanted to create a similar experience and set out to create the Hokie Soccer Leadership Academy.

"My mission behind the event was to teach the children the fundamentals of soccer, while educating them on how to become better leaders in their community," Coburn said.

Many of the outreach initiatives student-athletes engage in are located in Blacksburg because of their proximity to Virginia Tech. Forbes wanted to be able to provide children outside of the Blacksburg area with the opportunity to interact with Virginia Tech student-athletes, so she reached out to Kelly Sutphin, the physical education teacher at Eastern Montgomery Elementary School. Sutphin assisted with the event by securing the location and distributing fliers and permission forms to raise awareness to students at Eastern Montgomery. On Nov. 10, Coburn and a team of Hokie student-athlete volunteers brought the Hokie Soccer Leadership Academy to Elliston, Virginia.

"Planning and implementing this took a lot of hard work from a lot of people, but I wouldn't have traded it for the world," Coburn said. "As student-athletes, it's important that we set the example for others and give back to the community in any way possible."

The hard work certainly paid off, and Coburn looks forward to doing a similar event in the spring.

Trey Edmunds, a redshirt junior tailback on the football team, wanted to create a "field day" experience at a local Boys and Girls Club mainly because he spent a lot of time after school at his local Boys and Girls Club in Danville, Virginia and wanted to find a way to give back. Forbes contacted Megan Bishop with the Boys and Girls Club of Southwest Virginia. The organization sponsors after-

student-athlete development

school programs in Roanoke, Shawsville and Christiansburg.


Bishop jumped at the idea to work with Edmunds, and together, they determined that the location at Christiansburg Middle School would work best for Edmunds' event. They worked together to get 25 other Hokie student-athletes from a variety of sports to volunteer.

"A lot of times, people come up with these great ideas, but never act upon them," Edmunds said. "That was surely the toughest part of this project, because once I started reaching out to people and planning, it became fun and second nature."

The event was held Nov. 13, and Edmunds organized volunteers and Boys and Girls Club members for each activity, including the student-athletes who spoke to the children about leadership and making good choices.

"When you have partners and teammates who are just as dedicated as you are, it makes your job 100 times easier. Having a good team and gathering people with positive attitudes is the true reason this project was successful," Edmunds said.

"It was an incredible experience to be able to work alongside Jordan and Trey, as they planned and executed these outreach events," Forbes said. "Watching them both take the initiative from every aspect of planning was extremely rewarding. I am beyond proud of the leadership they demonstrated throughout the entire process."

This past semester, Hokie student-athletes have volunteered more than 1,200 hours in the community. At this rate, this number will double by the end of the spring semester. Virginia Tech student-athletes are dedicated to making a positive impact in the community and continue to embody the spirit of *Ut Prosim* ("That I May Serve"). 

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The Hokies hold off Tulsa 55-52 in a wild Independence Bowl to send retiring head coach Frank Beamer out with a win in his final game by Jimmy Robertson

As retirement parties go, this one was a rather long and wild affair.

Frank Beamer will be sure to get the traditional stodgy gifts befitting of one's final days at the workplace, but the day after Christmas, his football team sent him out in grand fashion, handing him a crazy 55-52 victory over Tulsa in a nearly four-hour long, record-setting Independence Bowl extravaganza in Shreveport, Louisiana.

The game—and the win—marked the final one for Beamer, who announced in early November that he planned to retire at this season's conclusion after 29 years as the Hokies' head coach. His players doused him with water as the final seconds of this exhausting party reached its conclusion, one final celebratory act for a man who has meant so much to Virginia Tech and to those passionate about the school.

"The first time we came to Shreveport, I left here a happy guy," an elated Beamer said afterward. "The last time I come to Shreveport, I leave here a happy guy. I'm going to come back to Shreveport just for the hell of it. I like it down here."

The win marked the 11th bowl win for Beamer, who won three of his final four bowl games. The victory—Tech's fourth in the final five games of this season—enabled the Hokies to extend their streak of winning seasons to 23 straight. They finished 7-6 overall.

Beamer finished his career with 280 coaching victories, the final of which came at the same stadium where he and the Hokies started their current streak of 23 straight bowls. He departs with 238 coaching victories at Tech.

"For what he's meant to this university and to this program and to so many people—obviously the football program and the athletic department, but the community and the state and the imprint he's put on college football ... I'm just blessed to have been a big part of it," Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster said. "It's hard to put into words."

"The only thing he hasn't done is win a national championship. If that keeps you from being one of the best in the country, then so be it. He's one of the best, if not the best, in the business just as far as how he's done things and treated people. I know I couldn't have worked for a better guy."

Primarily behind quarterback Michael Brewer and receiver Isaiah Ford, the Hokies set a school record for points in a bowl game and total offense in a bowl game (598 yards), among the many records set in what turned out to be the highest-scoring Independence Bowl in history. Ford set individual school records for receptions in a bowl game (12) and receiving yards in a bowl game (227). One of his catches was a 75-yarder for a touchdown, which marked the longest reception of his career and the longest pass completion of Brewer's career.

Perhaps fittingly, this bizarre game was decided by a defensive play. After all, Beamer learned his craft from defensive-minded Jerry Claiborne as a player and then began his coaching career as an assistant on defense under Bobby Ross at The Citadel.

Tulsa (6-7) cut what had been a 52-31 Tech lead to 55-52 on a 36-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Dane Evans to receiver Keyarris Garrett with 3:47 remaining. The Hokies picked up a first down on their ensuing drive, but ultimately were forced to punt, and the Golden Hurricane took over at the Tulsa 20 with two minutes left—more than ample time to get into scoring position.

Tulsa drove to its 46, but on second-and-10, Tech's Luther Maddy sacked Evans for a six-yard loss to the 40. An incomplete pass on third down left the Golden Hurricane facing fourth-and-16.

Forced to go for it, Evans went back to pass. But Tech defensive end Dadi Nicolas sacked him with 1:17 remaining, sealing the game for the Hokies.

"I just wanted to finish it strong with my teammates, my brothers," said Nicolas, who entered the game with just one sack on the season. "We didn't want to take an 'L'—that was not an option for us. We kept sticking together the whole time, and God willing, He gave me the power, the strength and the skills

to be able to finish that game.

"After I got the sack, it was just a great feeling. I haven't felt that feeling—a clean sack like that—in a while. I really wanted one. It was a great feeling. I looked up, and all I saw were my teammates running to me on the field. That was just a great experience. That was the perfect play just to remember my whole college career."

"We needed a big play," Beamer admitted. "If you give that kid [Evans] time to throw, with those receivers, there are going to be a lot of completions, which they had. The best way to combat that is to get him sacked or get people around him. That's what we did at the end to win the football game."

The Hokies trailed 7-0 and 14-7 early in the game, as the two teams went back and forth early and often in the first five minutes. But Tech tied the game on a 75-yard touchdown pass from Brewer to Ford and grabbed a 17-14 lead on a 27-yard field goal by Joey Slye with 9:53 left in the quarter.

That gave the Hokies a lead they would not relinquish, though Tulsa made it close late in the game. Sam Rogers' 14-yard touchdown run gave Tech a 24-14 lead at the end of the first quarter—the most points scored by a Tech team in a quarter of a bowl game.

A Bucky Hodges touchdown run, a Travon McMillian touchdown run and Greg Stroman's 67-yard punt return for a touchdown enabled Tech to take a 45-21 lead in the second quarter.

"It took me back to my Big 12 days," said Brewer, who transferred to Virginia Tech from Texas Tech in June of 2014. "It was quite a shootout. We didn't quite expect it to turn into a shootout like that. There have been games this year and last year and all throughout the years at Virginia Tech where the defense has had to step up and win football games. Every now and then, the offense has got to score 55 points and get the win."

But each time the Hokies started to pull away, Tulsa found away to answer. In addition to leading by 24 points in the second quarter, Tech led by 21 points after Trey Edmunds' 1-yard touchdown run with 7:38 left in the third quarter.

But Evans brought the Golden Hurricane back. The Hokies mixed and matched in the secondary all season after All-America cornerback Kendall Fuller went out with his knee injury, and Donovan Riley's broken collarbone early in the Independence Bowl forced even more adjustments—and Tulsa took advantage.

Evans scored on a third-quarter run and then threw two fourth-quarter touchdown passes—part of a 374-yard, three-touchdown passing day. Tulsa finished with 563 yards.


"We had guys all over the place," Foster said. "We had Chuck Clark playing corner. We had Donovan Riley playing safety and then he breaks his collarbone. We're trying to make adjustments, and it goes back to what it was earlier in the year. I told Torrian [Gray, Tech's secondary coach] that we've got to go back [this spring] and get these guys in spots. Let's go back and be sound fundamentally and then go do what we do."

In the end, Tulsa couldn't get into field goal position on its final drive, as Tech's defense—like it did against Virginia—made a stand.

Brewer completed 23 of 37 for 344 yards, with a touchdown and an interception for the Hokies. McMillian rushed for 82 yards on 16 carries and scored two touchdowns to lead the Hokies' rushing attack.

Ford was named offensive MVP of the bowl game. He also became the first Tech receiver in school history to go over 1,000 yards in a season.

In his final postgame news conference, Beamer deflected the questions about him and instead heaped the praise on the players.

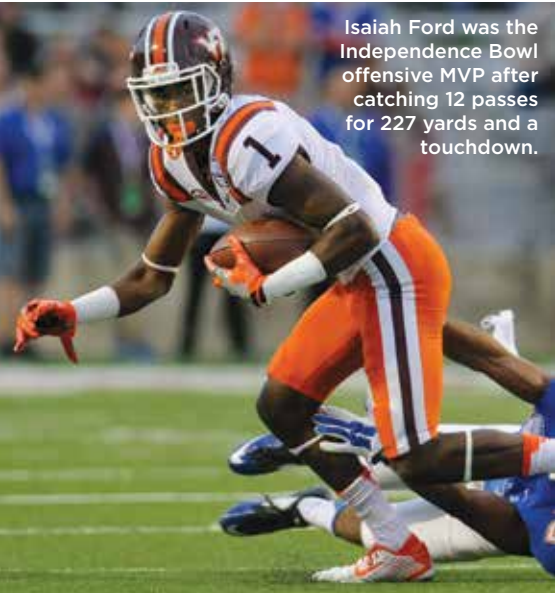
"It gets down to people," he said. "These are two great players for us [Brewer and Ford], but [also] two great people. Isaiah's mom sent me the nicest letter this week. That's what it is really all about. That's what makes this game so good. That's why I know I've been fortunate to stay around guys like this that long. That's my final word." 



RECORD-SETTING BOWL FOR HOKIES

Virginia Tech set numerous school bowl game records during its 55-52 win over Tulsa in the Independence Bowl, including the following:

CATEGORY	RECORD	PREVIOUS RECORD
First downs	30	29 (1986 Peach Bowl)
Total offense	598 yards	551 yards (2003 Insight Bowl)
Points scored	55	49 (2003 Insight Bowl)
Points in a quarter	24 (first quarter)	22 (fourth quarter, 2006 Gator)
Points in a first half	45	28 (1993 Independence Bowl)
Longest TD drive	81 yards	80 (done 12 times)
Most receptions by a player	12	8 (Ernest Wilford, 2003 Insight Bowl; Danny Coale, 2012 Sugar Bowl)
Most receiving yards by a player	227	158 (André Davis, 2002 Gator Bowl)
Punt return yards by a player	132	88 (Ike Charlton, 2000 Sugar Bowl)
Rushing touchdowns (tied)	5	5 (2001 Gator Bowl)



Isaiah Ford was the Independence Bowl offensive MVP after catching 12 passes for 227 yards and a touchdown.

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COMMEMORATING THE CAREER OF FRANK BEAMER

A look back at the 29-year tenure of Virginia Tech's all-time winningest coach



FRANK BEAMER INTRODUCTORY NEWS CONFERENCE

Virginia Tech fans are still beaming about their New Peach Bowl victory over N.C. State. But if such postseason success is to continue, it will be up to Frank Beamer.

Two days before Christmas, Beamer, 40, was named Tech's successor to head football coach Bill Dooley. And from the look of his credentials, it could be a prized gift for the Hokies.

—Chris Colston, *Hokie Huddler*,
Jan. 6, 1987 issue

FRANK BEAMER'S FIRST PRACTICE

"The players have treated me fairly. I'm a big person on trust, and I think you build relationships over time and not just on a few practices. I hope our relationship will grow tighter and tighter as time goes on."

—Frank Beamer, *Hokie Huddler*,
April 21, 1987 issue



ACCEPTANCE OF THE 1993 INDEPENDENCE BOWL INVITATION

The Hokies thrashed the Orangemen 45-24 before a season-high crowd of 44,722 at Lane Stadium/Worsham Field. The win also gave Frank Beamer his most wins—seven—as head coach at his alma mater.

More importantly, Independence Bowl Chairman Mike McCarthy extended the Hokies an invitation to play in Shreveport on Dec. 31. The team accepted in a meeting held at 4:30 p.m.

—Chris Colston, *Hokie Huddler*,
Nov. 15, 1993 issue

1995 SUGAR BOWL VICTORY OVER TEXAS

The Hokies closed their finest season in their 103-year football history with an improbable 10-game winning streak that came on the heels of an ugly 0-2 start. Despite that streak and a co-BIG EAST championship, many questioned whether Tech, 2-8-1 just four years ago, belonged in a major bowl. There should be no questions after Sunday's dominant defensive performance.

—David Teel, *The Daily Press*,
Jan. 1, 1996

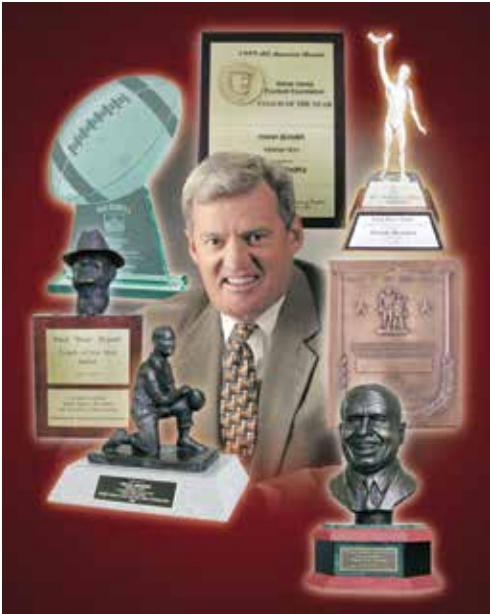


ESPN'S GAMEDAY VISITS FOR THE FIRST TIME

Tech fans certainly got excited over the arrival of Chris Fowler, Kirk Herbstreit and the infamous Lee Corso—the trio who make up Gameday. Between 12,000-13,000 fans packed the press box side of Lane Stadium just to yell and scream and be on television.

—Jimmy Robertson, *Hokie Huddler*,
Oct. 22, 1999 issue

Continued on page 18



1999 COACH OF THE YEAR AWARDS

This season was a season of firsts for Tech's 53-year-old head coach. He was named Region I Coach of the Year as voted on by the American Football Coaches Association. He's speaking at the prestigious Heisman Trophy Award dinner next week. He became one of just a handful of coaches nationwide ever to lead a team to an unbeaten regular season. And then there's this little matter of playing for the national title.

— Jimmy Robertson, Hokie Huddler, Dec. 10, 1999 issue

CONGRATULATORY CALL FROM PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

Tech coach Frank Beamer received a postgame phone call from President Bill Clinton following the Hokies' 46-29 loss to Florida State in the national championship game. He congratulated Tech on a stellar effort and a great season.

— Jimmy Robertson, Hokie Huddler, Jan. 12, 2000 issue



FRANK BEAMER TURNS DOWN NORTH CAROLINA TO STAY IN BLACKSBURG

"It was certainly nothing against North Carolina. Everything and everyone was very gracious, and I appreciate it. But when you get away a little bit, you realize how special this place is and the relationships that we have at this place. And the excitement and the fans that we have at this place...there's just so many things. I know the grass looks greener sometimes. But when you sit back and look, you can see how green the grass is here."

— Frank Beamer, hokiesports.com the newspaper, Dec. 8, 2000 issue



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TECH RETIRES FRANK BEAMER'S NO. 25 JERSEY

"I'm certainly not the athlete the rest of those guys hanging up there are. But this place has been special...for me. It's been a dream to be in this position. It's a real honor for me."

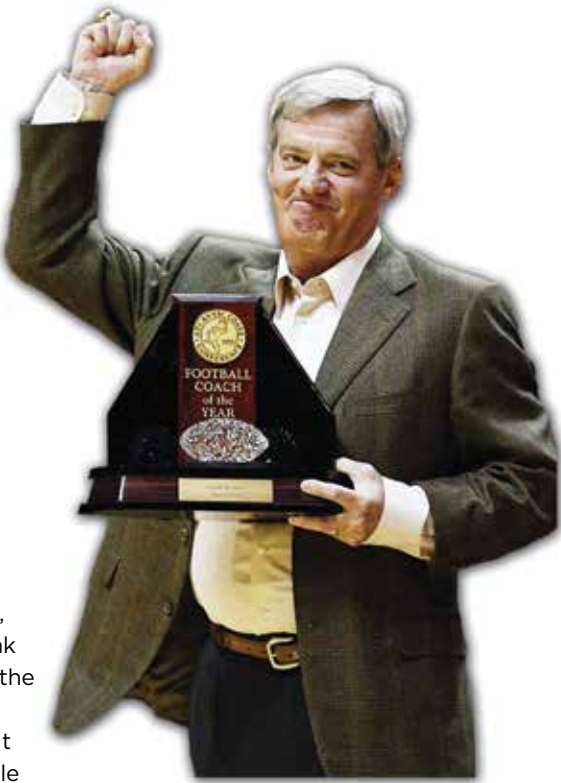
— Frank Beamer, hokiesports the newspaper, Sept. 20, 2002 issue



2004 ACC COACH OF THE YEAR HONOR

It came as little surprise that, the week after the Miami game, Tech coach Frank Beamer earned the ACC's Coach of the Year honor. It also came as little surprise that he received SI.com's national Coach of the Year honor. He deserved it. But while the awards reflect on him, they also reflect on his staff. Truthfully, they did their best coaching job this season.

— Jimmy Robertson, hokiesports the newspaper, Dec. 17, 2004 issue.



Continued on page 20

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FRANK BEAMER NOTCHES
FIRST WIN OVER BOBBY BOWDEN

Shortly before the final seconds ticked off, a few of Tech's players dumped a cooler filled with water over Beamer, and while Tech's longtime head coach downplayed the victory over the Seminoles from a personal standpoint, his smiles on the sideline at the end of the game spoke to the contrary.

— Jimmy Robertson, *hokiesports the newspaper*,
Nov. 12, 2007 issue

2009 ORANGE BOWL
VICTORY OVER CINCINNATI

The Orange Bowl championship trophy is likely the biggest — and heaviest — that Virginia Tech has ever won. It took two managers and a pushcart to get the massive trophy and glass bowl into the lobby of head coach Frank Beamer's office — and that's after the real oranges were replaced with hollow plastic replicas.

— Bill Roth, *Inside Hokie Sports*,
January, 2009 issue



2009 CHICK-FIL-A BOWL
VICTORY OVER TENNESSEE

New Year's Eve in Atlanta features the annual ritual of dropping an oversized replica of a peach to commemorate the New Year. This year, the ritual also featured the Virginia Tech football team dropping the hammer on Tennessee.

Behind a punishing defense and the typical running of Ryan Williams, the Hokies closed 2009 by caging ol' Smokey and knocking the Volunteers off Rocky Top in a 37-14 rout in the Chick-fil-A Bowl at the Georgia Dome.

— Jimmy Robertson, *Inside Hokie Sports*,
January, 2010 issue

HOKIES' 2010 ACC
TITLE WIN OVER
FLORIDA STATE

Beamer's 24th team pulled off one of the great turnarounds we've ever seen. The 2010 Virginia Tech Hokies were the first team in NCAA history to lose their first two ball games and then win 11 straight. It had never happened before.

— Bill Roth, *Inside Hokie Sports*,
December, 2010 issue



Continued on page 22



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HOKIES’ 2014 WIN AT OHIO STATE

“I still remember going to Nebraska and winning and going to Texas A&M and winning. That’s been a few years back. But this is good. I think those things go in cycles a little bit. When you play good teams like we play, you’ve got about a 50-50 shot of winning, and when you go on the road, it probably goes down a little bit. I think this is a big, big win for the status of our program.”
—Frank Beamer, hokiesports.com, Sept. 7, 2014

**FRANK BEAMER
ANNOUNCES PLANS
TO RETIRE**

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.
—Jon Laaser, Inside Hokie Sports, December, 2015 issue



**HOKIES BEAT VIRGINIA 23-20
IN FRANK BEAMER’S FINAL
REGULAR-SEASON GAME**

“That game showed everything we’ve tried to do at Virginia Tech. Relentless—I love that word—we got down and found a way to come back. We got it at the end. We did some good things in the kicking game, getting field position. The defense played great, and the offense made plays. Everything that we talk about—hanging in there, don’t give in, play your best when it counts—that kind of came through today.”
—Frank Beamer, hokiesports.com, Nov. 28, 2015

**HOKIES WIN INDEPENDENCE BOWL
OVER TULSA IN FINAL GAME OF
FRANK BEAMER’S CAREER**

“I’ve got a lot to look forward to. My grandkids, I’ve got a wonderful wife—I’m not sure she’s all for it, but we’re going to spend a lot of time together now—and then I’ve got some things that I’m interested in doing in the future. The next challenge, I look forward to it. I realize how fortunate I’ve been to have lasted this long at Virginia Tech. All I am is grateful and looking forward to taking the next step.”
—Frank Beamer, hokiesports.com, Dec. 27, 2015



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2015 SEASON-ENDING DEPTH CHART

*Below is a look at the depth chart for the entire season. The number before the slash indicates plays from scrimmage, while the number after the slash indicates plays on special teams. The number of plays came from the coaching staff. **Note: This does not include the number of plays from the Independence Bowl, but does include final stats.***
by Jimmy Robertson

OFFENSE

QUARTERBACKS

- 12 Michael Brewer (6-0, 195, r-Sr.)**
432/0. Started seven games and played in eight. Completed 126 of 216 (58.3 percent) for 1,703 yards, with 13 touchdowns and seven interceptions. Fractured his collarbone in the season opener and missed five games. Departs with career records for completion percentage (59.1) and yards passing per game (209.3).
- 9 Brenden Motley (6-3, 221, r-Jr.)**
410/0. Played in 10 games, starting six of them after Brewer went down with the injury. Completed 92 of 164 (56.1 percent) for 1,155 yards, with 11 touchdowns and seven interceptions. Also rushed for 224 yards and three touchdowns.
- 2 Dwayne Lawson (6-6, 230, Fr.)**
36/0. Played in five games. Completed 3 of 9 for 51 yards and rushed for 55 yards on 14 carries, scoring a touchdown.

TAILBACKS

- 34 Travon McMillian (6-0, 196, r-Fr.)**
359/37. A third-team All-ACC selection. Finished second in ACC Rookie of the Year voting. Became the first Tech freshman to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season since Ryan Williams in 2009. Played in 13 games, starting seven of them. Rushed for 1,042 yards on 200 carries (5.2 ypc) and scored seven touchdowns. Also caught 12 passes for 64 yards and a touchdown.
- 4 J.C. Coleman (5-6, 187, Sr.)**
63/22. Started four games and played in 12. Rushed for a 210 yards on 48 carries (4.4 ypc) and scored a touchdown. Also caught two passes for 21 yards and returned nine kicks for 170 yards (18.9 ypr).
- 14 Trey Edmunds (6-2, 223, r-Jr.)**
87/77. Played in all 13 games. Rushed for 185 yards on 47 carries (3.9 ypc) and scored three touchdowns. Also caught a pass for eight yards.
- 22 Shai McKenzie (5-11, 229, So.)**
27/0. Played in two games before suffering an injury. Will apply for, and likely will receive, a medical hardship waiver. Rushed for 50 yards on 13 carries.
- five of them. Rushed for 260 yards on 61 carries (4.3 ypc) and scored two touchdowns. Also caught 16 passes for 193 yards, including two for touchdowns.
- 32 Steven Peoples (5-9, 218, Fr.)**
34/161. Played in all 13 games. Finished with five tackles (two solo) on special teams.

WIDE RECEIVERS

- 1 Isaiah Ford (6-2, 188, So.)**
789/8. A first-team All-ACC selection. Set single-season school records for receptions (75), receiving yardage (1,164) and receiving touchdowns (11). Led the ACC in both receiving yards and touchdown receptions. Started 12 of the 13 games in which he played this season. Has caught at least two passes in all 26 games in his career.
- 5 Cam Phillips (6-1, 191, So.)**
766/17. Started 10 of the 13 games in which he played. Caught 49 passes for 582 yards and two touchdowns.
- 81 Kevin Asante (6-0, 187, r-Sr.)**
58/50. Played in 11 games. Caught a pass for 13 yards. Returned four kicks for 61 yards.
- 3 Greg Stroman (6-1, 168, So.)**
33/101. Played in all 13 games. Carried the ball seven times for 16 yards.
- 80 Demitri Knowles (6-1, 180, r-Sr.)**
19/0. Played in the Furman and Purdue games. Caught a pass for seven yards.
- 15 Joel Caleb (6-2, 190, r-Jr.)**
0/61. Played in 12 games on special teams.
- 21 Michael Brainard (6-0, 191, r-Sr.)**
0/63. Played in 12 games on special teams.
- 86 C.J. Carroll (5-7, 161, r-Fr.)**
8/7. Played in the Furman and Purdue games.
- 83 Charley Meyer (6-0, 220, r-Jr.)**
7/61. Played in 12 games.
- 20 Deon Newsome (5-11, 187, r-So.)**
7/24. Played in six games. Had a solo tackle on special teams.

LEFT TACKLES

- 71 Jonathan McLaughlin (6-5, 302, Jr.)**
791/46. Started all 13 games.
- 69 Yosuah Nijman (6-8, 280, Fr.)**
301/22. Played in 12 games.

LEFT GUARDS

- 57 Wyatt Teller (6-5, 304, r-So.)**
851/68. Started 12 of the 13 games in which he played.

- 67 Parker Osterloh (6-8, 323, r-So.)**
44/58. Played in 12 games.
- 66 Billy Ray Mitchell (6-4, 278, r-Fr.)**
3/0. Played in the Furman game.

CENTERS

- 64 Eric Gallo (6-2, 297, So.)**
871/0. Started all 13 games.
- 61 Kyle Chung (6-4, 283, r-So.)**
25/0. Played in four games, starting the NC State game in place of Teller at left guard.
- 58 Colt Pettit (6-4, 287, r-Fr.)**
4/0. Played in the Furman game.

RIGHT GUARDS

- 72 Augie Conte (6-6, 295, r-Jr.)**
842/68. Started all 13 games.
- 75 Alston Smith (6-2, 293, r-Jr.)**
23/5. Played in three games.
- 74 Braxton Pfaff (6-5, 295, r-Fr.)**
4/5. Played in the Furman and Purdue games.
- 41 Jack Willenbrock (6-3, 247, r-Jr.)**
31/44. Played in 10 games.

RIGHT TACKLES

- 77 Wade Hansen (6-5, 300, r-Sr.)**
668/0. Started all 13 games.
- 52 Darius Redman (6-4, 287, r-Sr.)**
31/72. Played in all 13 games.
- 88 Ryan Malleck (6-5, 253, r-Sr.)**
806/134. Started all 13 games. Caught 21 passes for 289 yards, including two for touchdowns. Also had two tackles on special teams (one solo).
- 7 Bucky Hodges (6-7, 241, r-So.)**
684/7. Started all 13 games. Caught 40 passes for 530 yards, including six for touchdowns.
- 89 Calvin Cline (6-4, 237, r-So.)**
85/4. Played in nine games. Hauled in three passes for 38 yards.
- 82 Xavier Burke (6-2, 235, Fr.)**
0/6. Played in the East Carolina game. Suffered an injury. Will apply for, and probably receive, a medical hardship waiver.

- 13 Chris Durkin (6-4, 222, r-Fr.)**
6/3. Played in three games. Rushed for 25 yards on four carries against Furman.

DEFENSE

STUD ENDS

- 90 Dadi L'homme Nicolas (6-3, 223, r-Sr.)**
677/57. Started 12 of the 13 games in which he played. Tallied 45 tackles (21 solo), including seven for a loss. Also had 2.5 sacks.
- 99 Vinny Mihota (6-5, 270, r-Fr.)**
138/55. Started the Virginia game and played in 11 others. Had 12 tackles (four solo), including 2.5 for a loss, and a sack. Also forced a fumble and blocked a kick.

ENDS

- 4 Ken Ekanem (6-3, 248, r-Jr.)**
694/46. Started all 13 games. Finished with 39 tackles (18 solo), including 9.5 for a loss. Also had 4.5 sacks and two forced fumbles.
- 43 Seth Dooley (6-6, 235, r-So.)**
84/69. Played in 11 games. Had four tackles (all assists).

NOSE TACKLES

- 92 Luther Maddy (6-2, 283, r-Sr.)**
631/0. A first-team All-ACC selection. Started all 13 games this season. Registered 57 tackles (17 solo), including seven for a loss, and 2.5 sacks. Also had a fumble recovery and forced a fumble.
- 60 Woody Baron (6-1, 275, Jr.)**
479/0. Played in all 13 games, starting five of them. Had 28 tackles (16 solo), including eight for a loss, and three sacks. Forced two fumbles and recovered a fumble.

TACKLES

- 96 Corey Marshall (6-2, 266, r-Sr.)**
239/0. An honorable mention All-ACC choice. Played in 10 games and started six of them. Tallied 17 tackles (eight solo), including 5.5 for a loss, and 2.5 sacks. Also forced two fumbles.
- 95 Nigel Williams (6-4, 299, r-Jr.)**
131/119. Played in 13 games. Had eight tackles (five solo), including 1.5 for a loss. Also forced a fumble.
- 91 Steve Sobczak (6-1, 309, r-Fr.)**
42/0. Played in six games and had two assists.
- 93 Jeremy Haynes (6-3, 225, r-Jr.)**
1/120. Played in all 13 games, mostly on special teams.

MIKE LINEBACKERS

- 54 Andrew Motuapuaka (6-0, 238, r-So.)**
656/46. Started 11 games, missing two with an injury. Recorded 73 tackles (41 solo), including a team-best 11.5 for a loss, and four sacks. Also had an interception, recovered two fumbles and forced a team-best three fumbles. Returned his interception for a touchdown against Furman and returned a fumble for a touchdown against BC.
- 56 Sean Huelskamp (6-1, 207, r-So.)**
143/7. Started the Purdue and East Carolina games and also played in three others. Had 13 tackles (seven solo), including 3.5 for a loss, and a sack. Also had an interception.

- 44 Carson Lydon (6-2, 233, Fr.)**
21/54. Played in 11 games. Had four tackles (two solo), including one for a loss.
- 53 Trent Young (5-10, 212, r-Fr.)**
0/21. Played in six games.
- 25 Josh Eberly (5-7, 208, r-Jr.)**
0/5. Played in four games.

BACKERS

- 40 Deon Clarke (6-1, 227, Sr.)**
771/49. Played in 12 games, starting 11 of them. Registered 77 tackles (43 solo), including 10.5 for a loss, and three sacks. Also recovered a fumble.
- 49 Tremaine Edmunds (6-5, 236, Fr.)**
20/273. Started two games and played in all 13. Had 11 tackles (six solo), including 2.5 for a loss.
- 50 Jamieon Moss (6-2, 213, r-So.)**
0/62. Played in 12 games, all on special teams, and had an assist.
- 45 Drew Burns (6-3, 220, r-Jr.)**
0/3. Played in two games.
- 38 Dahman McKinnon (6-1, 225, r-Jr.)**
29/10. Played in three games before leaving the program. Had six tackles (two solo), including one for a loss.

WHIP LINEBACKERS

- 24 Anthony Shegog (6-3, 212, r-So.)**
184/215. Played in all 13 games, starting five of them. Finished with 29 tackles (16 solo). Also recovered two fumbles.

Continued on page 26

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DEPTH CHART *Continued from page 25*

- 37 Ronny Vandyke (6-5, 215, r-Sr.)**
299/268. Played in all 13 games, starting six of them. Had 26 tackles (14 solo), including two for a loss. Also recovered a fumble.
- 30 Johnathan Galante (5-9, 204, r-So.)**
0/43. Played in 11 games and had a solo tackle.
- 18 Raymon Minor (6-2, 221, r-Fr.)**
0/29. Played in eight games and had a solo tackle.

CORNERBACKS

- 31 Brandon Facyson (6-2, 196, r-So.)**
680/10. Played in all 13 games and started 10. Recorded 31 tackles (20 solo), including one for a loss. Broke up a team-best 10 passes.
- 3 Greg Stroman (6-1, 168, So.)**
318/101. Played in 13 games, starting six of them. Tallied 24 tackles (16 solo). Also intercepted two passes. Returned 31 punts for 241 yards (7.8 ypr), including one for a touchdown.
- 36 Adonis Alexander (6-3, 197, Fr.)**
459/71. Played in 12 games and started eight of them. Had 55 tackles (37 solo) and a team-best four interceptions.
- 22 Terrell Edmunds (6-1, 201, r-Fr.)**
400/158. Played in all 13 games, starting eight of them. Had 34 tackles (16 solo), including 1.5 for a loss. Also recovered a fumble and blocked a kick.
- 2 Donovan Riley (5-11, 211, Sr.)**
294/66. Played in all 13 games, starting two of

- them. Finished with 25 tackles (16 solo). Also recovered a fumble and forced a fumble.
- 11 Kendall Fuller (6-0, 196, Jr.)**
170/12. Started three games before missing the rest of the season with a knee injury. Had seven tackles (three solo), including one for a loss. Also recovered a fumble.
- 6 Mook Reynolds (6-1, 181, Fr.)**
252/42. Played in all 13 games and started two of them. Had 30 tackles (20 solo), including four for a loss. Recovered two fumbles.
- 27 Curtis Williams (5-9, 167, r-So.)**
0/1. Played in the Furman game.
- 12 Erik Banks (5-10, 177, r-So.)**
0/1. Played in the Furman game.
- SAFETIES/ROVERS**
- 19 Chuck Clark (6-1, 204, Jr.)**
789/91. Started all 13 games. Led the team in tackles with 107 (65 solo). Became the first Tech defensive back to record more than 100 tackles since Michael Crawford in 2003. Had three tackles for a loss and a sack. Also had an interception and recovered a fumble—which he returned 20 yards for a touchdown against Purdue.
- 26 Desmond Frye (6-2, 197, r-Jr.)**
274/32. Played in 10 games, starting four of them. Registered 28 tackles (18 solo) and an interception. Also forced a fumble.
- 23 Der'Woun Greene (5-11, 186, r-Jr.)**
29/39. Played in 11 games. Had eight tackles

- (five solo). Also returned 16 kicks for 438 yards (27.4 ypr).
- 29 Greg Jones (6-2, 205, r-Jr.)**
0/129. Played in 12 games and had a solo tackle.
- 17 Jahque Alleyne (6-1, 180, Fr.)**
4/75. Played in 12 games. Had four tackles (three solo).
- PUNTERS**
- 27 A.J. Hughes (6-0, 198, Sr.)**
0/145. Played in all 13 games. Averaged 42.9 yards per punt on 70 punts. Placed 23 inside the 20. Had 15 punts of 50 yards or more.
- KICKERS**
- 46 Joey Slye (6-1, 214, So.)**
0/116. Connected on 23 of 30 field-goal attempts, with a long of 48 yards. Tied a Tech single-season record with 23 field goals (Dustin Keys, 2008). Also kicked off and 51 of his 74 kickoffs were for touchbacks.
- 35 Michael Santamaria (5-8, 166, r-Fr.)**
0/8. Played in the Furman and Purdue games. Made three extra points in the Furman game. Missed a field goal in that same game.
- SNAPPERS**
- 55 Eddie D'Antuono (6-7, 245, r-Jr.)**
0/121. Played in 11 games.
- 87 Colton Taylor (6-1, 21, r-So.)**
0/15. Played in five games.



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TAIJAH CAMPBELL

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Toronto, Canada
by Jimmy Robertson

Taijah Campbell is a member of the women's basketball team and will graduate next May with a degree in communication, focusing on multimedia and journalism. Once her basketball career ends, she hopes one day to write about all things related to pop culture.

Q: Why did you decide to major in communication?

TC: "It's kind of a funny story. I thought I wanted to be a psychology major because I was always interested in psychology, and I wanted to know how the brain worked and all that fun stuff. I got here and I took my freshman psychology class, and I'm like, 'This isn't what I want to do.' So I switched to human development, and I was in that for a little while. It was interesting, but I realized I didn't want to do anything with that career-wise. It just wasn't for me.

"I had to think about what I liked and what I'm passionate about and how I can make that into a career, and I kind of stumbled across communication."

Q: So what are you passionate about, as it relates to communication?

TC: "Ever since I was in high school, I've always had a blog. I started it for fun. It's about music and fashion, and writing about those kinds of things. It's pop culture. It's what I'm into. I think it's very interesting, and I feel like writing about it and publishing, all that kind of thing. That's really what led me to communication. I'm currently in the process of putting this blog onto a website, so I can work on content. Hopefully soon enough, it will be out there."

Q: Do you have a mentor, or someone you look up to who works in the communication field?

TC: "My mentor is my brother, and he's in this profession. He's one of those artists who has built himself up on the West Coast in Canada. He lives in Vancouver, and he makes music and produces his own music, and he acts as well. He's doing his thing. I look up to him because he's been through it. Even though I'm on a different side of it, I look up to him. I know that he's put in a lot of hard work.


"He helped me a lot when I was changing majors. He told me, 'You'll just know. Don't feel discouraged because you feel you're in the wrong major.' He said, 'Don't be afraid to say — It's not for me — and move on.' I did that a couple of times. He views life as being short, and he told me to do what makes me happy and don't feel obligated to settle. He told me that I'd figure out a way to make it work."

Q: You haven't done any internships primarily because you've been spending your summers with the Canadian National Team. So what is the next step for you?

TC: "Ideally, I'd love to keep playing basketball and take it overseas for a few years, but the goal with that is to save money because a lot of the internships I'm interested in are on the West Coast in LA or on the East Coast in New York and they're not paid internships. I'd like to play overseas, save some money and be able focus on an internship. I want to be able to sustain myself while I'm doing the internship.

"The two internships that I really like are radio stations, which might seem a little off to some because I'm not into being at the forefront of everything, but Hot 97 [based in New York] and Power 106 [based in Los Angeles] kind of reflect what I'm interested in. They're radio stations, but they deal with the same kinds of things that I want to deal with — the fashion, the pop culture, the music, and the art. They do all that in addition to playing music, and I just think that's really cool."

Q: Long term, looking out five or 10 years, where would you like to be with your career?

TC: "I really want my blog to eventually become well known, and that may sound crazy, but I really want to build my own brand and expand it. There are magazines that do these types of things as well, sort of in the same playing field as what I want to do. It's really big, and it's where a lot of people go to for anything about pop culture. That's what I want. I'd like my own version of that. I definitely could see myself working for a magazine or doing something like that, but eventually I'd like to build my own brand and have my own notoriety." 

Austin Gabel is a two-time NCAA qualifier in wrestling, but he also excels in the classroom, where he will graduate next May with degrees in business management and finance. Gabel recently took a job with RBCi Construction as an assistant project manager.

Q: Why did you decide to pursue both business management and finance?

AG: "I was originally a business management major and then I picked up finance about two years ago. Dr. [Art] Keown, at the time, was the chair of the Department of Finance, and he teaches all the intro to finance classes that every business student has to take. He's a pretty big wrestling supporter. I got in contact with him, and the plan was to use my fifth year to work on my MBA. That's what I had in mind, but things changed. They moved the MBA program from the Blacksburg location to the D.C. location, so there's not really an MBA program here on campus. I couldn't go to D.C. every week, so I was like, 'What do I do?' He talked to me about finance, but I never thought of myself as a big math person — and I still don't. I decided to give it a try, and I really enjoyed his class. I did well, and that sparked an interest. So I decided to double major, and of the two, it's definitely my favorite because it pushes me more intellectually than management."

Q: What did you like about business management?

AG: "I've been a natural leader, so just learning the management skills and all the different analytics that go along with management was my focus going in. That suited me the best of all the majors. I didn't enjoy my accounting classes. Marketing was OK, but I didn't have a huge drive to do marketing. Finance, at first, didn't cross my mind, and BIT [business information technology] ... I don't really enjoy computers that much, so that was crossed off. Management was one of those fields that I was like, 'OK, let's try this and see how it goes' because, like I said, the original thought was to do management and then get my MBA."

Q: You completed an internship this summer. What sort of things did you do?

AG: "I worked for Ron Gibbs, who works for Verity Asset Management here in Blacksburg, and he's a financial planner. I learned the business of how that works. There is only so much you can do as an intern in that position because you have to have your Series 7 and 63 and different licenses, but I was able to shadow him and learn what he does and help him with the small tasks he needed done around the office. I helped him keep up with his database of all his clients — stuff like that. It was a good learning experience, and I like that field of work. I've looked into that for future jobs down the road."

Q: Did that internship re-affirm your decision to pursue something in this particular field?


AG: "Yes, definitely. It made me think that this was the right choice for me. Finance has been a hard major, but with the internship, it really cemented that it was the right decision. I recently got two job offers, and I think that finance piece has helped me get those offers, which is nice."

Q: What are your future plans?

AG: "I've always had an interest to do FBI or CIA stuff and we'll see what happens with that path. I looked into project management as well as something closer to what I did my internship in, which was financial planning.

"Of the two job offers I got, one of the companies is called RBCi Construction [in Maryland], and I'd be an assistant project manager. That's the job I accepted. There are a lot of cool aspects that I like about that job. It's more hands-on, and I'll be doing a lot of different things.

"The other company was Vanguard [in Charlotte, North Carolina], and that is more of the financial planning. I would have been doing more virtual stuff, interacting with clients over email and telephone and things like that.

"So I'll be heading to the Northern Virginia-Maryland area after graduation to start working. We'll see where the road leads me after that." 



AUSTIN GABEL

WRESTLING
Parker, Colorado
by Jimmy Robertson

From Down Under? FROM DOWNTOWN IS MORE LIKE IT

Australian-born
Vanessa Panousis is
draining 3-pointers at
a record-breaking rate

by Matt Kovatch
Special to Inside
Hokie Sports

“When I got here was the first time that I ever came to America. I didn't come to America for an official visit, so I had to just look online and research. A coach from home knew [Virginia Tech] Coach [Dennis] Wolff. I also spoke to [fellow Australian and current Tech senior] Hannah [Young] through Facebook, asking her questions about how it is here. I just did some research myself and had to make a decision out of that.

It was pretty risky, but it's worked out well.

— Vanessa Panousis
on coming to Tech

”

If you haven't been paying attention to the Virginia Tech women's basketball team this season, you're forgiven — for now. After all, it's been nearly a decade since the Hokies had their last winning record and postseason appearance.

However, consider this your wake-up call. Following a victory in the Atlantic Coast Conference opener on Jan. 3, the Hokies sported a 13-1 record and have been receiving votes in the national polls since an upset of Tennessee on Dec. 6 — their first votes since the 2007 preseason. In fact, Tech's 13 triumphs as of this writing are already greater than the final win total in five of the past eight entire seasons.

One certainly could credit the team's defense for the early success this season — entering conference play, the Hokies ranked second nationally, giving up just 46.2 points per game while holding opponents to 31.4 percent shooting. But the other reason why Tech has been winning this season?

They can shoot the 3, and no one does it better or more often than junior guard Vanessa Panousis.

For those tuning in on television or filing into the stands at Virginia Tech Carilion Court, Panousis isn't hard to find.

First, look behind the arc — more than 60 percent of her career shots have been from downtown. Still can't find her? Look for the player with the massive bun of black hair woven on top of her head, a carefully crafted sculpture that adds a few inches to her 5-foot-7 frame. It's a distinctive look, no doubt, and serves as much of a calling card for her as the 3-pointers she launches every game.

“That's something a lot of people ask me,” Panousis said with a laugh, clearly anticipating the obligatory hairstyle question. “I only trim it once a year, and it goes about halfway down my back.”

The bun takes 15 minutes to create — that's a whole quarter and a half of game time — so Panousis has to make sure that a hard foul isn't going to bring it all toppling down. Four ties and at least a dozen pins hold it in place. It's arguably harder for an opponent to mess up Panousis' hair than it is to stop her from firing another 3-pointer, and that's saying something.

Since the long-range artist arrived in Blacksburg two-and-a-half seasons ago, she's unleashed 554 3-point tries (as of Jan. 4). Tech's all-time leader in 3-point attempts, Lindsay Biggs, tallied 575 attempts from 2006-10, so there's a good chance that, by the time many read this, Panousis already will have broken the career record with still more than a full season to pad her lead. She already holds the Tech record for most 3's attempted in a single game (15 against Duke last January) and in a single season (272 last year, 48 more than the previous leader).

It's one thing to take a bunch of 3's — any player can let it fly. The goal is also to make them, and Panousis has done just that.

Continued on page 32

FROM DOWNTOWN

Continued from page 31

She's converting the long balls at a career-best 37 percent this year and is actually shooting a better percentage from beyond the arc than she is with shots of the normal two-point variety. She tied the Cassell Coliseum record for most 3's made in a game (six vs. George Mason this past November, part of Tech's team record 14), as well as the record for most 3's made in a single season (77 as a sophomore). Panousis sits third on Tech's all-time career list, having drained 174 shots from downtown. Biggs resides in second place with 188, while Carrie Mason (2002-06) holds the record with 200. It's entirely possible that Panousis tops that list before her junior season ends.

Don't think of Panousis as a one-trick pony, however. She shoots with excellent accuracy from the free-throw line as well and currently ranks first on Tech's career list in accuracy from the charity stripe with a mark of 84.4 percent. Also, despite her tendency to let it rip from long range, she is not a ball-hog. Her two favorite NBA players are actually pass-first point guards Rajon Rondo and Tony Parker, and Panousis led the Hokies in assists in each of her first two seasons, while ranking second in helpers this year. Her 121 assists as a rookie broke a freshman record that had stood since 2003.



Barring injury, Vanessa Panousis will leave as the Hokies' all-time leader in 3-point field goals and 3-point attempts.

Despite her skill from beyond the arc, it's well known that the 3-pointer involves a lot of risk. The farther one stands from the hoop, the harder the shot. Yet it seems fitting that Panousis prefers this shot. After all, she took a huge chance by coming to Tech in the first place.

Panousis, though Greek by heritage, was born and raised in Sydney, Australia, which geographically may be about as far as one can get from Blacksburg. Despite playing for the U-17 and U-19 Australian national teams, which allowed her to travel to eight different countries for competition, Panousis never set foot in the United States until she arrived in Blacksburg for her first day of class.

"When I got here was the first time that I ever came to America," Panousis admitted in her thick Aussie accent. "I didn't come to America for an official visit, so I had to just look online and research. A coach from home knew [Virginia Tech] Coach [Dennis] Wolff. I also spoke to [fellow Australian and current Tech senior] Hannah [Young] through Facebook, asking her questions about how it is here. I just did some research myself and had to make a decision out of that. It was pretty risky, but it's worked out well."

Most people have a tough time simply buying shoes online, so that Panousis essentially chose her future with only a

keyboard and an Internet connection seems rather impressive. Her other choices—Long Island, Washington State, Louisville and Fordham—were noticeably varied, but the connection with Wolff and Young sealed the deal, as well as Tech's facilities and the notion of college in general.

"The facilities here are amazing," Panousis, a human development major, said. "We have nothing like that at home. It was an eye opener when I first got here. Also, back home, a lot of the guys go to college, but it wasn't really a big thing for girls to come here. We didn't really have this opportunity at home, to be able to study and play at the same time. I thought it would be a really cool and a different experience for me."

The other eye openers for Panousis were obviously the climate and surroundings, as she transitioned from a childhood of temperate-weathered beaches and city living to a college town in the middle of the mountains with unpredictable winters.

Panousis, however, was accustomed to change from an early age. As a child, she bounced around between activities besides basketball, participating in everything from gymnastics to Aussie rules flag football to modeling in television commercials. More significantly, her mother, Mary, passed away from liver cancer when Vanessa was just 9 years old.

"Some things are blurry, but I have good memories of her," Panousis recalled.

Mary's death forced Vanessa's father, Peter, to quit his time-consuming career as a Greek chef to focus more on raising Vanessa, her brother, Andrew, and her sister, Pamela. He became a handyman because it allowed for more flexibility in his schedule, an issue of importance with Vanessa doing so much traveling because of her blossoming basketball career. Peter still remains very much involved with Vanessa's life, usually visiting the U.S. over the holidays. He came to town recently for about two weeks, and Vanessa took advantage of his culinary skills.

"He's been cooking pretty much every day," she said excitedly. "That is one thing I definitely cannot do. I am a fan of [local Blacksburg Greek restaurants] Souvlaki and The Cellar, but they don't make my dad's chicken egg lemon soup."

With the holiday break over and the calendar turned to 2016, it's time for Panousis and her teammates to re-focus on a season that has started off as one of Tech's best in recent memory. The Hokies aren't just defeating cupcake teams—they knocked off a pair of giants earlier this season. In early December, Tech went on the road and shocked perennial Big Ten contender Penn State before

dethroning powerhouse Tennessee, ranked No. 8 in the country at the time.

Panousis totaled 37 points in the two wins, scoring 21 of those in the final quarter of each game en route to being voted the espnW National Player of the Week. She went a perfect 14 of 14 from the free-throw line in the two games, including 10 of 10 in the final minutes of both contests.

"It was an experience I'll never forget," Panousis said of the two upset victories. "After we beat Penn State, we really believed we could beat Tennessee."

Those two wins hopefully will provide some confidence for the Hokies to carry over to the always-difficult ACC schedule. Panousis thinks the team just needs to continue doing what has worked so far.

"Defense has been a big key for us this year," she said. "When our defense is working, it allows us to push the ball in transition, and that's where our points come from. We also have a lot more depth than we did last year. There are a lot more people contributing. If some people aren't having their best game, other people are stepping up."

However the rest of the season plays out, one thing is for certain—Panousis will be bombs away from 3-point land. She may be from 'Down Under,' but she now resides 'downtown.' **VTF**



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It was a perfect Sunday morning in early December, with the air uncharacteristically warm. At one local church, a crowd gathered to take in the service, pen and paper in hands to jot down notes that reinforce the pastor’s talking points.

Minutes into the sermon, Kevin Dresser started writing down his notes. The minister of Virginia Tech’s wrestling program, he scrawled down his depth chart at the various weight classes on his roster, thinking deeply about each student-athlete and his role within the team.

“How can we get better at this weight class?” he thought. “Whom can we go see because we’re not very good at this weight class?” he mused. “Whom can I go see so that I feel good next year about this weight class?” he queried.

Wife Penny glanced over at his scrawling. She then gave him a gentle nudge and a stern look – a rebuke for his lack of focus.

“Usually the message is really, really good, but they lost me for a while there Sunday,” Dresser said with a smile. “Everyone thought I was taking notes on the sermon because everyone else was taking notes, but I was out in left field. In church, 90 percent of the time, I’m following the outline, but that time, 10 percent of the sermon was about my lineup.”

Those who know Dresser well find this unsurprising. Coaches spend countless hours trying to make their programs the best they can be. Usually, that centers on coaching and recruiting.

But Dresser takes it to the extreme. He coaches. He recruits. He fundraises. He markets. He sells. And he uses every available minute to do those things, whether thinking of ideas in the middle of the night while sleeping or in the middle of the preacher’s sermon.

His devotion is certainly working. The Virginia Tech wrestling program was practically in the grave 10 years ago, but he resurrected it. The Hokies have finished in the top 10 at the NCAA Wrestling Championships each of the past three years. But he refuses to settle for just making this program the best it can be.

He wants to make it the best.

Dresser never has wanted to be anything but the best—in everything—going back to his days as a kid in Humboldt, Iowa, a small town of roughly 5,000. He grew up watching Iowa and Iowa State wrestling, and each Saturday night during the wrestling season, local TV stations would show the Hawkeyes

DRESSER

Lifts Tech Program

FROM

NEAR FALL

or the Cyclones. Those two schools combined to win 14 of 15 team national championships during a stretch from 1972-1987.

Watching engaged him in wrestling, sparking a passion that still burns. He won two state championships in high school, and he then decided to go to Iowa, where legendary coach Dan Gable was in the midst of guiding Iowa to nine straight national titles.

Success didn’t immediately come for Dresser, though. His first three seasons in Iowa City, he never once put on the black and gold singlet. He took a redshirt year in his first season because of an injury and then wasn’t able to beat out the wrestlers in front of him for two years.

“He had some unbelievable guys in front of him,” Gable said in a phone interview. “But then he got his chance to do it, and he did it.”

“I had people saying, ‘You’re crazy. You need to transfer. You’ll never make it there,’ Dresser said. “It was my seventh semester at Iowa before I put on an Iowa singlet and wrestled in front of an Iowa crowd.

“I was either really determined or really dumb. I guess I was determined.”

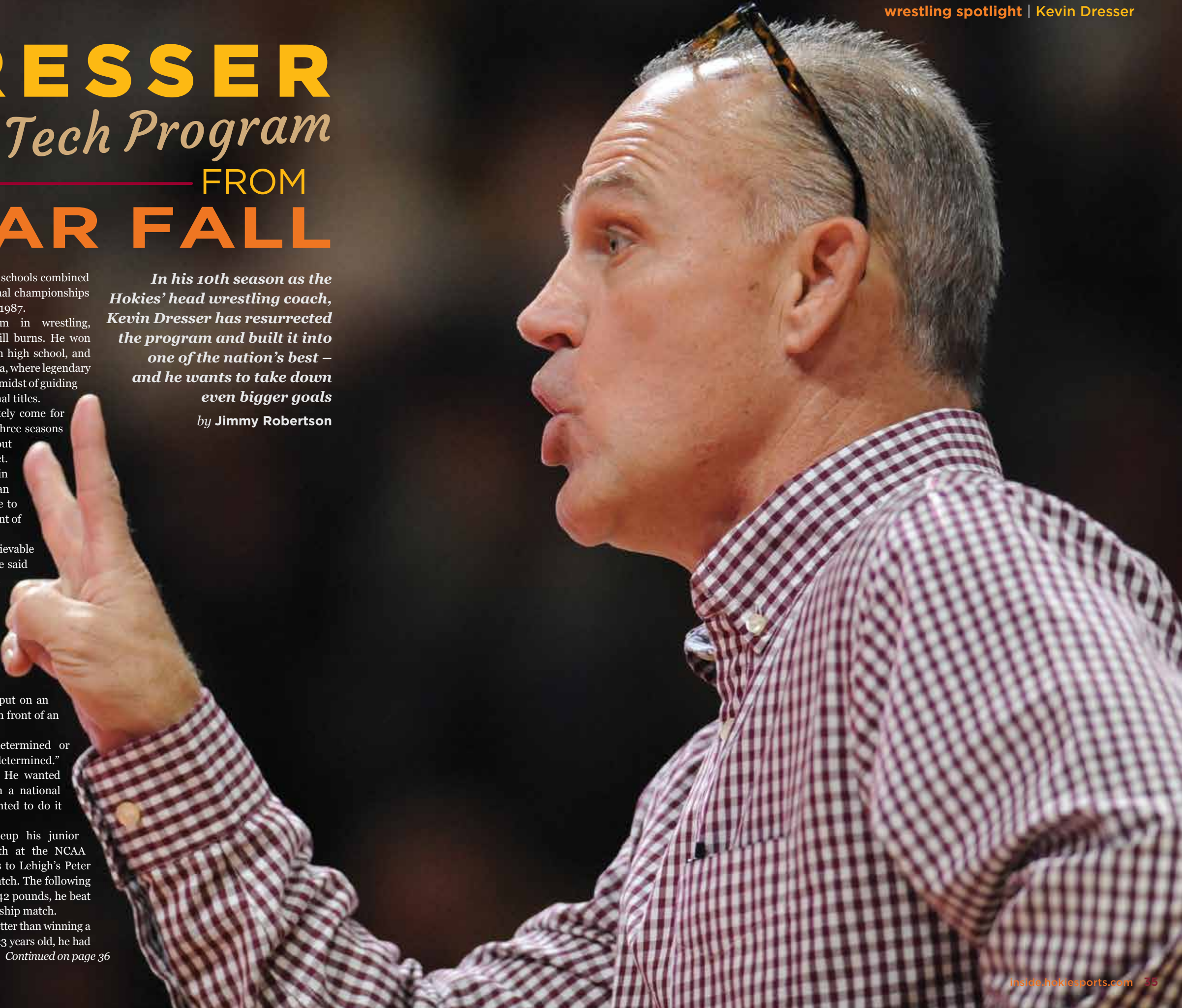
He refused to transfer. He wanted to win. He wanted to win a national championship. And he wanted to do it for Iowa.

He broke into the lineup his junior season and finished fourth at the NCAA Championships after a loss to Lehigh’s Peter Yozzo in the third-place match. The following season, as the top seed at 142 pounds, he beat Yozzo 11-6 in the championship match.

As an athlete, it gets no better than winning a national championship. At 23 years old, he had achieved his lifelong dream. *Continued on page 36*

In his 10th season as the Hokies’ head wrestling coach, Kevin Dresser has resurrected the program and built it into one of the nation’s best – and he wants to take down even bigger goals

by Jimmy Robertson



DRESSER

Continued from page 34

“It’s not what my wife wants me to tell my kids or tell my team, but I went to Iowa to be a national champion,” he said. “Along the way, I got a degree. I didn’t give a rip about school. I just did what I had to do. I wasn’t dumb. If I needed a 2.2, I got a 2.21. I was there solely to be a national champion. I never took my eye off of that.”

Dresser graduated in 1986 with a degree in general studies. At that point, it was time to find something else to satisfy his competitive urge.

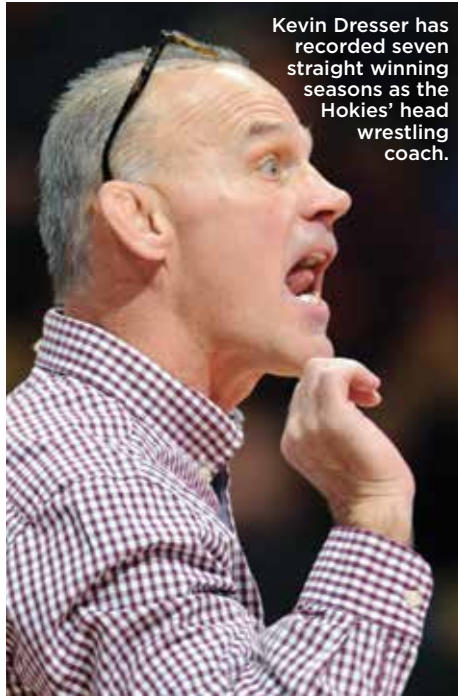
Before Dresser started rebuilding the Tech wrestling program into the top-10 program it is today, he started at a slightly more modest level—a small high school deep in the Appalachian Mountains in a small town that basically hugs the Kentucky border.

Red Robertson, a Virginia Tech graduate who became successful in the coal industry, built a wrestling facility there in the early 1980s and established the Grundy Wrestling Club for the youth in Grundy, Virginia and neighboring areas. In 1988, he asked Dresser to come to Grundy and run it, while also serving as the high school wrestling coach.

Dresser, wrestling in international tournaments and working as a graduate assistant for Gable, had never thought much about getting into coaching. Truthfully, he didn’t think much about anything except getting on the mat that particular day.

“I never thought, ‘One day, in five years, what am I going to do when I’m 24?’” he said. “I have to see things. When I saw Grundy and saw the potential of that program and the commitment, all of the sudden, I got really good focus again, and that translated into coaching.”

Dresser quickly made Grundy into a national powerhouse. He took his teams all over the country to wrestle in various prestigious tournaments, and at the prep level, he guided Grundy to eight state titles.



Kevin Dresser has recorded seven straight winning seasons as the Hokies’ head wrestling coach.

Off the mat, he found entertainment in Blacksburg. Grundy isn’t a hopping place for single men in their 20s, so he bought a place in Blacksburg, traveling to town on weekends and in the offseason to socialize. He met his wife while country line dancing at the old Holiday Inn on the corner of Price’s Fork Road and University Boulevard.

He also helped Tech’s wrestling program, running the offseason workouts in the fall while Jerry Cheynet coached the men’s soccer team. Cheynet doubled as the men’s soccer and wrestling coach during that time, coaching wrestling from 1974-96.

Dresser said then-Tech AD Dave Braine once tried to hire him as the wrestling coach. But Dresser made more money working in Grundy, and Braine admitted he couldn’t put the resources into wrestling at that time to make the program more competitive.

With his spare time—he only coached at

Grundy—Dresser decided to get his broker’s license and insurance license to sell those products. Some of the people in the company that he represented were making \$250,000 a year. That certainly got his attention.

He ultimately decided to resign from Grundy and become a financial services representative on a full-time basis.

“I was so bored with it,” Dresser said of wrestling. “We were killing everybody. My last year, we had 12 out of 14 guys in the state finals. We had won eight state titles in a row. We were ranked fifth in the nation in all school divisions. I was having a hard time getting motivated for that next group of kids.”

He and Penny got married and moved to Iowa in the summer of 1996. He put on his suit and tie, went to work for his company in Des Moines and became a businessman.

That lasted all of five months.

“I came home one day in October and said, ‘This sucks. I want to move back to Virginia and start over,’” he said.

He and Penny ended up moving back to Virginia, and he landed the job as Christiansburg High School’s wrestling coach. Christiansburg High had a team, but little else—certainly not the resources he had at Grundy.

“No money, no program, no booster club,” Dresser said. “No nothing.”

But he loved it. He loved the challenge. He was once at this point as a wrestler at Iowa, so he knew that hard work paid off.

He borrowed the ideas that the fine folks at Grundy had incorporated. He got kids to come out for the team and taught them how to wrestle. He raised money to start a mat club. He found a place for them to train.

The end result was as he expected it to be —his teams won five state championships and became one of the top prep programs in the nation.

One can say whatever one wants about Kevin Dresser—he’s a good guy, he works

hard, he knows how to coach, etc. All those things certainly apply.

But for sure, he knows how to sell.

It might be his best attribute. He has sold recruits on Virginia Tech. He sells his wrestlers on being better than they ever dreamed. He sells fans on coming out and seeing a great product. He sells donors on his program’s needs to be able to attain future greatness and then watches as they open their wallets.

Everyone knows the old “selling ice to an Eskimo” line. It applies here.

“To me, that’s the ultimate compliment because I’m selling a great product,” Dresser said. “I’m selling Virginia Tech, and I’m selling Virginia Tech wrestling. I get called a salesman all the time. They say, ‘Dresser ain’t nothing but a salesman.’ When I hear that, I high-five the person. That’s perfect. I say, ‘That’s what I want to be called.’ I’ve got a great product here. If you think I’m a salesman ... hey, that’s a compliment.”

Dresser’s best sales job came in April of 2006. A month earlier, then-Tech wrestling coach Tom Brands resigned to take the job at Iowa and took his assistants with him. Five talented wrestlers wanted to follow him, which would have gutted the Hokies’ program.

Brands had been at Tech for two years. In fact, Dresser interviewed for the position when then-AD Jim Weaver hired Brands, and he agreed with Weaver’s decision. Brands won three national championships as a wrestler at

“To me, that’s the ultimate compliment because I’m selling a great product. I’m selling Virginia Tech, and I’m selling Virginia Tech wrestling. I get called a salesman all the time. They say, ‘Dresser ain’t nothing but a salesman.’ When I hear that, I high-five the person. That’s perfect. I say, ‘That’s what I want to be called.’ I’ve got a great product here. If you think I’m a salesman ... hey, that’s a compliment.”

Kevin Dresser
on being a great salesman

Iowa, won an Olympic gold medal and then he served as an assistant for Gable for 12 seasons. His credentials were stout.

Brands’ decision put Weaver in a difficult spot. The program had struggled for consistency before Brands’ arrival, and now the best wrestlers wanted to leave. Was it time to take a drastic move and pull the plug on the program instead of attempting yet another rebuilding job?

Weaver decided to interview Jimmy Zalesky, who had just been fired at Iowa. Dresser knew Zalesky and thought he would be a good fit in Blacksburg.

But on the morning of the interview, Dresser said Zalesky called him.

“He said, ‘Basically, Brands and I would be swapping jobs. It’s just too weird for my family,’” Dresser said. “So I called Dave Chambers [one of Weaver’s associate ADs] and told him, and he said, ‘Wow, this isn’t good.’ I didn’t know what he meant by that.”

Weaver did not want to drop the sport, especially with Tech having just gotten into the ACC for all sports. But Zalesky’s decision not to come for the interview did not help matters.

Chambers invited Dresser to come over for a meeting with Weaver to discuss the program. On April 13 at 11 a.m., Dresser walked into Weaver’s office.

He sold—and maybe saved—the Virginia Tech wrestling program.

Continued on page 38

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DRESSER

Continued from page 37

"I told him that this place could take off," Dresser said. "When Brands came in, they had the full number of scholarships. I said, 'You've got everything in place to go.' I did most of the talking. It was mostly a pep talk."

Weaver bought what Dresser told him and offered him the job. Twenty-four hours later, Dresser agreed to take it.

On April 14, Weaver announced Dresser's hiring.

"It was maybe an SOS hire there," Dresser said. "But I think it worked out all right."

Dresser knew he was getting himself into a difficult situation, and it turned out to be exactly that.

The five wrestlers transferred to Iowa to be with Brands, losing a year of eligibility in the process when Weaver refused to grant them releases to attend that school. Weaver had asked that they all stay for one year to allow Dresser to get a foundation built and then they could leave if they wanted. They all refused.

So with a squad comprised of mostly walk-ons, Dresser guided the team to six wins during his first season and just one in the ACC. The second season showed only slight improvement, as Tech won seven dual matches and two in the ACC.

"The toughest part for me was losing," Dresser said. "I hate losing. But I'm realistic, too. I knew we were going to lose for a while. From a pressure standpoint, there was zero pressure. We had nowhere to go but up. The first couple of years, it was, 'Poor Virginia Tech, poor Virginia Tech.' By the third year, we started beating people."

In his third season, he led the Hokies to a 20-2 mark, including wins over then-No. 17 Michigan and then-No. 6 Central Michigan—breakthrough victories for the program. That record included a 5-0 mark in ACC matches. Tech lost just one ACC

match over a four-year span, but didn't break through and win an ACC title until 2012.

A new mat room helped with that cause. In 2010, the program moved into this new area, which sits above Tech's football locker room and features more than 6,000 square feet of space complete with offices, lockers, showers and exercise equipment.

That helped Dresser lure in guys like Jarrod Garnett, Pete Yates, Devin Carter, and Nick Brascetta—all of whom would go on to earn All-America honors at the NCAA Championships. Behind Carter and Yates, the Hokies finished tied for 11th place in 2012, which marked their best finish as a program.

Since then, the Hokies have won three ACC championships and have finished in the top 10 at the NCAA Championships each of the past three seasons. Carter narrowly missed becoming the school's first wrestling national champion, finishing second at 141 pounds in 2014.

Obviously, a lot of that success is attributable to work done on the mat by his wrestlers, but a lot of it also comes back to Dresser's relentless approach off the mat. He established the South-East Regional Training Center in Christiansburg, and he raises the money through that to pay his volunteer assistant coaches—his two this season, Mike Zadick and Derek St. John, both won national titles at Iowa. Those coaches make his team better.

"He's been around some great ones and in great situations, and that's part of why he's been able to do a good job there," Gable said. "He's surrounded himself with some Iowa guys and other good people. Now, it's just a matter of how high he can take it. You've got a good one there."

Dresser's ability stretches beyond coaching. He is filled with marketing ideas. He usually schedules a wrestling match in Roanoke or Salem each season just to let the local crowd get a glimpse of a great product. He's held

practice on the Drillfield to show the students what they're missing. He's done the same at Hokie Village, the Hokies' football pregame festival. He loves holding matches at the Moss Arts Center, which, with fewer seats, better lighting and a better sound system, creates a better environment.

His passion and creativity, and his team's performances, are starting to gain more attention. Tech drew more than 5,000 for a mid-November match against then-No. 2 Penn State.

"I feel like it's part of my job," Dresser said. "Nobody wants to go to college and wrestle in front of 150 people. I remember coming to Virginia Tech matches when I was coaching at Christiansburg, and there would be 300 or 400 people there. I told people, 'You can fill this place. There's no reason why you can't,' and they would laugh at me."

"Well, we had 5,000 watch us wrestle Penn State—and that's not good enough. We need to have 10,000. We're going to have 10,000 before we're done. It's going to take a lot of people pulling, and it's going to take a good product."

"It's amazing. I was on the road recently, and I saw three different kids, and all three asked me, 'How many people come to your home matches?' I know what kids like."

He expresses frustration over a lack of student attendance—a common problem among Tech's Olympic sports and the basketball programs. But he's thinking about that, and no doubt, will come up with an idea.

That hardly overshadows what Dresser has done at Tech in less than a decade. He is a three-time ACC Coach of the Year and has coached 10 wrestlers to All-America honors. His teams have won three ACC titles and finished in the top 15 nationally on four straight occasions, including three top-10 finishes.

That leaves a top-five finish and a national championship left on the to-do list. Many observers feel that wrestling could be the first

program to win a team national title at Tech.

But can the Hokies do so in a sport dominated by Iowa, Iowa State, Oklahoma State and Penn State?

"Ohio State won it last year," Gable correctly pointed out, also noting that the Hokies beat Ohio State in a dual meet in Blacksburg last year. "They proved it could be done. Virginia Tech ought to be able to prove it. But it's tough to do."

The toughness of the task fuels Dresser. It keeps him awake at night and distracts him during Sunday sermons. He constantly keeps refining his message points to lure recruits with the ability to achieve the ultimate goal in any sport.

The Hokies lost Carter from last season's squad, but returned everyone else and added talent with the freshman class. Dresser thinks they are as close as they've veer been.


"On our very, very best day, this team is capable of winning a national title—if all stars align," he said. "But if the NCAA Tournament were today, I don't know if we'd be in the top 10. We've got a few injuries, and we've got a few guys that we need to tweak their brains. We've got a few guys that need to get in better shape."

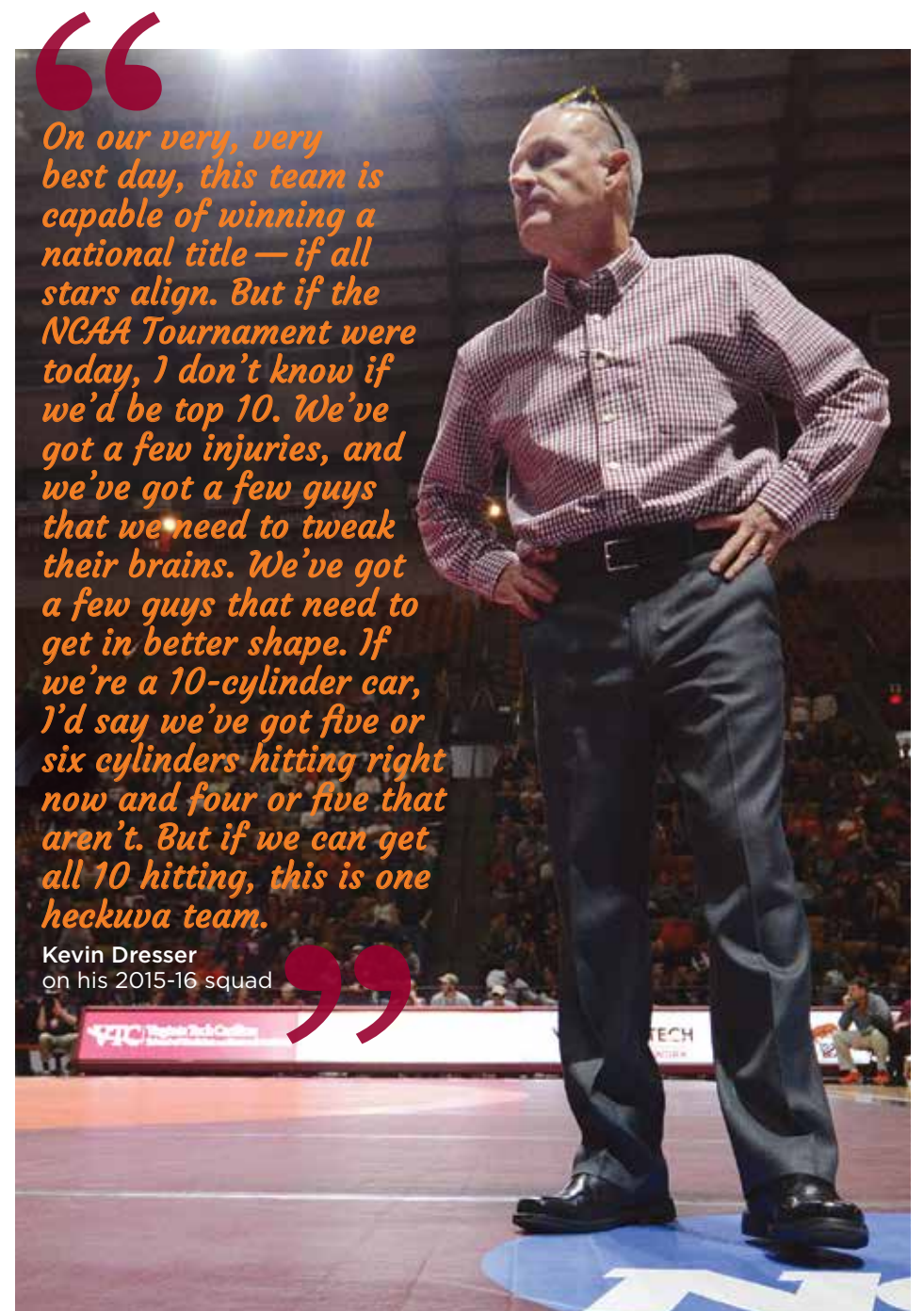
"If we're a 10-cylinder car, I'd say we've got five or six cylinders hitting right now and four or five that aren't. But if we can get all 10 hitting, this is one heckuva team."

"We're anywhere between 15 and 1, but there are a lot of teams like that. In any sport, the difference between 1 and 5 and 1 and 6 is not much."

Dresser puts his index finger and thumb almost together when he makes that point. That could be the difference between a top-10 or top-five finish and a national championship.

Dresser knows that it's the slimmest of margins. He also knows where the Hokies started.

A decade ago, the program was at ground zero. Now, the pinnacle is within sight. 



On our very, very best day, this team is capable of winning a national title—if all stars align. But if the NCAA Tournament were today, I don't know if we'd be top 10. We've got a few injuries, and we've got a few guys that we need to tweak their brains. We've got a few guys that need to get in better shape. If we're a 10-cylinder car, I'd say we've got five or six cylinders hitting right now and four or five that aren't. But if we can get all 10 hitting, this is one heckuva team.

Kevin Dresser
on his 2015-16 squad

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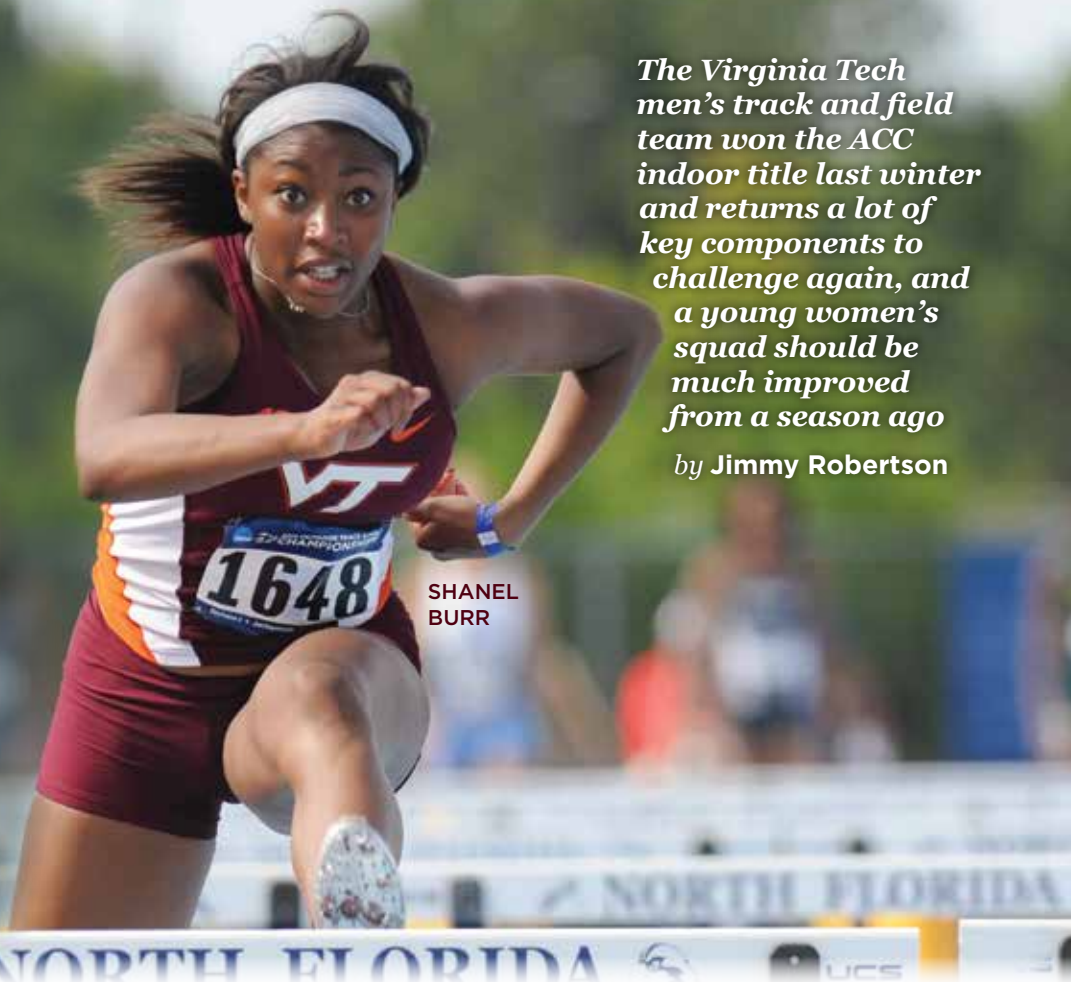
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TECH MEN'S TRACK SEARCHING TO REPEAT, WHILE WOMEN HOPE TO Make —a— Run



SHANEL
BURR

The Virginia Tech men's track and field team won the ACC indoor title last winter and returns a lot of key components to challenge again, and a young women's squad should be much improved from a season ago
by Jimmy Robertson

The Virginia Tech track and field teams open the 2016 season at the school's own Virginia Tech Invitational on Jan. 15-16. The two programs returned a combined seven gold medalists from last season's ACC Championships and nine All-Americans from the two NCAA events, giving Dave Cianelli, Tech's director of track and field and cross country, plenty of reasons for optimism for this season.

The men's team features 10 seniors, including guys like Thomas Curtin, Tomas Kruzliak, and Manuel Ziegler, who hold national championship aspirations. The women's team features just five seniors, but juniors Hanna Green and Irena Sediva figure to be in the national title hunt—Sediva won one last year, and the duo guided the Hokies to a 15th-place finish in the NCAA outdoor meet's team competition last spring.

Before breaking down the different areas on the teams, Cianelli answered a few questions about the 2016 programs:

Q: In talking with you following the outdoor track season last June, you felt like your teams could have a tremendous year this upcoming year. Do you still feel that way, as you get ready to open the 2016 track season?

DC: "I do, especially the men. This men's

team has really kind of come together, as far as what we envisioned with the new people we've gotten, and then we have a majority of the guys from last year returning. This has the makings to be the best team we've ever had. Obviously, everyone has to stay healthy and all that good stuff, but at least going into the season, I feel really, really good about the guys that we have and the new ones that have come in.

"On the women's side, we're still a young team. We only have three or four seniors on the entire team. The current freshman group that we have and the ones that have returned, I feel very good about them and how their fall has gone and what they look like now. I think we're a year away. The class that we just signed in November for next year is one of the best we've ever had—if not the best—as far as quality. When that group joins the current group ... I really think we're a year away from the women making a push to be at the top of the conference."

Q: You've won nine ACC titles in track and field and cross country. What has been the common denominator that has led to all that success?

DC: "The common denominator has been the staff—the coaches. Coach [Greg] Jack [throws], Coach [Ben] Thomas [distance] and

Coach [Bob] Phillips [pole vault], they've been here since the beginning or since I arrived. Those areas have been the meat and potatoes of our program, especially over the past three or four years.

"Also, we had success with the women first, starting in 2007 and winning the conference. The men came in really starting in 2009. It really coincided with us becoming fully funded in 2008. That was the catalyst for us to be able to have extra scholarships and go out and develop a complete team—and we saw immediate results from that. Since then, our men's team has always been up there."

Q: What has your new sprints coach, Tim Vaught, added to the staff?

DC: "I've watched him over the years at his previous schools—Coastal Carolina and UNC Charlotte. They would come up to our meets all the time during the indoor season, and I was impressed with the teams he was able to build at those institutions and the types of kids he was able to recruit. He was getting kids who were under the radar coming out of high school and developing them, and I felt that was a great fit for our program here and what we needed.

"He's an outstanding coach and has great energy. The student-athletes relate to him well

and respond well to what he's doing as far as training and so forth."

Now for a look at Tech's prospects for 2016 in each event category:

► MEN'S SPRINTS/HURDLES/JUMPS

TOP RETURNERS

Manuel Ziegler, David Prince, Will Kendall, Ryan Shepard, Chet Hebden, Dante Price, Darius Watkins, Austin Kolko, Alexander Merritt and Aaron Simpson

NEWCOMERS

Ihab El Hajri, Corey Hackett-Greene

OVERVIEW

Ziegler, who transferred from the University of Memphis two years ago, headlines this group. The redshirt senior from Dresden, Germany earned first-team All-America honors during the indoor season last spring after finishing in fourth place in the triple jump. He won the ACC title in this event, setting an ACC and school record with a jump of 54 feet, 6 inches. He also finished fourth in the long jump at the ACC meet.

Ziegler did not compete during the outdoor season.

El Hajri, a junior college transfer (Iowa Western), was the junior college national champion in the triple jump and a seven-time Moroccan national champion in the same event. Ziegler and he comprise a formidable one-two punch.

Watkins and Hebden, two sophomores, return after being a part of the 4x100-meter relay team that finished sixth at the ACC's outdoor meet. Watkins scored points in both the 100- and 200-meter events as well.

Watkins and Price figure to score points in the shorter sprints this season (e.g. the 60- and 100-meter dashes), while Simpson expects to do the same in the shorter hurdle events (110 hurdles).

CIANELLI'S TAKE

"Darius Watkins and Dante Price look outstanding. If they keep the momentum going, I'm expecting big things out of both of those guys. We have a transfer from Coastal Carolina coming in [Corey Hackett-Greene], and he's going to give us more of a 400-type runner, but he's very versatile. With him, we can put together a 4X100 relay team that is pretty formidable, so he is going to be a nice addition for us.

"Aaron Simpson is a hurdler as well. He improved as the season progressed last year all the way through the conference championships, but this fall, I'm seeing a different level of athlete. I think he can get in the mix and give us some help in the 110 hurdles.

"In the jumps, we're going to be strong in the triple jump with Manuel. We also have a new one in Ihab El Hajri starting in January.

He was going to be here in the fall, but ended up here in January. He's primarily a triple jumper, but can also long jump. He's been in the 52-foot range in the triple jump and in the 24-foot range in the long jump. With the two of them, that gives us a strong pair in those two events. Those are going to be big events for us when we get to the conference meet."



THOMAS
CURTIN

► MEN'S DISTANCE

TOP RETURNERS

Thomas Curtin, Patrick Joseph, Stuart Robertson, Neil Gourley, Darren Barlow, Andrew Gaiser, Daniel Jaskowak

NEWCOMERS

Peter Seuffer, Gaige Kern, Diego Zarate, Andrew Goldman

OVERVIEW

This should be the strongest contingent on the Hokies' squad, as both Curtin and Joseph won ACC titles last spring. Curtin won the

season preview | track & field

3,000-meter run during the indoor season and the 5,000-meter run during the outdoor season—and later earning All-America honors in both at the NCAA meets. He's also coming off a cross country season in which he won the ACC title and finished 22nd at the NCAA meet. The five-time All-American could be a contender for a national championship in the 3,000 or 5,000—or both—this season.

Joseph won the ACC title in the mile during the indoor season and went on to earn All-America honors at the NCAA's indoor meet.

Gourley finished third in the mile at the ACC's indoor meet and second in the 1,500-meter run at the league's outdoor event. Robertson was second in the 5,000 at the ACC's indoor meet and third in the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the league outdoor meet.

Keep an eye on Seuffer, as he was the ACC's Freshman of the Year in cross country this fall.

CIANELLI'S TAKE

"This distance group has just about everyone returning. There is a lot of leadership in that distance group, with older guys like Tommy, Neil, Patrick Joseph, and Darren Barlow. All those guys are veterans, and that leadership pays off when you have a large group of freshmen. That will definitely help the freshmen the first year. That's why I believe one or two will have a breakout year as a freshman. We've got the best vault group we've ever had, and probably the best distance crew we've ever had. It's more middle-distance oriented, but Tommy is one of the best in the country, and I expect Andrew Gaiser to give us some help in the 10,000. We have three scorers in the steeplechase [Robertson, Barlow and Jaskowak]. Patrick is very versatile. There is quality and depth."

► MEN'S THROWS

TOP RETURNERS

Tomas Kruzliak, Marek Barta, Jaka Muhar, Collin McKenny, Jordan Roach

NEWCOMER

Matija Muhar

OVERVIEW

This group figures to be better during the outdoor season because most of these throwers excel in outdoor events—the hammer throw, the javelin throw, and the discus.

Kruzliak leads the way. A 2013 national champion in the hammer throw, he returns for his final season after finishing in fourth place in the hammer throw at the NCAA Championships last spring. He earned All-America honors in both the indoor and outdoor seasons, claiming the indoor honors in the weight throw. He has won three straight ACC titles in the hammer throw, and he scored points for the team at the ACC's indoor meet by finishing fourth in the weight throw.

Continued on page 42

season preview | track & field

Continued from page 41

Barta, a sophomore, will be looking to improve upon his third-place finish in the discus at the league's outdoor meet and his seventh-place finish in the shot put at the ACC's indoor meet. Jaka Muhar, a senior, returns after finishing second in the javelin at the league's outdoor meet.

One to watch is Matija Muhar, Jaka's brother. He is ranked the No. 1 junior javelin thrower in the world and won a gold medal at the European Junior Championships in early 2015.

CIANELLI'S TAKE

"The javelin will be a big event for us, obviously, with Jaka and his brother, who is coming in. Marek will be in the discus again, and he was a national qualifier last year and third in the conference—and we have maybe the best conference as far as the top three go. He'll be back with Jordan Roach in the discus.

"Tomas is back for his final year, and he's a proven athlete. He's been a multiple ACC champion and All-American. So this will be a strong group, particularly during the outdoor season."

MEN'S POLE VAULT

TOP RETURNERS

Chris Uhle, Brad Johnson, Torben Laidig, Jared Allison, Jeffrey Linta



BRAD JOHNSON

NEWCOMER

Deakin Volz

OVERVIEW

Uhle, the ACC indoor champion last spring, is eligible for the outdoor season only, but still, this group still rivals the distance group as the deepest and strongest contingent on the squad. At the ACC's indoor meet last winter, five vaulters scored points, with Uhle winning

and Allison finishing third. At the ACC's outdoor meet, Johnson won the gold medal, while Allison and Linta came in third and fourth, respectively.

The group gets even stronger with the return of Laidig, who took a redshirt season during both the indoor and outdoor campaigns last year. In 2014, the German native earned All-America honors at both the NCAA indoor and

outdoor meets, and he won the ACC title at the league's indoor meet that year.

Volz, a freshman, could be a great one. He won the pole vault event at the New Balance Indoor High School National Championships last season.

CIANELLI'S TAKE

"The vault will be a strong event for us, as it has been over the years. Of this particular group, Chris Uhle has an outdoor season left, so he returns. Then Torben returns, and we signed one of the top—if not the top—high school vaulters in Deacon Volz. He was the national indoor record holder.

"As a group, collectively, this is the best we've had. Not just depth-wise, but the quality. We could have three or possibly four over that 18-foot range. Those guys look really good. That will be a big event for us."

WOMEN'S SPRINTS/HURDLES/JUMPS

TOP RETURNERS

Adeyeni Aromolaran, Courtney Blanden, Jada Gundran, Ciara Simms, Selina Tchume, Shanel Burr, Nora McKiver

NEWCOMER

Kacia Vines

OVERVIEW

This is a relatively inexperienced and unproven group, and new assistant coach Tim Vaught will be looking to add to the sprints area going forward. Much of this group's success hinges on the development of sophomores Blanden and Burr, along with McKiver, a junior. Blanden competes in the 100 and 200, while McKiver runs the 200 and the 60-meter hurdles. Burr also competes in the 60-meter hurdles.

Vines, the freshman, could help in the jumping events. The North Carolina native was a state champion in the long jump and the New Balance Emerging Elite Champion in the event. She also was a state runner-up in the 400.

CIANELLI'S TAKE

"We had a time trial in mid-December, and both Nora and Shanel looked very good. I'm expecting them to have very good years. We have a couple of newer people. We have a freshman, Kasha Vines, whom I think has a tremendous amount of talent. It's still undeveloped at this point, but we project her as being a hurdler or a 400-meter runner. She's a multi-talented individual, but I think she's going to be outstanding as an intermediate hurdler.

"As far as the straight sprint crew, Courtney Blanden looks good and Selina Tchume, too. Those two are going to be the ones to watch in the shorter sprints up to the 400. Collectively, I think that group is going to be able to do some things at the conference level that we didn't do last year. We weren't able to get things done there a year ago, but this year, I'm pretty confident that this group is going to do their part."

WOMEN'S DISTANCE

TOP RETURNERS

Hanna Green, Shannon Morton, Abigail Motley, Katie Kennedy

NEWCOMERS

Lauren Berman, Amanda Swaak, Jennifer Fleming, Julie Wiermerslage

OVERVIEW

Graduation all but wiped out a fairly strong distance crew from a season ago, but the Hokies do return Green, an All-American during both the indoor and outdoor seasons. Green won the 800 at the ACC indoor event and hopes to contend for a national title this season.

Morton, a senior, finished fourth in the mile at last spring's ACC indoor meet, and she gives the Hokies a scoring option in the 1,500 as well during the outdoor season. Morton may run some longer distances, as she ran well this fall during the cross country season, coming in a team-best 41st at the NCAA Southeast Regional.



SHANNON MORTON

Motley competes in the 1,500 and the 5,000, and Kennedy gives the Hokies another scoring option in both the 800 and the 1,500.


Berman also ran well this fall in cross country, finishing a respectable 45th at the NCAA regional, and so, too, did Swaak, who came in 51st at the regional. Fleming took a redshirt season this fall because of an injury, but she could help in some of the middle and longer distances.

CIANELLI'S TAKE


"Hanna is one of the top middle distance runners in the country, but in some of the longer stuff, there is going to be a void with who graduated last year (Paige Kvartunas and Sarah Rapp). We'll see who emerges. There is a huge group of freshmen, and a lot of them are middle distance-oriented, but out of that group, someone is going to emerge as that leader as far as the longer distances are concerned.

"I think we'll be very deep in the middle distances, and I think it's a talented group. What I'm hoping is that we can also get someone out of this group to be a scorer in the steeplechase and the longer distances, like the 5,000 and 10,000, even though, as we've built our distance team, the foundation has been the middle distances, more 800 and 1,500 types of athletes."

Continued on page 44



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► **WOMEN'S THROWS**

TOP RETURNERS

Irena Sediva, Sabine Kopplin, Eva Vivod

NEWCOMERS

Pavla Kuklova, Teagan Rasche

OVERVIEW

Any conversation about the women's throwers starts with Sediva, who won the national championship last summer in the javelin. The junior from the Czech Republic broke the ACC and school record en route to the title and was the ACC's Women's Field Performer of the Year. She should contend for another national title this season.

Kopplin, a redshirt senior from Germany, qualified for the NCAA Championships in the javelin and earned All-America honors in 2014 in the event. Vivod, a junior from Slovenia, also earned All-America honors in the javelin in 2014.

Kuklova and Rasche are newcomers to watch. Kuklova, a native of the Czech Republic, has competed at the World Junior Championships in the hammer throw, while Rasche, a native of Canada, competes in both the hammer throw and the javelin.

The Hokies, though, figure to get little scoring from this group during the indoor season — the javelin throw and hammer throw are outdoor events.

CIANELLI'S TAKE

"Indoor, we're going to be thin because most of our athletes are outdoor types, such as the hammer or javelin. Pavla Kuklova will probably throw the weight, although it's fairly new to her. We don't necessarily have that person. It's a work in progress. She's been a hammer thrower, and that's where she is going to make her mark."

"As a group, it's more of an outdoor type of group. We'll be stronger outdoors than indoors. You could say that for the men, too, but especially the women."

► **WOMEN'S POLE VAULT**

TOP RETURNERS

Kristen Lee, Emma King, Olivia Privitera, Erinn Schaal

NEWCOMERS

Erica Hjerpe, Hannah Meador

OVERVIEW

Lee and King lead the way among the women's vaulters. Lee, a junior, finished 10th at the ACC Championships during the indoor season and took a redshirt season during the outdoor campaign. She finished in the top 10 during both the indoor and outdoor ACC Championships in 2014. King, a redshirt sophomore, placed 15th at last spring's ACC outdoor meet.

Also, Hjerpe, a native of Finland, could be one to watch, as she has a personal record of better than 14 feet.

CIANELLI'S TAKE

"I expect Kristen to have a breakout year. She's dealt with some injuries, but right now, she's healthy, and she's had a good fall. We have a new vaulter, Erica Hjerpe from Finland, and I expect her to be at a high level herself. She has a PR of 14 feet. If she's able to match her PR, that would vie for a top-three spot [at the ACC meets], and that's where I believe Kristen should be."

"It's a pretty deep group, but our conference has improved. What it takes to score has gotten better and what it takes to be in the top three has gotten better. You could say that in just about every event across the board, though."



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