

TSL Extra

Issue 2, December 18, 2000

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TSL EXTRA

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers:

Man, what a crazy football season it's been, in more ways than one.

The last four months have been full of quite a bit of drama, both on the football field for the Hokies, and off the football field for TechSideline.com. Not only did the Hokies string together another ten-win season, flirting with the upper reaches of the BCS Rankings along the way, but they also almost lost their coach (to UNC) and their starting quarterback (to the NFL). Thankfully, both are staying at Tech.

Meanwhile, it has been a season of drastic change for TSL. A name change, the launch of the TSL Extra, and the introduction of a recruiting database have all kept me hopping far and above what the normal football season does.

Without question, football season is TSL's busiest time of the year. It's four months of pedal-to-the-medal non-stop work. So what kind of idiot would decide to change the name of his web site, introduce a new supplement, and put in extra time creating a database? Why not do that stuff in the offseason?

I don't know. As a friend of mind used to say, "Call me crazy, call me nuts ..."

The good news is, that's all behind me now. HokieCentral.com is now TechSideline.com, the recruiting database is going great, and the TSL Extra has been well-received.

Speaking of the TSLX, I thought issue #1 was decent, but I think you'll agree that this issue is outstanding. It's got some great material, including a profile of VT recruit Justin Hamilton from Clintwood High, plus an in-depth look at Tech's TV ratings for the 2000 football season. And that's just the beginning.

I've also made some structural changes. Each article now runs concurrently from one page to the next, instead of starting on one page and continuing in the back of the magazine. And all articles are now in a one-column format. The two-column format used in issue #1 looked nice, but I like to use a lot of tables in my work, and they don't fit very well in the two-column format.

All in all, I'm very proud of this issue, and I think you'll enjoy it. I only have one request: write me some letters! Starting next issue, we want to add a "Letters to the Editor" section, so send me some commentary on what you read here, and hopefully, we'll include your feedback in what could become an interesting new feature in the Extra.

Now, I've wasted enough of your time. Enjoy issue #2.



P.S. – As we do our best to earn an honest living, we greatly appreciate your unwillingness to share your TSL Extra password with others, as well as your discretion in not posting any of TSLX's articles on any websites.

Recruiting Profile

Clintwood High's Justin Hamilton

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Beth Hamilton Stanley got an inkling that her son Justin might turn out to be an athlete when he was about four years old.

"When he was four," she said, "before he could read words, he would get the newspaper, and he would open it up and read the box scores of baseball games. No joke. I wish I had taken a picture of this little kid, sitting on the couch like a big adult, with the paper wide open, looking at the box scores."

Fourteen years later, little Justin Hamilton isn't so little, and baseball isn't his favorite sport anymore. Football is. And it's Justin's ability to tote the rock - he has piled up over 5600 yards and 82 touch-downs in four years at Clintwood High in Clintwood, Virginia - that led the coaches at Virginia Tech to offer him a scholarship to play for the Hokies' Top 10 football team.

On Tuesday, December 12, Hamilton ended a recruiting process that lately had become a little hectic by accepting Virginia Tech's offer and giving his verbal commitment to join the Hokies in the Fall of 2001. Hamilton's list of favorite schools included Georgia Tech and Miami, but in the end, it came down to the Hokies and the Tennessee Volunteers.

Justin visited Tech and Tennessee on back-to-back weekends December 1st and December 8th, and once his trips were over, he wasted no time in giving the Hokies the word.

"I like that the program's on the rise," Hamilton says of Virginia Tech. "I feel that every year, they are Big East contenders. I felt that the opportunity to play, along with Lee Suggs, would be there early. And I was really comfortable with all the coaches and the area.

"I really like Coach Wiles," Hamilton says of Tech defensive line Coach Charlie Wiles, who recruited him. "I think we'll have a good relationship, even past the four years that I'm at Virginia Tech."

No one in the small town of Clintwood, which is in the far reaches of Southwest Virginia, along the Kentucky border, was surprised by Justin's choice. Bill Castle, the athletic director and head boy's basketball coach at Clintwood High, said, "I graduated from Tech, and my brother did, and a lot of the faculty here did, so we were tickled pink that he committed to Tech."

According to Hamilton himself, Tech was always the team to beat. "From the beginning, VT was in the race, and throughout the whole recruiting process, I told the coaches and my mom and grandmother that Virginia Tech was on top, and all the other schools had to reach Virginia Tech. And in the end, no other school did."

For that, Hokie fans and coaches are grateful. A first-team All Group A running back in 1999, Hamilton entered the 2000 season as a SuperPrep preseason All-American and as the Roanoke Times's fourth-ranked player in the state of Virginia. In SuperPrep's Preseason 2000 issue, one college coach described Hamilton as "a Terry Kirby (former UVa standout and NFL running back) kind of guy. Runs straight up and down. He can really take a game over at tailback."

Recruiting Profile

Justin Hamilton

But Hamilton's accomplishments on the field in football-crazy Clintwood tell less than half the story of his ability as an athlete, and even less about him as a person. Because when you start talking about Justin Hamilton with those who know him, it's not his ability as an athlete that they talk about first. No, they talk about what he's like as a person, and the praise they heap upon him would probably embarrass the unassuming young tailback with the bright future, if he were to hear it first-hand.

Athletically, a Jack of All Trades

"A lot of people around here will tell you that they think baseball is his best sport," says Beth Stanley. "And then you have some people that say no, basketball is. But a lot of people will say that baseball is."

But Hokie fans don't need to worry about losing Justin Hamilton to baseball's minor leagues, or having him split his time between Frank Beamer's football team and Ricky Stokes's basketball team. Justin gave up baseball years ago, and in college, he'll concentrate solely on football.

"He played baseball up until he was about 13 or 14," Stanley says. "He was involved in an AAU league over the summers and they played, gosh, I don't know how many games. 125 games, or something like that. I could be exaggerating, but it felt like a 125. It was a bunch, a whole bunch."

"It turned out that a lot of the parents of the kids on the baseball team started fussing with each other, and he just had a bad taste in his mouth about the whole thing after that. And we just did not have a good baseball program then, so he just decided that in the spring, he would run track to help with football."

As for basketball, Hamilton loves the sport. Last year, he averaged 24 points and 12 rebounds a game for Clintwood and was named MVP of the Lonesome Pine District. Hamilton told SuperPrep last summer that Virginia Tech and Wake Forest had both offered him basketball scholarships, and according to Castle, who coaches Hamilton's Clintwood basketball team, Ricky Stokes has told Hamilton that "if he wanted to come on board, he'd be welcome."

Hamilton's pretty good in track, too. Last year, he won state championships in the 110-meter and 330-meter hurdles.

So with all that ability, how did Justin Hamilton come to settle on football as his sport of choice? That's easy. Football is king in Southwest Virginia, and the Lonesome Pine District, despite being a group A district, has produced some great football players. Powell Valley's Thomas Jones had a great career at the University of Virginia, and his younger brother Julius is already making an impact at Notre Dame. Now the highly-recruited Hamilton is the LPD's latest star.

Stanley sums it up. "In our town, where we live, the tradition is football. Justin has grown up into it. When you talk about Clintwood, you talk about football. Had basketball been the traditional sport, I think he would have gone into basketball, or even baseball. But here, it's football."

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Justin Hamilton

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When he puts those other sports behind him and concentrates on football, Hamilton isn't likely to look back. And football better look out. If there's one thing Justin Hamilton knows how to do, it's work hard and reach his goals.

"One thing that I've always admired about him is his work ethic," says Stanley. *Work ethic.* How many mothers describe their sons that way? "It seems like he has always had a strong work ethic in everything he does since the day he was born. He seems to be able to set very realistic goals and do what it takes to achieve those goals."

She must be right, because without even hearing what she has said, Justin Hamilton describes himself like this: "One thing I do is try to set a lot of goals for myself. I've already started setting goals for my career at Virginia Tech. My first major goal is to be able to play as a true freshman. And the next is to carry the ball ... I don't know if I should say *a lot*, but a good amount for a true freshman."

Virginia Tech's coaches might do well to pay close attention to that statement and think twice about their policy of redshirting most true freshmen when it comes to Hamilton. Because the next thing out of his mouth is, "Academically, I want to graduate in four years. Of course, I want to have good grades. Not just good enough to keep my eligibility, either. I want to get A's and B's."

Ah, yes, academics. The world's full of kids who can run with the football. The true gems have balance in their lives, and Hamilton has the other side of the coin mastered, as well. As a junior, he scored 1000 on his SAT's, and he entered this school year with a 3.9 GPA.

"That comes from my mom, and my grandmother and grandfather, who has passed now," Hamilton says of his academic achievements. "Academics always came first with them, and that translates into how I always try to put a lot of effort into my schoolwork."

Gosh, the kid's got it all. He's probably full of himself, right?

Staying Grounded

"I've been around Justin since he was a toddler," Castle says of his star basketball player. "You'll never hear him float his own boat. He'll never tell you how many points he had, or how many yards he had in a game, or how many touchdowns. He's pretty humble about those kinds of things. He's a good young man."

"We do an all-sports athletic banquet at the end of each school year. I keep up with whatever accolades or honors are bestowed upon our athletes here at our school, keep it on file, and I've typed it up year after year on Justin, and he just has a truckload of trophies, of things that he has won throughout the years."

"But the most amazing thing about him is his humbleness. He doesn't go around talking about

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himself, and that, to me, means so much. When he made his announcement (of his verbal to VT) in front of several members of the media, I think they gathered that idea. He said that he had thought it over a lot, and that he wanted to make a decision that was best for his family, himself, and everyone included.”

When asked to describe his son, mother Beth Stanley pauses for a second. Terms like “work ethic,” and comments about his various athletic abilities are far from her mind. “He’s just a wonderful kid,” she gushes. “He has an excellent head on his shoulders. And he’s a wonderful big brother. I have two daughters, ages 9-and-a-half and 6.”

Another pause. “He’s just a good kid. He doesn’t put on airs. He’s just a good kid.”

Castle doesn’t pull any punches.

“Virginia Tech has got one of the best kids that they could have gotten anywhere in this country,” he says. “Not only as an athlete, but as a human being.”

Analysis

Happy Hunting Grounds: Recruiting Havens

by Gary Criswell, VirginiaPreps.com

As a follow up to last month's article on building a college coaching staff I would like to weigh in on the Beamer to UNC situation, which swirled around the coaching community as I wrote this new article. I believe this is a normal course of events for almost any coach that experiences success at any school that doesn't have a long, elite football pedigree.

I have not seen where anyone is talking about how a coach thinks when pondering a career move. Money helps, but it's not about the money, it's about accomplishment and getting the tools to get the job done. Only at UNC could Coach Beamer; a) rebuild another program- not many coaches get to do that twice in a career at that level, b) coach in the ACC-a more stable and highly regarded conference than the Big East (deserved or not), c) work with new facilities that have already been built, and d) do all this while having a shot at retaining the same recruiting base he enjoyed at Tech while maintaining UNC's potentially extensive recruiting reach. UNC would have allowed Beamer to take on a new challenge without dealing with too many unknowns that would lurk at say, Alabama. That being said, I still couldn't see him leaving his alma mater - and he didn't. Now let's talk recruiting.

College Football coaches are paid to do three things; win games, fill seats and graduate players. Any staff that loses sight of those facts won't keep their jobs very long. We all know about obtaining the talent to win games, but coaches also recognize that the correct recruits can also help a program accomplish goals two and three on a more consistent basis.

In-state recruits fill stadiums, keep the program in the local papers, and more quickly form a bond with the "faithful" that always translates into ticket sales. Concentrating on your home state is also much more cost and time effective. Winning your home state's recruiting "wars" is more than about pride; it is about a strategic advantage.

Much has been written recently about the recruiting talent in Virginia. Comparisons have been made with Florida, California, and Pennsylvania, especially about with regards to speed and skill position players. My personal reaction has always been; "not so fast my friend" when confronted with such accolades for my home state's talent base. Caution must be exhibited anytime you compare our state with any true Sun Belt state, especially one that has high school Spring Football.

However, the state of Virginia can take pride in its depth of recruiting talent. I don't believe that there is a state the size of Virginia that is able to sustain two I-A, seven I-AA, and three Division II (or similar) programs. That's 725 scholarship players with a lion's share of the recruits coming from the Commonwealth. These teams are just not "showing up" on Saturdays. In the 90's there were many years that four or even five of these twelve scholarship programs went on to post-season play. This success results in keeping football in the sports pages and fuels the enthusiasm for the sport of football among high school players, thereby ensuring that the pipeline will stay full.

Where are the recruiting havens in the State of Virginia? I never bought totally into the idea that there is one area of the State that consistently yields the best recruits both in quality and quantity year after year. Obviously the consensus opinion is that the AAA Eastern Region yields the most

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football talent. They have the right mix of population, demographics, and consistent levels of competition that makes the area the “first stop” among the college recruiters. When it comes to finding the best talent in Virginia’s high schools, it is not always a question of what areas you recruit. The consistently successful recruiter has “his schools” that he knows yields the best players; i.e. ready for the rigors of college football.

While being blessed with great athletes is the first criteria for qualifying as a recruiting haven, there are other factors that make certain schools the place to be during the recruiting season. In fact, when I was a college recruiter, with the rules as they are today and not being able to spend much time with a recruit, I always evaluated the home life and even the neighborhood in which the recruit lived. This went a long way to determine if the player would fit in with our program.

When a recruit is a far superior athlete and an accomplished student and obviously would be at the head of anybody’s recruiting class, it really doesn’t matter from what school he comes, you recruit him and sign him. But when your incoming class is filling up, and you are sorting out whom you will offer scholarships to, the intangibles of the recruits’ background starts to break the ties. Many times you settle on the kids from the same area and the same schools. Let’s look at what these schools have to offer.

Friday Night Fever

I know it sounds simplistic to state that you want players from winning programs. Recruiting players that know how to win is desirable for obvious reasons. But its not the winning, it’s learning how to prepare, the exposure to big games and the appreciation for tradition that builds the mindset of a strong recruit.

Successful high school programs are usually not simply a collection of good athletes with good coaches that show up at the same school and win football games. Great high school programs teach their players to pay the price that it takes to prepare them physically. There are several high school programs in this state that are renowned for getting their players fit to play. The great programs have their athletes in a year round program when they are not participating in other sports. This regimen not only enhances the physical development of the future recruit, it prepares them for the full time job that awaits a major college student/athlete.

Athletes that are used to playing in a “big game” are always attractive recruiting targets. I also liked to recruit in districts that were strong from top to bottom because I liked to think that they were challenged each week. It is also easier to get meaningful tape to evaluate a player when he plays a tough opponent each week.

Traditionally strong programs also instill a certain attitude on their players that translates well at the next level. I also had great success at every high school level (A-AAA) when the players played in communities, both rural and urban, that the games still managed to be big events. It is beneficial to bring in recruits that have played in front of big crowds.

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The Coach

Probably the biggest question that I field from parents is, “What should my son’s coach do to promote him?” My stock answer is that if your son is good enough, colleges will find him. But there are coaches that do a better job of promoting their athletes than others. A high school head coach’s impact on his athletes’ recruiting fortunes basically fall into three categories: 1.) their cooperation with college programs; 2.) helping evaluate their talent; and 3.) the system to which they expose their athletes.

Believe it or not, getting their athletes into scholarship programs is not a high priority with some high school coaches. In other programs, getting their players into college seemingly overrides the goal of actually winning championships. Assistant Coaches out on the road recruiting really need to rely on the HS coach to get him the information he needs in a timely fashion. I can name high school programs right now that college recruiters will not go into unless there is a super prospect available because the coach there can not be counted on to reliably deliver the desired data; whether they be transcripts or game tapes.

Coaches have to be very careful not to oversell their players. College recruiters will put up with the occasional “6-4” offensive lineman that loses two inches on the way to his official visit. But a high school coach can get tainted when he consistently pushes players on recruiters that are unlikely (according to the college’s evaluation) to be able to cut it in college football. High school coaches understandably get emotionally attached to these players and that clouds their judgment. College assistants are salesmen and they don’t like to say “no” too often. They tend to gravitate to coaches that can objectively evaluate their players as well lead them (the recruiters) to other players that they have coached against. Great high school coaches are great scouts also.

There is also one other trend that I need to point out that speaks directly to the “marketing” of high school football prospects. Camps have become huge on the recruiting landscape. Obviously a hands-on experience is invaluable when recruiter meets recruit and gets to evaluate him in a camp setting. What is overlooked is the high school head coach who has the ability to put together a large contingent of players to attend State U’s camp, sprinkled with a couple of blue chips, all paying full price. If you think that there is not a quid-pro-quo relationship involved here then you share a rosier picture of the business world than I do. This is NCAA-legal when the high school coach is compensated as a clinician or camp counselor for the college camp, and is a valuable tool for his team, getting them together as a team during the off-season.

Inside the Halls

I am pleased to say that I survived some major NCAA academic reforms while in college coaching. I found out very early in my career that there was a sure fire way to figure out if a high school program really “got it” when it came to football scholarships. A clueless guidance office was a true danger signal that the prospect was already at a serious disadvantage. I also learned very quickly where the academic havens were and where SAT was thought to be short for Saturday.

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It is always helpful to recruit players that are used to a challenging academic environment. While you might think that this is becoming more difficult given the condition of our nation's schools, I have found that an athlete that is identified early as a prospect can get the correct mix of "GPA builders" and college prep classes. I have even seen the reverse effect when it comes to college worthiness. I ran into a recruit last year at a great high school that had an 1100+ SAT score but could not qualify for a Division II scholarship because his GPA was too low. Go figure.

The Boys in the Hood

You can call it what you want, but I don't think I could recruit players from wealthy homes. I always felt that you had to be double sure with recruits that never wanted for anything while they grew up. Give me a middle class kid anytime. It would be comforting to me as a fan if my favorite team recruited a lot of players from true working class neighborhoods.

I think everyone who has been a college assistant has a story like the one that I'm closing this article with. I recruited a quarterback (my first signee) from a Virginia city that was just large enough to have a neighborhood that could only be described as a slum. This young man had an arm that Jeff George could be proud of and had overcome some serious academic deficiencies.

In those days, you could take the letter of intent to the recruit and have him and a parent sign it in person. As I arrived at the home, I knew that I was in for an experience. The house had three rooms and was drafty but neat. The smell of kerosene fumes ensured that my sports jacket was soon headed to the cleaners. As we munched on chicken wings I explained the details of the scholarship.

As we proceeded, I noticed that the father was becoming increasingly agitated, and soon his hands began to noticeably shake to the point that he might not have been able to sign the documents. It was only after we "sealed the deal" with a drink that he got control of himself again. I realized that the family had attempted to sober up the Dad before I came for my visit, and I asked for that celebratory drink myself to purposely relieve him from his distress.

The new college quarterback never returned home after he left for his freshman year. He became a four year starter, earned his degree and he is now a guidance counselor. I always believed that this young man appreciated the opportunity that he had and he capitalized on it. There are a lot of recruiting nuggets out there; you just need to know where to look.

Enjoy the game!

Gary Criswell has a varied and interesting career, including stints as a high school JV football coach and head wrestling coach at Henrico High School, a baseball umpire, and an assistant football coach at Virginia Union University. Gary now works as a Sales Manager for Network Business Furniture, serves as an analyst for WRNL's High School and College sports broadcasting, and continues to work as an advisor to college coaches on recruiting. Gary also runs the VirginiaPreps.com web site for Rivals.com

Feature

Son of a Preacher Man

by Neal Williams

Earlier this month, Lee Suggs traveled to Richmond to receive The Dudley Award at a banquet at The Downtown Club.

The Dudley Award is named in honor of a Virginia Cavalier, “Bullet” Bill Dudley. It is symbolic of the player of the year in Virginia and is voted on by 15 newspaper, television and radio reporters around the state. Each school can only nominate one player. Suggs was Virginia Tech’s choice and was the unanimous choice of the voting panel.

Receiving the award meant posing for a lot of pictures, shaking a whole bunch of hands and - finally - speaking to a crowd of several hundred people after dinner was served.

Pictures? Fine. Handshakes? Fine.

Speaking to a big group? That’s a whole ‘nuther thing right there for Suggs, a quiet man who considers “Hello” a long conversation.

But to the surprise of no one who knows him, Suggs got the job done.

Looking resplendent in a gray pinstripe suit, Suggs made his way to the podium and spoke a few well-chosen words. He thanked his parents, he thanked his teammates, he thanked his coaches, he thanked God and he thanked The Downtown Club. Then he took his trophy and went back to his table.

Suggs’ speaking style is like his running style. There’s nothing fancy, he just gets the job done.

“Lee’s not a showy-type person at all,” Tech coach Frank Beamer said. “But he sure can put on a show.”

The Dudley Award was just one of the rewards Suggs got for his amazing sophomore season. He was the Big East Conference’s tri-offensive player of the year. (Tri? He shared the award with Pittsburgh’s Antonio Bryant and Miami’s Santana Moss.) He was a third-team Associated Press All-America honoree. He was the Roanoke Times’ state offensive player of the year.

And it was an amazing year.

Consider:

- Suggs rushed for 1,207 yards on 222 carries - it’s the best season yardage-wise for a back in Frank Beamer’s 14 years in charge.
- Suggs scored 28 touchdowns in 11 games, doubling the previous Tech best for touchdowns

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in a season. *Doubling* it. His 15.27 points per game led the nation.

- He rushed for at least 100 yards six times to tie a school record.
- He set a Big East record for touchdowns in a game with five against Central Florida. He added four more the following week against Virginia to give him nine in the final two games of the season.

But there's one stat than stands tall above all the others. Suggs didn't lose a fumble all season. Not one. Playing a position where big, strong, fast guys plow into him regularly, carrying the ball 222 times, he dropped it only twice, and both of those were recovered by the Hokies. It's like a quarterback never throwing an interception. It's like a pitcher never allowing a home run.

It's one of the many reasons Tech running backs coach Billy Hite loves Suggs so much. "The last thing I say to them at every meeting is protect the football," Hite said. "Ninety-five percent of the time, when there is a fumble it is a mental mistake. Occasionally you are going to get the hell knocked out of you where you will fumble the ball. Usually, it is a problem with the way you're carrying it. And Lee almost never put it on the ground."

His other numbers are impressive, too.

Twenty-eight touchdowns? While it is well short of Barry Sanders' national record of 39 in 1988, it is still an eye-popping number. Is it just because Tech gave him the ball when it got close? Or it is the other way around - because he was so good, Tech gave him the ball whenever it got close. For the regular season, Tech scored a touchdown 75 percent of the time it got inside the opponents' 20-yard line. The average in the National Football League through 12 weeks was 59 percent.

Think about all the times you've watched a team get a first-and-goal and struggle to score. The bumbling Redskins had six cracks from inside the three in a recent game and settled for a field goal.

Not the Hokies. They get down there, and they're in the end zone. That's Suggs.

"He has an amazing nose for the end zone," Tech quarterback Dave Meyer said.

Suggs' yardage total is also impressive, considering it came on just those 222 carries. That's about 20 a game. Given his 5.4 per-carry average, Suggs might have been over 1,500 yards with another 10 carries a game. But there's a flip side to that as well. He might not have been able to maintain his average or been such a force near the goal line. He might have worn down.

Hite will never give too many carries to one back. He learned his lesson, he said, 20 years ago with

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Cyrus Lawrence.

“If you let a guy carry it too many times, something’s bound to happen and it is usually bad,” Hite said.

Suggs has always had big numbers. He rushed for 5,056 yards and scored 50 touchdowns during his career at Roanoke’s William Fleming High. But he didn’t do much as a redshirt freshman at Tech and the magnitude of his sophomore season was something of a surprise.

Suggs, like all good running backs, first credits his offensive line for his successful season. His role, he said, was maturing as a back to the point where he could pick up and follow his blocks. Added strength also helped. A well-chiseled 207-pounder, the 6-foot Suggs said he really felt the benefits of his offseason strength work. He has lifted weights in the past, but this year, he reached a level where it made a significant difference.

Getting that much out of Suggs about himself takes some work. He can be in a room and no one will know. He got his quiet nature and work ethic from his parents, Lee Sr. and Juanita Suggs.

“I’d like to think my wife and myself had an influence in the final product that Lee is now,” Suggs Sr. said. “We try to take everything in stride. We’re appreciative of all the accolades but I don’t think you’ll ever find us patting ourselves on the back or drawing attention to ourselves.”

The elder Suggs stays pretty busy, though he does find time to see Lee Jr. play and will be on hand for the Gator Bowl.

By day, he works for the Virginia Employment Commission in Roanoke. He’s also the pastor at Schaefer Memorial Baptist Church in Christiansburg. That’s two full-time jobs.

“That’s my situation and we make the best of it,” Suggs Sr. said. “I don’t complain. I just try to do it to the best of my ability.”

Which is the way his son goes about his business of carrying himself and carrying the football. Hite said the image of Suggs as a quality young man is not a mirage.

“He’s wonderful. Terrific family background, very unselfish,” Hite said. “With all the success he’s had, he makes sure to pass along the praise to everyone who is responsible.

“You hate the old cliché, but it is true. If you had a daughter, Lee’s the type you’d like to see come through the front door.”

Carpenter's Team: Champions of the South

by Jonathan Fisher

Editor's Note: this article was submitted by Jonathan Fisher to TechSideline back in October. Jonathan wrote the article when he was an undergraduate student at Tech and submitted it in December of 1997 as a research paper for his Historical Methods class. Since the article has its origins as a research paper, it has a research paper "feel" to it, such as citing sources when quotes and information are given. Nonetheless, it is very interesting reading. It is also admittedly very long, so we advise setting aside sufficient time before reading it. While editing this paper for inclusion in the TSL Extra, nearly all of the original content was preserved unaltered.

Prologue

As fans enter Cassell Coliseum, they are greeted by a picture and sign which reads, "Frank Loria, Virginia Tech's First All-American." While accurate, the late, great star of the 1960s was not the first Tech player to receive respect at the national level. In an era before NCAA regulation, polls, and even statistics, Hunter Carpenter led Virginia Tech to its first truly great football season, a 9-1 mark in 1905. The maroon and orange did not win nine games in one season again until Bill Dooley's squad went 9-2 in 1983.

1905 was Hunter Carpenter's final season, and he went out with a bang. His statistics are phenomenal, despite limited playing time. Yet the most alluring part of this great season was the controversy surrounding the game with the University of Virginia, in which Carpenter was the key figure. Blood was so bad following this battle that the two teams did not play again for seventeen years. As great as Carpenter was, it is important to note that he was not the team captain in his final year, and in fact did not even play in four of the ten games. The team as a whole was a great one, perhaps pound for pound the best the school has ever seen.

Game 1: V.P.I 86, Roanoke College 0

The first game of the 1905 season was played on September 30 in Blacksburg. The Techmen scored two minutes into the game and never looked back, posting a 52-0 lead after a shortened fifteen minute first half. The second period lasted only ten minutes and saw the cadets play only reserves in route to the 86-0 thrashing, the most lopsided score in the history of Tech football, in any era. The reports of the time stated that Roanoke College gave a good effort, but in the end were just too small. Tech ran no deception plays, instead relying on the size advantage to run off tackle and around end for anywhere from ten to thirty yards per play.

In his book *Hoos 'n' Hokies*, Roland Lazenby wrote that it was this game in "which Carpenter was said to average better than 20 yards per carry (page 22)." This statement seems to fit better however in Lazenby's other work *Legends*, as both *The Virginia Tech* and *The Richmond Times Dispatch* indicate that Carpenter did not even play in the game. The latter listed Harris, Tredwell, Strickling, and Connor as the major contributors for Tech. The referee for the game was Professor Vawter (probably Jr.), while Instructor Miles served as umpire (*The Virginia Tech*: October 23, 1905).

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Game 2: V.P.I. 12, Cumberland University 0

This game is somewhat of a mystery. No account exists in *The Virginia Tech* or *The Times Dispatch*, at least not anywhere near the scheduled game date. In columns later in the year which recap the season, the game is also absent. Perhaps it was canceled and played at a later date. The score above is straight from the 1906 *Bugle*.

Game 3: V.P.I. 16, Army 6

Tech proved victorious in this game, which was probably the most significant one the school had played to this point, at least on the national level. Gleaming with regional pride, *The Virginia Tech* proclaimed:

For the first time in the history of foot-ball in the South, a team representing a Southern institution has met a representative Northern institution and defeated them by a decisive score. This victory is one in which every lover of the game in our Southland can justly feel proud for it clearly demonstrates the possibilities of Southern athletics and Southern systems of coaching (October 23, 1905).

Army was a team already on the scene, annually playing such powerful schools as Harvard and Yale. While surprised by the outcome of the game, it appears that the players from West Point received the Tech team well and accepted defeat humbly. The same could not be said of the Northern press, which immediately began whining and making excuses. *The New York Times* wrote: Against a strong eleven West Point's defeat would not have been surprising, in spite of the hard luck she has been playing in, in the matter of injuries, but against the Virginia Polytechnic boys she was certainly not expected to meet defeat (Sunday October 15, 1905, p. 13).

The game went as follows: Army won the toss and received the ball. After gaining nothing, they punted to Tech and Carpenter returned it thirty yards. Tech's first drive resulted in a Carpenter field goal; Tech 4, Army 0.

Tech again held Army and mounted a fifty yard scoring drive culminating in a seven yard touchdown run by the left halfback Treadwell, who was injured on the play. As well as kicking the extra point, Carpenter also chipped in two runs for twenty-seven yards on the drive; Tech 10, Army 0.

Tech's next possession was a long grinding drive that ended on a three yard scoring plunge by Wilson. Carpenter added the extra point; Tech 16, Army 0.

The Cadets from West Point were truly on their heels at this point. On Tech's final possession of the first period, Carpenter ripped off runs of five to ten yards at a time. After three quick first downs the half ended with Tech threatening.

Christmas came early in West Point as Carpenter fumbled the opening kick of the second half and Army took over on the Tech seventeen. The men from Blacksburg fought hard to defend the goal,

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forcing Army to run nine plays, seven of which netted two yards or less. The fullback Tourney finally scored on a half yard run; Tech 16, Army 6.

The rest of the game was back and forth, highlighted by Carpenter, who had a nice thirty yard run but missed several field goals. The gun sounded, and the Techmen returned to Blacksburg victorious.

Game 4: V.P.I. 56, Gallaudet College 0

The team from Gallaudet was no match for V.P.I. Though quick and skilled in the kicking game, they simply could not overcome the size and strength differential. Hunter Carpenter dominated the show with 129 yards on only six carries. He scored two touchdowns and handled most of the kicking chores, racking up seventeen total points. The rest of the team ran for 250 yards, including a 72 yard game by the Quarterback Nutter (*The Virginia Tech*; October 27, 1905).

Game 5: V.P.I. 35, North Carolina 6

In the ten years since Tech had begun playing football, this had turned into one of the most hard fought rivalries. Following this shellacking by V.P.I. the series record lay at (3-3-3), all three ties scoreless. The point totals for the nine games; 76 for Tech, 71 for the Tar Heels. The players from Chapel Hill, who prided themselves on tough play on the defensive side of the ball, could only watch in amazement as their former teammate Hunter Carpenter rolled off 255 yards on only eleven carries. This performance included runs of 30, 50, 56, and 80 yards. The QB Nutter also had a solid game.

"Their former teammate?" you say? Yes, Carpenter had played at UNC the previous year. Hunter Carpenter hated the University of Virginia so much that in 1904 he transferred to UNC, which had a great team that year, in an attempt to beat UVa. Carpenter had been unsuccessful in five attempts at Tech to beat UVa. The Hoos nipped the Heals 12-11, and Carpenter returned to Blacksburg for his last season

What appeared at first to be another classic match up turned into a pummeling. Tech took its first possession and mounted a sustained drive, with Willson scoring from two yards out. Carpenter's kick made it Tech 6, UNC 0. Tech later fumbled on its own 35 and Carolina scored on a long run: Tech 6, UNC 6. On Tech's next possession Carpenter hinted of the carnage awaiting the Tar Heels in the second period. After he ripped off 23 yards on three carries, the Tech drive seemed to stall. Facing third down and sixteen to go, Carpenter lined up to punt, only to tuck the ball under his arm and race around end 56 yards on the fake for the touchdown. The kick failed, and Tech led at the half 11-6.

The second half was a spanking by Tech. On plays too numerous to mention, Carpenter ran the Tar Heels into the ground. He added his final thoughts for the afternoon during the game's last minutes, rumbling for an 80 yard touchdown. Carolina never knew what hit them; final score - Tech 35, UNC 6.

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Origins of the 1905 Tech-UVA Controversy

The 1905 Tech-UVA game was the most controversial game ever played between the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech. It is also extremely important in the history of Tech football because it marked the first win over that state rival, and Hunter Carpenter's only one. Yet this now legendary game was almost never played, and even when the game was not in question, the status of Hunter Carpenter was.

The controversy had its roots in February of 1905 at the annual meeting of the Virginia Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association, the regulatory body at the time. At this meeting a contract for a Tech-UVA game the following fall was drawn up. During the same conference however, UVA decided to withdraw from the association for an unrelated reason.

In response to an August inquiry by the Tech management, UVA officials stated that the game would not be regulated by any VCAA rules except Article 7, which called for lists of players to be provided to the opposition's management upon request. By that clause, the request must be submitted at least 15 days before the contest. In violation of the rules which they had set, the UVA management wired their list on October 23, only twelve days before the game. The following day Manager Bryan wired again, and after explaining why the violation had occurred, he closed with a statement which caught the Tech officials by surprise:

Lest you should contemplate playing Carpenter against Virginia I write to protest him and to state that his athletic career is too besmirched with professionalism for Virginia to submit to your using him in a game with her (Reprinted in *The Virginia Tech*; November 5, 1905).

The faculty committee at Tech at once made inquiries into the accusation, and after they were satisfied as to the amateur status of all players on the team, a response was sent on October 25 which stated that all players named on the original list would in fact play.

Two days later the plot thickened. UVA officials now claimed not only to have hard evidence against Carpenter, but also listed Nutter, Webber, Harris, and Strickling as being suspected of professionalism as well. Although admittedly having no tangible evidence against these other players (and apparently not consulting anyone at the acclaimed law school about the workings of justice in America), it was added that they could play, provided their innocence was proven. This letter was received on October 29th, only five days before the game, and was UVA's first official protest against any of Virginia Tech's players.

In a response the following day the Tech management pointed out (accurately) that UVA, having removed itself from the VCAA, had no basis upon which to protest the amateur status of any players. In fact it was only UVA which had violated the contract in any respect thus far (the late list). It was further stated that the claim that Hunter Carpenter was not a "legitimate" student had been received as "having reflected upon the integrity of the Executive of the College." In response to a similar list sent by UVA, a signed affidavit attesting to the amateur status of all players on the Tech

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team was sent.

At this point UVA officials reaffirmed their position that Carpenter would not be allowed to play until he had been cleared by an impartial committee. Tech's management countered by saying that such an investigation would not be practical at such a late date, and that the Tech team was prepared to play the game under the terms agreed to in the original contract. In a final telegram, received at 8:00 p.m. the Thursday before the game, there was the first mention of the nature of the evidence against Carpenter. The claim apparently involved the previous season, which he had spent at North Carolina. No other details were provided.

After some debate by the Tech Athletic Council, the decision was made to send the team. Several members of the council went along to assist in any further discussions. Upon arrival in Charlottesville on game day, UVA officials stated that Carpenter would be allowed to play if both he and his father offered honor statements attesting to his amateur status. Once these statements were procured, the officials did an about face, refusing to accept them and instead demanding sworn affidavits. At this point the Tech management decided to terminate all discussion and present the team on the field. Just before game time, UVA offered a final ultimatum, sworn affidavits or no game. Their bluff was called, and the game began (*The Virginia Tech*; November 10, 1905).

Hunter Carpenter maintained his amateur status until his death. It appears that the whole thing was a farce. No evidence was ever presented. *College Topic*, the paper which had started the whole controversy, later recanted and offered an apology to both Hunter Carpenter and his father (*Legends*, p. 24).

Game 6: V.P.I. 11, Virginia 0

Even without the controversy, the game was destined to be a good one. The undefeated Techmen were up against a Virginia team with a 4-1 record, their only loss coming the same week as Tech's win over Army, to the Carlisle Indians. The 12-0 shutout itself was not so embarrassing when it is considered that Carlisle was one of the most powerful programs in the nation. Jim Thorpe and the great coach "Pop" Warner are two of the many legends associated with the Indians.

The game began with Tech receiving the ball. After an unsuccessful attempt to advance, possession was relinquished on a 45 yard Carpenter punt. Aided by some penalties, UVA drove into Tech territory only to lose the ball on a fumble at the 43 yard line. After a 7 yard run by Willson, Carpenter picked up 40 more on two efforts. Virginia at this point sucked it up, and held on a great defensive stand. Tech was denied the end zone and UVA took over on the 6 inch line. The Hoos immediately punted and Carpenter called for a fair catch on the 18, but Virginia was penalized 15 yards for interfering with the reception.

With first and goal for Tech at the 3 yard line, it took only two plays to reach pay dirt. Nutter circled around end for the first score of the game, again contrary to the accounts of Ronald Lazenby, who states in both of his books that Carpenter scored both Tech touchdowns. Carpenter kicked the

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extra point, and 15 minutes into the game the score was Tech 6, UVA 0. The remainder of the first half was marked by good play by Tech on both sides of the ball. Virginia simply could not sustain a drive. Carpenter had runs of 24, 16, 15, and 12. He also attempted a field goal, which was wide by only inches. Tech could manage no more points, however. The half ended with Tech driving at the UVA 35.

UVA was held on its first possession of the second half, and Carpenter missed another field goal on the subsequent Tech drive. After another exchange of punts, UVA put its best drive together, the most dramatic aspect of which being what appeared to be a long touchdown run by Johnson. It was ruled however that he had stepped out of bounds at the 34 of Tech. The drive continued to the Tech 14, where UVA attempted an unsuccessful fake kick. Tech drove to the 25 before being forced to punt. Virginia fumbled the return and Tech retained possession at its own 40.

Tech could advance no further, and in what turned out to be his most important play of the game, Carpenter punted for 60 yards. UVA, now pinned in at its own 3, attempted to punt out of danger. C. V. Hanvey sneaked through the line and blocked the kick and Strickling fell on the ball at the 2. Three plays later, Carpenter walked in. After Strickling's missed kick, the score was Tech 11, UVA 0. Tech controlled the rest of the game with great field possession play aided by Carpenter's good punting. UVA never threatened again, and the gun sounded with the final score of Tech 11, UVA 0 (*The Virginia Tech*, November 10, 1905).

The win was heralded as the greatest ever at Tech. It inspired several poems published in *The Virginia Tech* and several pages of attention in *The Bugle*. Unfortunately, the controversy surrounding the game led to a 17 year hiatus in the series.

Game 7: V.P.I. 15, Washington and Lee 0

Tech returned home for what *The Virginia Tech* described as an unusually clean game. Carpenter, Willson, Stiles, and Treadwell were all absent from the lineup. Perhaps mentally exhausted by the events of the week before, Tech played a sloppy game. W & L played smart, and their team was described as especially quick, but in the end they were no match for the bigger and more talented V.P.I. players. Harlan and Nutter scored, and the highlight of the game was perhaps the 40 yard field goal by Strickling (*The Virginia Tech*, November 17, 1905).

Game 8: V.P.I. 34, South Carolina 0

This game was just as the score indicates. Hunter Carpenter ran for 188 yards on 18 carries. He also returned a kick 58 yards. When the game ended, Carpenter had scored five touchdowns and the defense had posted yet another shutout (*The Virginia Tech*, November 24, 1905). A member of South Carolina's team later described Carpenter as "a back in the caliber of Jim Thorpe and Red Grange" (Lazenby, *Hoos 'n' Hokies*, p. 27).

Game 9: V.P.I. 6, U.S. Naval Academy 12

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The game against Navy was marked as a great match up. Tech, at 8-0, had outscored its opponents 247-11, while the Midshipmen (10-1) had managed a combined 265-12. Of their ten victories, nine were by shutout. In order to beat Tech, any team knew they would have to do two things, stop Hunter Carpenter, and find a way to score on Tech's defense. Navy managed to accomplish these goals, at least enough to win.

Tech could not move the ball at all in the first half. After several exchanges, Navy put together a strong drive and scored on an 8 yard run. After the kick it was 6-0. Near the end of the period Tech did manage to drive down to the Navy 15, but a Carpenter kick sailed wide and the half ended with Tech failing to register any points.

The start of the second period was marked by perhaps Hunter Carpenter's greatest play of the year. On the opening kickoff Harlan received the ball and quickly pitched to Carpenter. He raced the full 90 yards for the score, only the third given up by Navy all year. The kick made the score 6-6. The ensuing kickoff was short, and Navy secured excellent field position. Only moments after Carpenter's spectacular run, Navy broke the tie on a short run.

The score was 12-6 with only a few minutes remaining. Tech drove again deep into Navy territory and again Carpenter missed a field goal. After holding Navy, Tech got the ball back for one last try. It appeared the game would end in a tie, and perhaps that would have been a fitting end. It was not to be. The gun sounded with Tech threatening at the Navy 10 yard line. The end of the recap in *The Virginia Tech* perhaps puts it best:

The above rehash of the game shows that our team is composed of mortals, not invincibles or professionals, and conclusively proves that in every race there has to be a loser. "Nuf Sed." (*The Virginia Tech*, December 1, 1905)

Game 10: V.P.I. 34, V.M.I. 0

Fanfare was great for this season ending battle played in Richmond. Spirits and hopes were high on both sides, but in the end V.M.I. was simply no match. Carpenter did not play, but Hanvey chipped in four touchdowns and Lewis and Cox each had one.

The Virginia Tech proclaimed Tech as "Champions of the South," pointing out that no other Southern team had beaten V.M.I. Vanderbilt also claimed this title, with a record of 7-1. They had outscored their opponents 372 to 22, and their only loss was to national power Michigan by a score of 18-0. The rest of their schedule was not so tough, however, and they failed to notch a win against an opponent the caliber of West Point. This led the paper to conclude that Tech was in fact the better of the two teams (December 8, 1905).

Whether or not the 1905 team was "Champion of the South," it was one of the greatest in the history of the school. Perhaps more important, it was a fitting conclusion to the career of Hunter Carpenter, and it included Tech's first win over UVA. As many of the first great Southern players, Hunter Carpenter was never named All-American. Yale legend Walter Camp personally named the

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team, and he never included Southern players. In 1955 Hunter Carpenter was named posthumously to the College Football Hall of Fame. Members of the 1905 teams from Army, UNC, South Carolina, VMI, and even UVA fought to get him inducted (*Hoos 'n' Hokies*, p. 27).

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Analysis

Inside the Numbers: Tech's TV Ratings for 2000

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Recently, a TSL reader in the television industry offered to email me a spreadsheet of the television ratings for college football's 2000 regular season.

"What ratings?" I asked him.

"All of them," he answered.

"Okay," I said, not sure what he meant. "Send them to me."

He did. And he wasn't kidding - he had *all* the ratings.

The spreadsheet that my new best friend sent to me lists the television ratings for 126 college football games. That's every game played on a national network: ABC, NBC, CBS, ESPN, and ESPN2. FoxSportsNet and the ESPN+ Regional telecasts were not included in the information that my source sent to me. I imagine that both sets of ratings as a rule come in far behind the big 5 listed, so the fact that they're not available is not a big deal.

The original spreadsheet is a handful, so I'm not going to present it to you here, nor am I going to even offer it for download. What I will offer, both here and in the download, is a reduced set of the data.

In the case of this article, I will discuss Tech's ratings on CBS and ESPN, the only two networks that they appeared on this year (ESPN will actually be broken out into ESPN Thursday broadcasts and ESPN non-Thursday broadcasts, because they're two different animals).

Just for the record, Tech's preseason BCA game with Georgia Tech was supposed to be on ESPN2, but other than that, Tech did not have any games on ESPN2, just CBS and ESPN. When the BCA game was postponed by lightning, ESPN2 replayed the VT-Miami game from 1999 (and it got decent ratings, too).

At the end of the article, I will offer links where you can download the data either as an HTML file or a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Understanding TV Ratings

Availability: Free over-the-air network TV (CBS, ABC, NBC, Fox) reaches 100 million households. Cable and satellite networks (ESPN, ESPN2) reach 80 million households.

Rating: percentage of households that are watching a network out of those that *could* watch a network. For example, a 5.0 rating on CBS means that roughly five million households watched the game (5 out of 100). A 5.0 rating on ESPN means that roughly four million households tuned in (4 out of 80).

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Share: the percentage of households watching a particular show out of the total number of households that have their televisions turned on at the time.

Households: the number of “houses” that were actually watching, in other words a raw, numerical measure of the number of viewing households, as opposed to Rating and Share, which are percentages.

Example: The Big XII Championship game aired in prime time on ABC, had a rating of 8.2, a share of 14.8, and the number of households was 8,366,000. This means that the total number of households that had a television on during that time was about 55,500,000 (8.3 million out of 55.5 million is about 14.8%), thus deriving an audience share of 14.8. (Exact percentages will be off due to rounding and actual number of households in the U.S.)

Data Presentation: I’m going to present data for CBS, ESPN, and ESPN-Thursday games independently, sorted by Rating. I thought about sorting it by Households, but Rating seems to be the favored number when discussing TV ratings.

The CBS Ratings

CBS showed games in 18 time slots this season. The information that I received was not ratings for individual games, but rather total CBS ratings for a time slot. So, if CBS showed a split national broadcast of two games during a time slot, then the ratings were for both games combined. But if CBS showed one game to the entire country during a time slot, then the ratings were just for that one game.

My own gut feeling is that split broadcasts will have higher total viewership, because they’re regional in nature, so each one will have a higher appeal in its region than it might from a national standpoint. In the example given above, a lot of TV’s in SEC country would tune in to watch LSU-Arkansas that otherwise might not tune in to watch WVU-Pitt, if the WVU-Pitt game were broadcast nationally by itself.

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Having said that, here is the CBS data, sorted by Rating.

Rank	Date	Game	Rating	Share	Houses*
1	9/16	Florida-Tenn / Penn State - Pitt	4.5	11.4	4589
2	11/25	Georgia Tech-Georgia	4.1	11.4	4220
3	10/7	Florida State - Miami	3.7	10.7	3759
4	10/28	Pittsburgh-VT / Georgia-Florida	3.7	9.3	3785
5	11/4	Alabama - LSU/Florida-Vanderbilt	3.6	8.7	3726
6	11/11	South Carolina - Florida	3.5	8.0	3539
7	12/2	Army-Navy	3.4	9.4	3430
8	10/21	Alabama - Tennessee	3.2	8.4	3280
9	11/4	Virginia Tech - Miami	3.2	9.3	3240
10	11/18	Auburn-Alabama/Notre Dame-Rutgers	3.2	7.2	3257
11	9/30	Florida-Miss St. / VT-BC	3.0	8.0	3057
12	11/25	Boston College - Miami	2.7	6.3	2759
13	11/24	LSU-Arkansas / WVU-Pittsburgh	2.6	6.4	2700
14	9/23	Kentucky-Florida / Miami-WVU	2.5	5.9	2554
15	10/7	Auburn - Mississippi State	2.5	6.3	2505
16	10/14	Auburn - Florida	2.5	6.9	2575
17	10/21	Notre Dame - West Virginia	1.8	5.7	1870
18	10/14	Notre Dame - Navy	1.6	5.4	1661

*Note: multiply "Houses" by 1,000 to get total number of households.

You can see that Tech was a pretty good draw on CBS. The SEC dominates the Big East on CBS when it comes to ratings, and that's why CBS wasn't very interested in renewing their contract with the Big East. They like the SEC, and starting next season, when the Big East moves to ABC/ESPN, the Big Eye network can dedicate all the air time they want to the SEC.

Note that the VT-Miami game was the highest rated Big East in-conference game. Also note that of 10 games involving Big East teams, only 6 were in-conference games. Two games featured Notre Dame against Big East teams, another game was Pitt-Penn State, and the last game was FSU-Miami.

Also, and this is interesting, note that Syracuse did not appear on CBS this season. They were one of only two Big East teams (Temple was the other) that did not show up on CBS.

When you look at the averages, you can see that VT had above-average ratings for CBS, far above average.

Average Ratings	Rating	Share	Houses
CBS Season Averages	2.6	6.8	2650
VT CBS Average	3.3	8.9	3360

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The ESPN Ratings

One of the things I like about ESPN from a ratings standpoint is that they don't do split broadcasts, so you can really compare game-to-game how many people are watching one game versus another. Sure, there are other factors that affect viewership, like time of day and the day of the week. But we're taking care of most of the "day of the week" problem in this article by breaking the Thursday games out separately from the other games, which are mostly Saturday games.

ESPN showed 26 college football games this year, and the Hokies were in two of them: VT-UVa and VT-Syracuse. And Tech did well in the ratings - very well. The UVa game came in #4 on the season, and the Syracuse game was #11.

Here is the ESPN data, sorted by Rating.

Rank	Date	Game	Rating	Share	Houses*
1	11/4	Clemson - Florida State	3.4	5.8	2695
2	9/30	Tennessee - LSU	3.0	5.5	2376
3	9/23	Michigan - Illinois	2.9	5.0	2281
4	11/25	Virginia - Virginia Tech	2.9	5.0	2293
5	9/2	S. Miss - Tennessee	2.8	5.5	2180
6	10/7	Tennessee - Georgia	2.6	4.8	2068
7	11/11	Georgia - Auburn	2.6	4.5	2095
8	9/9	Marshall - Michigan St.	2.2	5.7	1714
9	10/28	Florida State - NC State	2.1	3.9	1686
10	9/16	LSU - Auburn	2.0	3.7	1623
11	10/21	Virginia Tech - Syracuse	2.0	3.7	1621
12	11/11	Ohio State - Illinois	1.9	4.0	1544
13	10/21	Purdue - Wisconsin	1.8	5.2	1438
14	11/4	Michigan State - Ohio State	1.8	4.9	1455
15	11/11	Penn State - Michigan	1.8	4.5	1435
16	10/14	Mississippi - Alabama	1.7	3.1	1320
17	9/23	Minnesota - Purdue	1.4	3.6	1091
18	10/14	Purdue - Northwestern	1.4	4.1	1088
19	9/16	California-Illinois	1.3	3.7	1052
20	11/24	BYU-Utah	1.3	2.4	1044
21	9/2	BC - WVU	1.2	3.4	962
22	11/18	Miami - Syracuse	1.1	2.0	915
23	11/25	Wake Forest - NC State	1.1	2.7	849
24	11/18	ECU - West Virginia	1.0	2.4	788
25	9/30	Illinois - Minnesota	0.9	2.7	741
26	10/28	Illinois - Michigan State	0.9	2.3	689

*Note: multiply "Houses" by 1,000 to get total number of households.

It's interesting to note that both Tech broadcasts fared better than Penn State-Michigan, and way better than Miami-Syracuse.

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Here are the averages for ESPN and VT - once again, VT beats the average handily:

Average Ratings	Rating	Share	Houses
ESPN Season Averages	1.9	3.7	1495
VT ESPN Average	2.5	4.2	1972

The ESPN Thursday Ratings

The Hokies are somewhat of an oddity, namely, a Top-10 team that plays on Thursday on ESPN, and plays often (twice this year).

The good news? Out of 12 ESPN Thursday broadcasts, the Hokies finished 1-2 in the ratings. The VT/ECU game on September 7th ran away with the Thursday night title this year, despite the fact that it was a blowout (blowouts drag down ratings because people turn off the TV before the broadcast is over).

Rank	Date	Game	Rating	Share	Houses*
1	9/7	Virginia Tech - East Carolina	2.7	4.4	2137
2	10/12	West Virginia - Virginia Tech	2.3	3.6	1836
3	8/31	Auburn-Wyoming	2.3	3.8	1767
4	9/21	Georgia Tech - NC State	2.3	3.7	1828
5	11/23	Miss State - Mississippi	2.2	4.2	1790
6	9/14	Mississippi St. - BYU	2.1	3.6	1699
7	9/28	Florida State - Maryland	1.7	2.8	1350
8	11/9	Virginia - Georgia Tech	1.6	2.4	1300
9	11/2	BYU - Colorado State	1.5	2.3	1168
10	11/16	Wyoming - Colorado State	1.5	2.3	1217
11	10/5	Western Michigan - Marshall	1.2	2.0	971
12	10/26	Wyoming - BYU	0.9	1.3	687

Let's be honest, though. The sad fact is that the Thursday night games are dogs. There simply aren't many Thursday games with national appeal, so the highly-ranked Hokies do well in the Thursday night ratings. Try throwing matchups like Tennessee-Notre Dame into that Thursday night mix, and you'll see a whole different ratings dynamic.

The only Top-10 team other than Tech to appear on Thursday this year was FSU, and their game was a yawner against Maryland. Hence, low ratings. Meanwhile, get a load of Wyoming — three Thursday night games, but only their game with Auburn drew a decent audience.

Analysis

Inside the Numbers

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A Thursday night broadcast involving VT soundly thrashes the average Thursday night rating:

Average Ratings	Rating	Share	Houses
ESPN-Thu. Season Averages	1.4 2.4		1148
VT ESPN-Thu. Average	2.5 4.0		1987

Conclusions

When it comes to TV ratings, the Hokies aren't Notre Dame, Michigan, or Florida, but they did pretty well this year. A lot of that can be attributed to the presence of Michael Vick, but there's no doubt that the Hokies have a growing national appeal as a team, coming off their national championship appearance in 1999.

With Vick coming back near year, and hopefully staying healthy, TV ratings for the Hokies should continue to be relatively high (at least, for a small market team with no national appeal - that's sarcasm there, folks).

I hope you have enjoyed this view of the Hokies' TV ratings. I think it's interesting stuff. To view the ratings for all 127 games appearing on ABC/CBS/NBC/ESPN/ESPN2, you can visit:

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue002/footballratings2000.htm>

On that page, you can view the data, or you can download it as a Microsoft Excel 97 spreadsheet.

Inside TSL: Creak ... Groan ...

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Without a doubt, November 27, 2000 — the day Frank Beamer almost left for North Carolina — was one of the more extraordinary days in TSL/HokieCentral.com history, at least when it comes to site traffic and email traffic.

As you recall, the day was one full of drama. On Sunday, November 26, barely ten hours after the UVa football game had ended the night before, Beamer jetted down to Chapel Hill to meet with representatives of North Carolina University about their head coaching job.

Later that Sunday night, all indications were that Beamer was leaving. Not only that, but if he took the UNC job, he had supposedly been given *carte blanche* by UNC to bring with him whomever he wanted, from assistant coaches to support staff to his strength and conditioning coaches, and even his secretary. And every source that was saying anything was indicating that Beamer was indeed gone.

Now normally, I spend all day Monday writing my analysis of the previous Saturday's football game, but I knew that on this particular week, there would be no such work going on. I knew by the time the game was over on Saturday night that Beamer was going to make his decision by Tuesday, which probably meant Monday.

So after arriving home from the game after midnight on Saturday, I stayed up until 3:00 a.m. writing my recap. That's *recap* — the factual retelling of the game events — not my analysis. I put the analysis off indefinitely, knowing that if it came at all, it would come much later in the week.

Sunday dawned, and there was very little celebrating about the win over UVa. Instead, there was nothing but fretting and worrying over what Beamer's decision was going to be. Traffic on the message board was very heavy, and just under 2,000 messages were posted for the day, about double the typical daily posting total.

Late Sunday night, the *Charlotte Observer* ran a story on-line that was destined for the Monday print edition of their paper. The headline was Beamer bound for UNC?, and the story proclaimed, "...three sources close to the situation said an agreement was close and could happen today."

The story presented the Beamer-to-UNC agreement as all but a done deal (there's that phrase again), although it advised caution, citing a similar turnaround by Kansas Basketball Coach Roy Williams when everyone thought he would take the UNC head men's basketball coaching job.

I read the article. It seemed definite. Every source I had was telling me he was gone. But a big, big part of me just couldn't see it happening, no matter who thought it was a "done deal." The article appeared shortly after midnight that Sunday night, and knowing that things were about to get serious, I thought to myself, "Let's light this candle," and at 12:45 a.m. Sunday night/Monday morning, I posted a link to the Observer's article on the TechSideline.com home page.

I almost never post links to other articles/media outlets on the TSL home page, but I knew that when it came to the Beamer-to-UNC story, it was time to take a deep breath, pinch my nose shut,

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and dive in. So I posted the link, and at 1:00 a.m., I went to bed.

The next day was extraordinary.

I logged on to mass hysteria on the message board, which was rolling over faster than I have ever seen it move. Entire pages of posts were rolling off to the next page in just a matter of minutes, and I saw a number of posts that had the exact same time stamp, indicating that they were made at the same time, right down to the second.

There was no chance to keep up with the board and monitor the posts properly. I looked for obvious flames and vulgar language and let the rest of it ride. I've never seen so much raw emotion, spread out across the human spectrum of feelings, flow through a message board. There were those who ripped Beamer, those who praised him, those who spewed venom at athletic director Jim Weaver, and those who backed Weaver up and told Beamer not to let the door hit him in the backside on the way out.

In the meantime, during the morning hours, between 8 and 12 noon, I was writing an article that I never gave a title to, and it was an article that I never ran on TechSideline.com. It was four pages long, and it is still stored on my hard disk under the Microsoft Word title "BeamerLeaves.doc," and as you can tell from that file name, it was my column that was to run in the wake of Beamer's exit to UNC.

"What we had here was a good old-fashioned power struggle," the article began, "and unfortunately, Hokie fans, the bad guys won."

It is some of my finest work, I believe, and you will never see it. It told a tale of intrigue and drama, and in the end, it railed fiercely on an athletic director and an administration that would allow Frank Beamer, the very embodiment and soul of Virginia Tech football, to depart for another university.

As I was writing it, though, the news hit the message board that Beamer, Weaver, and School President Charles Steger had gotten together for a morning meeting. There was also some talk that former Tech president Paul Torgersen was involved, an indication that I took to mean that all was not lost. In the optimistic part of my heart that always believed that Beamer would stay, I took this as a sure sign that things were going to get worked out.

In the meantime, the TSL web server was having a hard time staying on its little rubber feet. The message board crashed a couple of times under the strain, but the site hosts were somehow able to keep it up, for the most part, and keep things going. I managed to fight my way through the traffic to make an early afternoon message board plea for everyone to **STOP POSTING SO MUCH!!** but it was to no avail. Things were way beyond anything I could control.

I later found out that the server was experiencing twice its peak design load in terms of the number of users and traffic it was getting, so it's actually pretty remarkable that it stayed up for most of the day and didn't suffer any permanent damage. I'll give you traffic statistics soon, but before then,

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let's return to our tale.

Around 2:30, Roanoke's Channel 7 and Channel 10 both broke into their afternoon programming to report that Virginia Tech was holding a press conference at 3:30, and that all indications were that Beamer was staying.

The tide swung on the board, the mood changing from anger and confusion to elation, but the announcement of an upcoming press conference certainly didn't do anything to slow down the traffic on the site. If anything, it increased.

I spent the hour between 2:30 and 3:30 writing a News and Notes update announcing that Beamer was staying. It was an odd reversal of fortune, but I wanted to be the first to have the news posted.

The news conference was a little late getting started, and it took until almost 3:40 for Jim Weaver to step up to the podium and announce that Frank Beamer was staying at Tech "for the future." The instant he said it, I clicked and dragged a couple of files from my local hard drive to the server, and boom, TSL had the news posted. I put an update time of 3:45 pm on the News and Notes article.

I spent the next 20 minutes watching the news conference, and when it ended at 4:00, I immediately rewound my video tape and transcribed it. Then back to my News and Notes update I went, filling out the article I had already written with more monetary details and quotes from Beamer and Weaver.

At 4:30, I tried to log on and send over the new information. There was only one problem — my Internet Service Provider (ISP) wouldn't respond and let me log on.

Aaargh! This dragged on until about 7:00, when I was finally able to connect and send the new data over (as an aside, I had been having trouble with my ISP for weeks up until that point, and it was my inability to log on at 4:30 that day that finally led me to cancel my account with them and sign up with another ISP).

As far as news updates went, that was it for my day, but on the message board, the hysteria continued. This time it was all positive, except for the few posters who were grumbling about having lost their trust in Frank Beamer, and also except for a large contingent of Jim Weaver headhunters (who are still on the prowl to this day).

I stayed at it late into the night, monitoring the message board and posting GalaxHokie's Hokie Hotline notes — from a show which included an appearance by Jim Weaver — at midnight. I also wrote another article, but this time, it was saved under the file name "BeamerStays.doc." That article, which I worked on until 3:00 a.m. Monday night, wound up being titled "Destiny's Doorstep," and it ran at 11:55 Tuesday morning.

By the end of the day Tuesday, I was exhausted but too keyed up to sleep, and I wound up staying awake until 1:00 a.m. again, monitoring the aftermath on the message board. Finally, things settled

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back down to normal. If you can call what goes on on the TSL message board “normal.”

Traffic Statistics

So exactly how busy was TechSideline.com during those three days? There are three ways I can answer that statistically, and all three ways reveal staggering amounts of traffic to the web site.

One measurement is the email that I receive. I get about 40 or 50 emails in a typical day, and on that Monday, I received 126 emails in my in-box.

As for page views on the web site and message board (MB) posts, here are the totals for that Monday-Tuesday time period:

Statistic	Ave. Day	Sun. 11/26	Mon. 11/27	Tues. 11/38
MB Posts	1,000	1,966	4,424	1,738
Page Views	120,000	280,141	606,637	215,364

Note: a page view is recorded each time someone reads a message board post or an article on the TSL web site.

To give you some idea of the magnitude of traffic on those three days, TSL had never received over 200,000 pages views *in any given day*. The previous record was 189,687 on Monday, October 30th, the Monday after the Pitt game. But on the three days that surrounded Beamer’s announcement, the 200,000 page view figure was exceeded all three times, and the Monday statistic *tripled* it.

As an aside, TSL would exceed 200,000 page views yet again shortly thereafter, totaling 222,889 page views on Monday, December 4th — the day after the BCS snub.

And lastly, my bed times for the four-day stretch from Saturday to Tuesday were 3:00 a.m., 1:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m., and 1:00 a.m.

I will never forget the intensity of those three days, Sunday, November 26th through Tuesday, November 28th, 2000. I don’t think that it’s overstating it to say that the very future of the Virginia Tech athletics programs hinged upon the events of those few days, and for someone like me, who makes my living covering Virginia Tech athletics and *only* Virginia Tech athletics, I was exhilarated, apprehensive, and everything in between.

And now I’m just glad it’s over.