

TSL Extra

Issue 3, January 17, 2001

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TSL EXTRA

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers:

Something significant happened on Wednesday, January 10th, 2001, and for the most part, it went unnoticed.

The Hokie men's basketball team laid the wood on the Miami Hurricanes and won their first-ever Big East Conference game, 85-74. Their first BE win came on just their third try, and just one game after they had almost pulled the trick on Villanova.

But it wasn't the win over Miami so much that was cause for excitement. Recent Hokie men's basketball teams have notched wins over good opponents. Just last year, they beat Xavier and Dayton at home in games they were not supposed to be competitive in. So it wasn't the victory; rather, it was more the way they did it.

For the first time in recent memory, I saw a confident, athletic Hokie basketball team pushing the ball up the floor and attacking the basket. We've been hearing for years about how the Tech team was finally going to start running the ball again, but on this day, they actually did it.

But to me, the most remarkable moment of the game came when 6-4 Danny Gathings took an alley-oop pass in heavy traffic and slammed it down amidst the tall trees. It was one of those out-of-nowhere plays that not a single person in Cassell Coliseum saw coming, except for Gathings and the Tech player who threw the pass.

The crowd went crazy. I mean, really crazy. There were only 2800 or so of us there, according to the official attendance numbers, but all 2800 people lost it. So much so, in fact, that they couldn't stop cheering even when Gathings lined up for his free throw (he had been fouled on the dunk and had a chance to convert a three-point play). With the crowd screaming, Gathings missed the free throw.

I haven't seen a Tech men's basketball crowd lose their composure like that in a long, long time. And I hope it's a harbinger of things to come, because I have grown tired of spending hours and hours and hours of covering this team, knowing full well that very few people are paying attention, and that the program has died on the vine. Like many mid-80's Hokies, I await the moment that Tech men's basketball arises from the dead like the Phoenix, revives interest in the program, and once again packs Cassell Coliseum.

And I'm not talking the walk-it-up-the-floor Hokies of the mid-90's. They won some games, sure, but they weren't anywhere near the mid-80's Hokies in being able to peg the excitement meter.

For just one game, Ricky Stokes's Hokies flashed what I hope was an indicator of the future. Sure, the guys went out and got stomped by Georgetown in the very next game (falling behind 37-10), but hey, a guy can dream, can't he?

Enjoy issue #3.



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Recruiting Profile

Springdale, Arkansas' Will Hunt

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Last year's national championship Sugar Bowl game between Virginia Tech and Florida State caused quite a stir in Springdale, Arkansas. The city of approximately 45,000 residents had a lot to talk about the next day.

That's nothing new or unusual, of course. Michael Vick's wizardry that night led to a lot of water cooler talk around the entire country. But in Springdale, things were a little different.

Those who follow Springdale High's football team went through a collective episode of déjà vu that night. See, they were used to watching their own #7, a 6-foot-2, 205 pound quarterback named Will Hunt, avoid tacklers with scrambling moves and then improvise a great play.

Hunt, who verbally committed to Virginia Tech last September, wasn't familiar with the Hokies when he saw Michael Vick pull his Sugar Bowl magic act.

"The first time I ever saw Virginia Tech play was in the championship game last year," Hunt said in a recent phone interview with the TSL Extra. "My mom came running in, and she said, 'You've got to watch this guy play, Michael Vick. He plays just like you!'"

Hunt had just finished his junior season, his first year starting at quarterback for the Springdale High Bulldogs. And by passing for 1267 yards and running for another 816, and generally playing as if he had eyes in the back of his head, Hunt had already made a name for himself in Northwest Arkansas, playing in the toughest conference in the state.

And just a few weeks after the end of Hunt's junior season, the Hunt family sat transfixed to their TV, watching Michael Vick duck and dodge Florida State defenders. And they found out the next day that they weren't alone.

"After that game," says Hunt's mother, the bubbly, loquacious Barbara (nicknamed BeeGee), "five or six people from around town called me and said, 'We saw Will on TV last night.' After the Sugar Bowl, people on the street or in the grocery store would tell me the same thing."

The Hunts like to tell the story, but the truth is, they are uncomfortable with such talk. "I don't compare to him (Vick) at all," Will Hunt says, not the least big eager to draw similarities between himself and the former Hokie quarterback. But no matter how they try to avoid the inevitable comparisons to Michael Vick, the fact is that Vick's shadow will loom large over Virginia Tech's next quarterback. It is unavoidable.

It's one thing to have loving friends and family make the comparison. So I asked Springdale High Coach Jarrell Williams, a legend in Arkansas high school football who is retiring after 36 seasons as a head coach, to describe his most recent — and last — starting quarterback.

"Will's greatest asset is he's got tremendous peripheral vision," Williams says. "He can elude tacklers, especially rushers, and come up with a big pass or run out of it. That's what makes him so unique."

Recruiting Profile

Will Hunt

“My strong suit is my ability to scramble and make something out of a play,” Hunt says. “It puts pressure on the defensive back, not knowing if he should come up and watch for the run, or stay with his receiver.”

And he can take the heat, too. “He was the baby of four,” BeeGee Hunt says of her son, “and he had two older brothers, so he’s tough. Will is tough. He had to be tough, because the two older boys, with their friends, they would throw him around, they would wrestle with him, and he had to learn to take up for himself. And honey, he can. He’s tough.”

Hmm, she used the word “tough” four times in one paragraph. How about one more, this one from Coach Williams. “He really loves competition,” Coach Williams says. “When the going gets tough, he gets going.”

The going got tough plenty of times for Hunt over the course of the two seasons that he started for Springdale. Springdale plays in the 5-A West Conference, the most competitive conference in Arkansas, and doesn’t duck any teams out of conference either. Hunt’s junior year, Springdale played Shreveport’s Evangel High School (when they featured Florida QB recruit Brock Berlin and were ranked #1 in the country — Springdale lost 41-28), and this year, they played Shiloh Christian of Springdale to a 7-7 tie when Shiloh was ranked #11 in the country by ESPN.

In 1998, the year before Hunt hit the field, the Bulldogs finished second in the 5-A West, and many of the players on that team graduated. They weren’t expected to even make the playoffs in 1999, but with Hunt at the helm, Springdale finished second in the state in 1999 and third in the state in 2000.

In his two years as a starter, Hunt was 147-339 (43.3%) passing for 2,430 yards, 20 TD’s, and 12 INT’s. He ran for 1,568 yards and scored 21 touchdowns on the ground. His junior and senior years were almost equal statistically, but his passing production was down a little bit as a senior. “We had a much more balanced offense this year with better runners,” Hunt explained. “We had a running back who was the top rusher in the conference, and I was up there, plus we had a good fullback.”

Not to mention that Hunt wasn’t completely healthy. “He had some shoulder problems during the season,” Williams says, “and he always had to have it worked on before practice and games, so that kind of hampered him a little bit.” Not only that, but Springdale’s top receiver was injured in the first game of the season and didn’t play again, and that affected Springdale’s limited passing game. Against Shiloh, for example, in the 7-7 tie, Hunt had two passes dropped in the end zone and another TD pass called back on a penalty.

Hunt is generally regarded as the top quarterback prospect in the state of Arkansas, and as a senior he was named All-State at quarterback. Two newspapers in Northwest Arkansas named him the Player of the Year in the state as a senior.

So he’s fast (4.54 forty, a number which will no doubt improve at Virginia Tech), elusive, tough, a

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Will Hunt

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winner, and he loves to compete. What's the downside?

"I would say that my passing needs work," Hunt says. "We didn't pass much, maybe nine or ten times a game, but I'm sure I'll get work after I get to Tech. I've got a pretty strong arm. I can get the ball where it needs to go."

Williams agrees. "He's got good arm strength." With a great tailback and fullback on the roster, plus Hunt's running ability (he was Springdale's top rusher as a junior), "We didn't throw the ball all that much, and consequently, he probably didn't get to work on throwing as much as he did if he went somewhere where they threw all the time. But as far as throwing the football, he's got a very accurate arm and reads defenses good. He'll get better in that area."

"I think in college," Williams continues, "he'll certainly be successful. He needs to push himself a little bit more to make himself a *great* player — I think when he gets to college and faces better competition, that'll happen — but he is a good football player."

"I think he tries to lead by example more than anything. He's not a rah-rah guy or anything like that. He plays with a lot of intensity. Very intelligent, very sharp kid, and he catches on real well. He's a student of the game, and he loves football."

Hunt, who says that he runs the option well ("It took a few games into my junior year to get the hang of it, but once I got it down, it just comes naturally to me"), seems to be a perfect fit for the Virginia Tech offense.

So how in the world did an Arkansas boy wind up committing to Virginia Tech, especially when he lives just ten minutes from the University of Arkansas campus?

The Road to VT

"We have family in Virginia," says BeeGee. "My mother grew up in Portsmouth and met my father during World War II. He was stationed in Norfolk. They got married, and after the war, she moved with him to Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and that's where I was born. I went to college at the University of Arkansas."

"My mom died a year ago, and she never forgot her Virginia roots. She was from Tidewater, and she never lost her accent, even after living in Arkansas 50 years. We would always go back and visit every summer for a month, and I still have cousins and very good friends that live in Portsmouth. So we have deep Virginia roots."

But that wasn't the main reason that Will Hunt wound up being interested in Virginia Tech. As he said, he hadn't really watched them until the Sugar Bowl game against Florida State. But after a successful junior year, one in which he led his team in rushing and passing and took them all the way to the state championship game, he knew he could play quarterback at the Division 1-A level.

Recruiting Profile

Will Hunt

He didn't wait for the schools to come to him, though. He signed up with a recruiting service, who in exchange for a fee, will post a prospect's statistics on the Internet and will mail stats and tapes to 20 teams of the prospect's choice. Hunt's brother, who wants to be a movie director, put the tape together for him. "He shot on the ground every game, and he had one of his friends on the other sideline. Then we had the coach's up-top view, so we had a lot of different views of games," Hunt says.

In addition to nearby Arkansas, Nebraska, Tulsa, and Rice, Hunt was interested in the Hokies. "I got interested in them (after the Sugar Bowl). I sent a highlight tape to Virginia Tech, and everything got rolling after that."

Tech offensive coordinator Rickey Bustle liked what he saw in the scrambling QB, and he very quickly got in touch with Hunt and indicated Virginia Tech's interest. The Hokies offered a scholarship to Hunt early, and in mid-September, just as other schools were starting to ramp up their interest in him, Hunt committed to Tech.

So who was in the mix? "Probably Nebraska and Virginia Tech were my top two," Hunt says. "I live five minutes from Arkansas, so they were definitely the favorite at first. But they didn't show too much interest in me, so I kind of lost interest in them."

More accurately, Arkansas did not show interest in Hunt as a quarterback. Nebraska did, but they backed off when he committed to Tech (the Cornhuskers never offered Hunt a scholarship). Stanford's quarterback coach wanted to fly to Arkansas to see him, but when Hunt told him he had committed to Virginia Tech, that trip was quickly canceled.

And he has never wavered. "I just think their style of play suits me best," he says of the Hokies.

"Competition Makes Everybody Better"

Since Hunt committed to Virginia Tech on September 19th, the landscape of VT football has changed dramatically. Mainly, Michael Vick has thrown his name in the ring for the NFL draft.

Hunt is one of a handful of quarterback prospects that now finds his schedule for competing for the starting job at Virginia Tech has unexpectedly been moved up one year. In addition to current quarterbacks Grant Noel and Jason Davis, the Hokies will reportedly try freshman DB Eric Green and redshirt freshman wide receiver Richard Johnson at quarterback in the spring.

In addition to Hunt, the Hokies have a verbal commitment from quarterback Bryan Randall, the #1 prospect in the state of Virginia, and things look good for the Hokies to land a commitment from quarterback Michael Robinson out of Varina High School near Richmond.

Playing a true freshman quarterback is not Frank Beamer's cup of tea, but it's not out of the realm of possibility for all of the incoming true freshmen to get a chance at the starting job in the wake of Vick's departure.

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Will Hunt

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All told, that's no less than seven players who might get a run at the position.

Like Randall, Hunt had hoped to redshirt a year and prep for the college game. But now he knows he may have to be ready this fall to give it a run, so to speak.

"I kind of have mixed feelings about Vick's early departure," Hunt says. "I was hoping to be able to learn under him for a year and then challenge for the starting job when he left, but Coach Bustle called and told my mom that Vick was leaving and told me to get ready. So I get the feeling that there is going to be a competition for the starting job, and I might be right in the middle of it...at least I hope I am. I feel if I am given an opportunity to battle for the starting job that I will be very mentally alert and ready to try and win it."

What about the prospect not only of competing against all the players already on the team, but of going up against highly regarded home state recruits like Randall and Robinson? Hunt's answer is textbook: "Competition makes everybody better, and it makes the team better. If there are three or four of us fighting for the spot, and I get beat out, then I get beat out. That's the way it goes. That's all part of football."

Coach Williams of Springdale is frank about the prospect of his quarterback competing for the starting job at Tech next fall. "I think he needs a year. I think everybody needs a year. Back when I played, they had the freshman team, and we couldn't play varsity, and I'd like to see that back again, because the transition from high school to college, primarily because of the speed of the game, is hard. I think he'll need a year to adjust to the speed of the game and the size of the players."

And if the quarterback battle shakes out and he not a part of the picture at QB, Hunt is ready to change positions if asked. "I love the game of football and I just want to play. Whatever it takes to help the team out."

In that case, Hunt's most likely destination would be safety, the position Arkansas recruited him for briefly.

The Right Tools for the Job

Whatever his destiny, Hunt is not likely to struggle academically or feel homesick so far away from Springdale. He's an excellent student with a 3.97 GPA and a 22 on the ACT, easily making him a qualifier, and in fact, he has already been accepted at Virginia Tech under the early admissions program. He is taking two college courses this year, and Bustle has checked with the academic advisors at Virginia Tech and verifies that they'll transfer for credit to Tech. Hunt hasn't picked a major yet but thinks it will be something in the Business school.

As for getting lonely or homesick, BeeGee says, "Will never meets a stranger. He's very easy to talk to. He's a good kid. Maybe because of all those people being around (having three siblings), he

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Will Hunt

just never meets a stranger.”

But before he enters Virginia Tech next fall, there is one thing that Will Hunt needs to improve upon. His racquetball game.

“I’ve got to get ready,” he says, “because I understand Coach Bustle likes to play.”

Good luck to Coach Bustle on that, because it’ll be hard for him to beat the scrambling QB from Arkansas with eyes in the back of his head.

Some Thoughts as #7 Leaves

by Art Stevens

Michael Vick was here just a minute ago.

And now he's gone.

It must be like some of the guys trying to tackle him felt over the course of Vick's two seasons in a Virginia Tech uniform. How did he get out of here so fast?

As Will Stewart wrote on Techsideline.com's main page, Michael, we hardly knew you.

His going away party, conducted at the branch of the Hampton Roads Boys and Girls Club where he spent so much time as a kid, was quite a scene.

TSL Extra was there, not that that makes us special. Everyone, it seems, was there. Family. Friends. Fellow Hokies. Coach Frank Beamer. Assistant coach Jim Cavanaugh. Media out the wazoo. And what seemed like half of Newport News. They applauded when he walked in, applauded when he walked out and applauded everything he said in between his entrance and exit.

Michael Vick the college kid became Michael Vick the professional athlete in a blur.

Here are a few thoughts on the whole scene and the whole subject:

Why did he announce it there?

It was actually a great choice of a venue.

For starters, he has too much class to go back to Tech and say, "I'm leaving." You just don't do that. You have your "I'm staying" sessions at the school, your departure sessions at home. Standard operating procedure.

Vick sure couldn't have had all those folks to his home, just a few blocks away. His future new home maybe, but not his childhood home. And good ol' Warwick High, which would have been a nice option, didn't need the disruption with school in session.

Warwick wouldn't have been as nice a setting anyway. James "Poo" Johnson, the executive director of the Hampton Roads Boys and Girls Club, has known Vick for 13 years. Through those halls Vick ran as a kid. What better place to officially cut the ribbon on your manhood than at the spot where you had so much fun as a kid?

Did Vick make the right choice?

Absolutely. Daggone right. No question.

Absolutely not. No way. Talk about your mistakes.

Some Thoughts as #7 Leaves

How's that for definitive? Actually, all of the answers are correct.

Vick, who won't be 21 until June, talked many times of this being the hardest decision of his life. No joke. It was a decision where he'd be right and wrong all at once.

The right is simple. The money. Pro athletes today command the kind of cash that is often hard to imagine. Millions upon millions upon millions. It'll be there next year? Probably. Maybe not. Ever hear of a knee injury? Not the kind that takes you out forever, but the kind that knocks your ability down several notches. Insurance can only cover so much.

If Vick doesn't go No. 1 in the draft, someone isn't thinking clearly and deserves to be fired. He's the type of talent that comes along so rarely. He's there and you have the pick, you take him. Be it the Chargers or some team that trades for the Chargers' No. 1 pick, that team ought to be "on the clock" for about ten seconds and only for that long if they say, "Michael Vick" very, very slowly.

At No. 1, Vick is looking at a \$60 million deal. Try to imagine yourself as a 20-year-old with a mother who has worked hard her adult life providing for four children. Tell me you'd say no and mean it and I'll call you a stew-mouthed liar.

That said, there's no question Vick is NOT yet ready to be an NFL quarterback. Who is to say a year or two more at Tech would make him ready? He'd become fundamentally better, sure, but he'd still have to learn more about pro style offenses and the system of the team that drafts him.

History hasn't been kind to early-departing quarterbacks. The week of Vick's declaration, John Markon of the Richmond Times-Dispatch wrote an excellent column detailing that fact.

Will Vick be a successful National Football League quarterback?

You'd darn sure think so, wouldn't you?

Vick can run like the wind. He has an extremely strong arm that's generally pretty accurate as well. Some folks say his throwing fundamentals are off and, if so, correcting them can only help. He has a head for the game.

Go back to his redshirt freshman season, the game where Tech kicked the smithereens out of Syracuse (62-0 in case anyone has forgotten). Two plays very early in that game sum up the multiple gifts of Vick.

On second and nine from the Syracuse 10, Vick found himself in serious trouble. A large loss was looming. He scrambled his way out of the jam. The play gained only three yards. It might have been the most impressive three-yard gain ever.

So now it is third and six from the seven. Vick comes to the line and, with about nine seconds on the play clock, sees something he doesn't like. He backs up and changes the play, gets back under

Some Thoughts as #7 Leaves

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center and gets the play off on time. A simple handoff and off-tackle run that gains the necessary six and gets Tech a first down on the one.

Yowza. How many quarterbacks, freshmen or no, would have had the presence of mind not to panic and call a timeout?

None of the above, however, guarantees his success. He wouldn't be the first guy with a bunch of talent to be less than successful.

Much depends on where he ends up. Norv Turner has landed in San Diego as offensive coordinator. He's been lauded as being very good with quarterbacks but is that because he had Troy Aikman? He didn't do much with Heath Shuler. Was that Turner or Shuler? Also, he's thought to be more comfortable with an Aikman-style quarterback (like the Chargers' Ryan Leaf).

Word seems to be that Seattle, with the seventh and 10th picks in the draft, is going to make a bid to get that top pick. Mike Holmgren might be a better coach for Vick.

Wherever he ends up, the team and its fans are going to have to be very, very patient. Don't you dare kill that golden goose to try to get more eggs now. If Vick gets into a good system and is given time, look out. Build a shelf that will hold many MVP trophies.

But if Vick goes somewhere and finds himself playing for different coaches and coordinators under different systems, he could end up as a bust through no fault of his own.

Did he do the Hokies wrong by saying he'd stay and then changing his mind?

I seriously wonder if he changed his mind. It's difficult to believe his mind was really made up when he made his Dec. 15 declaration to stay another year.

The thought was good, the plan was misguided. Get it over with and deflect attention before the Gator Bowl. That worked, didn't it? A better plan would have been to say, "Folks, I have until Jan. 12. I'm not even going to worry about that now. I'll play the Gator Bowl and then weigh the options. So let's focus on the game."

Might not have worked any better. Couldn't have worked any worse.

Don't blame Vick for anything. He's 20 years old, still very young. He's been blessed with incredible gifts, but that blessing comes with a price. He had to make a difficult choice.

He's made it now and, as he said at his press conference, there's no turning back.

Good luck, good sir.

Feature

Matt Lehr: Looking Back

by Neal Williams

Joni Mitchell sang the words years ago, before Matt Lehr was even born. “Don’t it always seem to go, you don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone.”

Lehr can relate, partly.

He knows what he had, knows well.

He just can’t believe it is gone already.

“It went too fast,” said Lehr, whose stellar career as an offensive guard at Virginia Tech ended Jan. 1 with the Hokies’ 41-20 whipping of Clemson in the Gator Bowl. “You blink and it is over. I’m with (tackle and fellow departee) Dave Kadela now and we’ve been talking about it. It’s gone before you know it.”

Lehr has one more “college” game, thanks to his invitation to play in the Hula Bowl later this month. But his days as a member of the Hokies are done.

What days they turned out to be.

Lehr was part of the winningest four-year class in Tech history. The Hokies were 11-1 in both his junior and senior seasons. And the undersized lineman who was not a most-wanted property coming out of Woodbridge (Va.) High was a major part of that success.

He became a star.

He became a leader.

As much as he’ll miss his days at Tech, the Hokies may miss him more.

“Definitely,” said defensive end Jim Davis, who played this season as a true freshman just as Lehr did in 1997.

“Matt was a leader, just with his work ethic. For instance, in the weight room he worked with me one time. That was the very first time I came into the weight room. He showed me and ins and outs of what it takes to be an All-American type athlete. You can tell he just had a passion. That’s something I really didn’t have coming in. He set the tone for a lot of the freshmen coming in.

“I hope I can end up being like that. I will, if I work hard enough. I’m going to concentrate really hard to become like a Matt Lehr or a (fellow senior) Cory Bird.”

In an ideal world, Lehr’s days as a Hokie would not be over.

He’s only 21, younger than some of his teammates who are coming back next season.

Matt Lehr

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Rare is the athlete who doesn't take a "redshirt" season at some point. Davis, for example, was one of only three true freshmen to play for the Hokies in 2000.

Lehr, in particular, could have used a redshirt season since he came to the Hokies (and still is in some ways) undersized.

But it doesn't always work out that way. Timing is everything and, at the time Lehr and Kadela joined the team, the Hokies were not deep on the offensive line. The team needed the two freshmen to play – not much, but enough to use up the year's eligibility.

By the following season, Lehr was a starter and there was no turning back.

"There are some things I'd like to change and being redshirted is one," Lehr said. "Other than that, there's not much. That was totally out of my control.

"That's something I ask myself every day. If I had one more year, what could I accomplish? It's weird. There really was no choice."

Lehr hasn't grown upward. He reported at 6-2. He remains 6-2.

He has gained some bulk. He says he was about 250 pounds when he showed up "if that." After preseason two-a-day practices he was down to 238 pounds. He's carrying 285 now, which is about his max.

Lehr developed more than muscles. He earned the nickname "The Technician" for his fanatical devotion to doing things the proper way. Bryan Stinespring, Tech's assistant head coach and offensive line coach, said Lehr has set a standard for hard work and that standard has been noticed.

"Pro scouts I've talked to say they've never seen a guy practice with the same kind of focus at the end as they do at the beginning the way Matt does," Stinespring said.

All part of the plan, Lehr said. If you can't outsize someone, outwork them.

"I wish I was a little bigger at some point," he said with a laugh. "I think my main strength is just not wanting to quit, always trying to work harder than anybody else, telling myself that there is no one who is going to work harder than me, trying to become a student of the game.

"There's a lot more to people than just size. You can overcome size."

Lehr ended up starting 27 straight games for the Hokies and earned the designation as Tech's "most consistent offensive lineman" in the team's postseason media guide.

Matt Lehr

As a senior, he made second-team All-Big East – something of a joke to those who saw Lehr play. He had a “first team” type season. He was also a second-team Walter Camp All-America and was named to the postseason All-America team by ESPN The Magazine. Going into the season, Lindy’s Magazine and The Sporting News listed Lehr as the No. 5 guard in Division I-A.

Twice during the regular season, Lehr was voted Tech’s game MVP by the team’s coaches (Miami, West Virginia).

“I was just happy going to college on a scholarship,” Lehr said. “I would never have imagined making all-conference and All-America and going to All-Star games.”

Lehr, and the younger Davis, are prime examples of Tech’s recruiting successes in recent years. Sure, the Hokies love their “blue-chippers” and they pursue them hard. But not every recruit can be a big-timer, and Tech has done an excellent job of mining the next tier for athletes who can develop.

The trick in recruiting is not seeing who can do what now, it’s seeing who can do what later. Lehr’s offers mostly came from Division I-AA schools. Many schools saw a hard-working player who was just a bit too small. Tech saw a hard-working player who could develop, who could set an example, who could fit into what the Hokies were trying to do.

“Tech gives a lot of guys the opportunity,” Lehr said. “It’s almost like they can see the future, what a guy is going to be.”

With his college playing days behind him, Lehr is almost back where he started before he became a Hokie. Once again, the undersized lineman will have to prove himself.

He’s due to graduate next fall with a degree in financial risk management.

“That’ll give me a good degree to fall back on,” he said.

He may become a coach.

But first, he’s going to try and become a professional football player. He’ll attend the NFL scouting combine in Indianapolis before the April 21 draft. Perhaps there, someone will see in Lehr the same qualities Tech saw when it recruited him.

Just give him the chance, he says.

“It’s a big challenge, a big dream of mine to make it,” Lehr said. “It’s kind of like starting college recruiting all over again.

“I want to make sure I maintain my weight, get stronger and become more a student of the game. If you go into life looking at and thinking you know everything, you’re going to get shot down. Every day, you can learn something new.”

Feature

Matt Lehr

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Lehr says he doesn't doubt people who say college is the best time of your life. His advice to younger players like Davis is simple – work hard and enjoy because it will all end all too soon.

“When is another time that you learn about life like this?” Lehr said. “You grow up so rapidly, you meet the people you'll know the rest of your life. You get to 18 and think you're grown up. College is where you grow up, where you meet your true friends.

“This team is like my family and it is going to be hard to come back and see these guys play next year and I'm not going to be with them. It has taught me so many different things, I can't even start to explain how.

“It's taught me how to become a person, how to get through life without waiting for something to happen, to make it happen. It's been one experience I'll never forget.”

Feature

Jim Davis: Looking Forward

by Neal Williams

One year down.

For defensive end Jim Davis, his freshman year as a Virginia Tech Hokie qualifies as a success to most everyone but himself. He became a central part of the Hokies' defense and was a leading player in Tech's 41-20 whipping of Clemson in the Gator Bowl.

Three to go.

It seems like forever, only it isn't. As good as he was this year, Davis' future is what has Hokie faithful most excited. He's only just begun.

College football is a revolving door. Each year a senior class departs and takes with it – usually – a tremendous amount of experience and leadership. Cory Bird, Matt Lehr, Dave Kadela and Nick Sorensen are just some of the players the Hokies will miss in upcoming seasons.

As the seniors depart, the other classes move up and assume another place in the pecking order. Some advance quicker than others. For the Hokies' rookie class, Davis is one of the players who has “leader” and “standout” stamped all over his 6-4 frame.

He had two sacks of Clemson quarterback Willie Simmons, on successive third-quarter plays, in the Gator Bowl. Those raised his sack total for the season to 5.5, though the two in the bowl won't count in Tech's official records.

“Seeing him coming in, he was like everyone else when they came in,” Lehr said. “He was quiet, shy, didn't really know anybody. Toward the end of the year, he got better and better to where he was one of our top defensive ends.

“He came in with a lot of athletic ability and a lot of stuff he already knew. He still has a lot to accomplish. But the natural strength he came in with is unreal. He's so strong. It's surprising for a freshman.”

Davis wouldn't agree with the strength part. But more on that later. Suffice it to say he's judging himself against the big picture, the finished product. As freshmen go, he definitely stood out.

“I would call my year mediocre,” Davis said. “But it has definitely been a great experience. I think I proved some people wrong. That makes me feel pretty good. I know there's so much room for improvement. I just can't wait for next year. I'm definitely looking forward to working with Coach (Mike) Gentry in the weight room.”

Like many before him at Tech, Davis is another example of Tech's ability to find recruits that others may not think are Division I ready.

Sure, the Hokies would love to stock their player larder with blue-chip prospects, and they work hard at doing that. But not every player brought in can be a “sure-fire star,” and often the difference

Jim Davis

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between the very good programs and the great programs is the quality of the recruit they find a notch below the sure things and top prospects.

Like Davis.

At Highland Springs High, Davis was barely recruited. Tech had some contact. So did East Carolina. And that was about all.

“To tell you the truth, I had no idea where I was going to be,” Davis said. “Maybe college, maybe a junior college. The possibility of just working out of high school was there. I really had nothing to strive for coming out of high school.

“All I really wanted was just another shot. I knew I had it, knew all along I had the tools.”

A military school wouldn't have been Davis' first choice. Many players go to Fork Union Military Academy, and others like it, to improve their academic standing and/or their ability on standardized tests. Davis was fine academically. He went for another reason – to improve as a player and prove himself.

And he did.

“Even there, some thought it was my last stop,” Davis said. “My attitude was that, given the opportunity, I was going to take it to another level. I was going to show that the kid who was overlooked by many people had a chance to be a pretty good player.

“In high school, no one even looked at me as a good player. My coaches believed in me. My parents believed in me, maybe a couple of other players. I was always overshadowed, overlooked. I guess I didn't have the flair they were looking for. Fork Union gave me a chance to improve. I was still pretty young (Davis didn't turn 19 until Oct. 4, 2000). I definitely got my looks there. It was such a surprise. You never know how good you are, and the things I was starting to hear I had never heard before, except from my parents. It kind of made me work extra hard to be that much better.”

Davis' list of suitors definitely grew, to include many big-name schools in the region such as Tennessee, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and West Virginia. He remembered Tech, which had given him some notice in high school. He remember Tech assistant coach Jim Cavanaugh, who had kind words for him back when others didn't.

He decided to become a Hokie.

“I guess with a lot of the athletes they choose, they can just see it,” Davis said. “Coach Cavanaugh was so genuine. He was kind of there from the year before and you remember things like that. It isn't always the money a program has, or the swagger. It's how genuine the people and program are.

Jim Davis

“Coach Cavanaugh just took a chance on a skinny tall kid who had decent strength. I guess he just knew I had a knack for football.”

Davis’ year at Fork Union gave him an advantage over most incoming freshmen. He was a year removed from high school, yet still considered a “true” freshman with the option to redshirt.

Being at Fork Union helped him in terms of strength and development. He doesn’t think he could have played right out of Highland Springs. But being at Fork Union didn’t do everything to prepare Davis, because postgraduate ball just doesn’t compare to high-level Division I-A football.

That part of the education can only be completed on site.

“That prep year really did help me,” Davis said. “Still, it is nothing like it is here. There is such a tremendous strength difference. The players are so much stronger, so much faster. Could I have done it coming out of high school? No way, no way.

“I seriously doubted I could have done it coming out of prep school. The first day you get here, you look around and everybody is just as big as you including the quarterbacks, the running backs, everybody. Guys are 22, 23 years old and I was 18. I was sitting there getting pushed everywhere. Then you realize these guys have put in tons and tons of work to get to where they are. That’s what I have to do now.”

Davis plans to put in as much time as it takes, and then some.

He’s 240 pounds, which is an OK weight for him. If he can, he’d like to get into the 250 range. If not, he’ll get by at 240.

“I think I could carry 250 pretty well,” he said. “My problem is I’m not strong enough. I hope to get as strong as possible and put on a little weight. But I don’t think weight is going to be an issue. I just think strength would help.

“I want to work on my speed, also, and Coach Gentry can help me there, too. I’m pretty quick off the ball, but I’m not the fastest guy.

“Mainly, I want to make sure I develop that solid work ethic to where I really push myself to be the best I can be.”

Davis is one of three freshmen regulars at defensive end, along with Nathaniel Adibi and Cols Colas. Lamar Cobb, the other end on the two-deep, is only a sophomore. Tackles Chad Beasley and David Pugh are juniors. The entire line returns intact.

Three years to play seems like such a long time, and it is in one sense. In another, it isn’t. Lehr would advise the young players to make certain they take the time to enjoy what they’re doing.

Jim Davis

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“You blink,” he said, “and it is gone.”

Davis doesn't want to project what his future might look like. Others see future All-Big East, possible All-America. He just sees a guy who wants to be a little stronger and faster by the opening of spring ball March 26, and then a little stronger and faster than that by the opening of the 2001 regular season.

“I don't think I can project,” Davis said. “If I was to project what happened this year, I would have been wrong. I'll just have to take it summer to summer, season to season and just hope for only good things.”

Analysis

Inside the Numbers: The Big East, Best in Show

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

The Big East made a great showing in this year's bowl season, and here are the statistics to help you prove it - whether that be to a co-worker, message board poster, or just an annoying neighbor. I've broken down all kinds of stats on the bowl season, by conference, to help you break down any weak arguments that you may run into.

The conferences are ranked using the final rankings from the AP and coaches' polls, margin of victory, winning percentage, and even a few imaginary numbers. I've tried to include as many aspects as I could that message board posters thought should be represented in defining which conference had the best showing.

The rankings are based on averages of all the teams from each conference that participated in a bowl game. They do not include non-bowl teams. These rankings are not all-inclusive and are not meant to demonstrate that one conference is "better" than another. The rankings do however, demonstrate how well each conference's bowl teams did as a whole, or *how well the conference showed in the bowl season*.

The conferences ranked below include the "Big Six" or BCS conferences, along with Conference USA, to demonstrate how a non-BCS conference fares in these rankings. The Mid-American Conference would also have been included, but their only bowl participant was Marshall, and since the rankings are based on averages, I left them out to prevent skewed results.

So, without further ado, here are the results:

Winning Percentage

Which conferences had the highest winning percentage? The Big East went 4-1 and had the highest winning percentage of any other conference. Here's how the rest stack up.

Rank	Conference	Record	Winning %
1	Big East	4-1	80%
2	Pac 10	3-2	60%
3	Big XII	4-3	57%
4	C-USA	2-2	50%
5	SEC	4-5	44%
6	Big Ten	2-4	33%
7	ACC	1-4	20%

Analysis

Inside the Numbers

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Participation Percentage

It was pointed out to me that a conference should get credit for having a high percentage of its total teams participate in bowl games, so giving credit where credit is due, the SEC has us beat. Here's the results.

Rank	Conference	Bowl/Total Teams	% Participation
1	SEC	9/12	75%
2	Big East	5/8	63%
3	Big XII	7/12	58%
4	ACC	5/9	55%
4	Big Ten	6/11	55%
6	Pac 10	5/10	50%
7	C-USA	4/9	44%

The Big East dominates in winning percentage, and gets a second place finish for percentage of bowl participants. With the amount of bowls today, most conferences should have more than half of their teams in bowl games.

Polls and Rankings

The final Poll results are important in ranking how well a conference did. How can we judge the level of competition each conference played against? All of the following were compiled using the AP and Coaches polls final post-season results.

The total number of votes, or "points" were added up from both polls for each of the teams, then divided by the number of bowl teams. The first is a look at how highly each of a conference's team were ranked in the final polls, on average. The far right column is to show where the amount of average points each conference has would land the team ranked in the final AP Poll. Yes, this will be slightly off, since I used the Coaches' Poll in the points, but they are all off the same, and it is not used to rank the conference, just to give an approximation and relate to "real world" results of where the average bowl team finished.

Rank	Conference	Avg. Points	Total Points	AP Rank
1	Pac 10	1,612	8,062	4th
2	Big XII	1,606	11,242	5th
3	Big East	1,154	5,771	6th
4	ACC	969	4,844	12th
5	Big Ten	694	4,163	14th
6	SEC	482	5,336	20th
7	C-USA	65	259	29th

As we can see, the Pac 10 barely edges out the Big XII for number one, aided by Oklahoma gain-

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Inside the Numbers

ing all number one votes in both polls. The Big East lands solidly in number 3, also third in total votes, not that bad.

We want to give credit to the rankings of the level of competition, as well as the teams in the conference, so here are the average amount of points per team each conference played against. The rankings are derived the same as the ones above, only for the competition.

Rank	Conference	Avg. Points	Total Points	AP Rank
1	ACC	1,377	6,886	7th
2	Big Ten	1,174	7,044	10th
3	Pac 10	904	4,520	12th
4	Big XII	876	6,130	13th
5	SEC	853	7,673	14th
6	Big East	674	3,368	15th
7	C-USA	495	1,979	19th

The ACC is heavily aided by playing Oklahoma, the winner of every number one vote. The Big East struggles in this category, but we can partly attribute this to the fact that we beat all of our ranked opponents, thus they fell in the rankings. I should point out that these are the final rankings, and since the Big East won most of its bowl games, the opponents all dropped in the rankings.

To be more accurate, the rankings going into the bowl season should have been used. Notice that the conferences with the two worst winning percentages come out in the lead in this ranking, reverse from the Big East, an important point to bring up when arguing our case.

Points Scored

On average, who scored the most points in bowl games? The Big East, of course. Led by the high-powered offenses of Virginia Tech and Miami, we rack up an average of 37 points a game. These numbers are found simply by dividing the total points scored by a conference by the amount of bowl teams.

Rank	Conference	Avg. Pts. Scored	Total Pts. Scored
1	Big East	37	187
2	Big XII	36	249
3	Pac 10	29	147
4	SEC	28	253
5	C-USA	25	99
6	Big Ten	22	130
7	ACC	18	88

The Big XII comes in a close second, helped by Nebraska's 66-17 blowout of Northwestern. These rankings show which conferences feature powerful offenses.

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Inside the Numbers

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Next, we look at defenses. The following shows us who has the best defenses, with regards to average points allowed per bowl game.

Rank	Conference	Avg. Pts. Allowed	Total Pts. Allowed
1	Pac 10	23	115
2	C-USA	24	95
3	Big East	25	132
4	Big XII	27	187
5	SEC	29	259
6	ACC	30	149
7	Big Ten	35	210

As you can see, these rankings are pretty close at the top, but the Big Ten is a clear loser here, allowing an average of 35 points a game (Northwestern's rollover act against Nebraska didn't help here). The Big East does fairly well in this category, given the small margins at the top.

Here are some interesting numbers — the margin of victory ranking. The BCS is trying to minimize the use of this statistic in their rankings, but we use it here to show how dominating a conference was over its opponents. These numbers are derived just by dividing the margin of victory by the amount of bowl teams, and therefore do not show the average amount each winning team won by, but rather the total average margin. Thus the conferences with losing records have a negative average margin of victory.

Rank	Conference	Avg. Margin of Victory	Total Margin of Victory
1	Big East	11	55
2	Big XII	9	62
3	Pac 10	6	32
4	C-USA	1	4
5	SEC	-1	-6
6	ACC	-12	-61
7	Big Ten	-13	-80

These numbers show us that the Big East dominated opponents, especially since this includes games lost. We won our games by a total of 187 to 132, a margin of 55 points. Conference USA won its two games by only 4 points, and the SEC, on the other hand, lost its games by an average of less than 1 point, a total margin of only 6. The Big Ten clearly shows that overall it was dominated by opponents, being outscored 210 to 130 in bowl games.

Analysis

Inside the Numbers

Some Imaginary Numbers

It was pointed out to me that conferences should get some credit for having more than one team in the BCS, for going to the National Championship, or for winning their BCS game, etc. So I have used some imaginary numbers to incorporate this into some rankings.

Each team participating, but losing a BCS bowl: 1 point
Having a team participate in, but lose the National Title Game: 2 points
Each team that wins a BCS game: 3 points
Having a team win the National Title: 4 points

I think that we can all agree these numbers are pretty fair as a representation for participation in the BCS bowls. The following are the rankings based on these numbers:

Rank	Conference	Points
1	Pac 10	6
2	Big XII	4
3	Big East	3
4	ACC	2
5	Big Ten	1
5	SEC	1
7	C-USA	0

The Pac 10 dominates, and the National Title winners come in second. The Fiesta shaft hurts the Big East here.

The Final Tally

So now you're asking, "Okay, so there's a bunch of numbers, but who is number 1?" Well, to find that out, lets use our own "BCS Computer Formula." Below is the final rankings, taken from an average of the above rankings. The rank is based on the "Average Rank" column, which is the other categories divided by eight.

	Conference	Avg. Rank	Winning Pct.	Part. Pct.	Poll Rank	Comp. Rank	Avt. Pts. Scored	Avg. Pts. Allowed	Avg. Margin	BCS Pts.
1	Big East	2.5	1	2	3	6	1	3	1	3
2	Pac 10	2.5	2	6	1	3	3	1	3	1
3	Big XII	2.75	3	3	2	4	2	4	2	2
4	SEC	4.5	5	1	6	5	4	5	5	5
5	ACC	4.875	7	4	4	1	7	6	6	4
6	Big Ten	5.25	6	4	5	2	6	7	7	5
7	C-USA	5.375	4	7	7	7	5	2	4	7

As you can see, we end up in a tie for number one. We have an argument over our 'Hoo friends,

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Inside the Numbers

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because the ACC represented fairly poorly this season, and we even have a decent argument over the National Champion conference. It's our hated enemy, the Pac 10, who continue to give us fits. The rest of the conferences are clearly spread, but the Big East and the Pac 10 stand together at the top, tied at an average ranking of 2.5. So who had the best showing?

This is where it becomes apparent it was important we get an at-large BCS bid. If we had been asked to play the Fiesta Bowl rather than Oregon State, and assuming we beat Notre Dame (which is reasonable, given the margin OSU beat them by), we win this little formula. Not only would the BCS points go up, but also the rankings of Big East teams and their competition also. But would the number three Big East team have beaten Clemson? Most likely the Big East would have enough of an advantage to pull ahead in these rankings, but we would really never know what else would result.

If it wasn't for the crybaby-I'm-taking-my-ball-and-going-home-overrated-flash-in-the-pan-Huskies/Beavers conference, we wouldn't have this problem, this not nearly being the biggest of them, by the way (can you say \$1.3 million + heavy national exposure?).

But we aren't bound to lot of preset rules like the real BCS system. In a situation like this, its always nice to use head to head competition (I know all 'Canes fans would be behind me on this one):

Boston College 31
Arizona State 17

If only the BCS were *this* accurate.

Inside TSL: The Aftermath of "Goodbye Michael"

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

I've been doing HokieCentral/TechSideline for a long time now (almost five years, which is an eternity in Internet terms), so I've had the opportunity to write a lot of articles for the web site. And those articles have generated a lot of feedback, most of it positive, some of it decidedly negative.

But no article has generated as much feedback as "Goodbye Michael, We Hardly Knew You." As you know, that article contained my thoughts on Vick's early exit from Tech. I painted his career in quick, broad strokes and tried to sum up how I perceived the whole thing from start to finish.

When I was done with the article, I was pretty proud of it. It was crisp, sharp, and said exactly what I wanted it to say. I had been storing up some thoughts on Michael's unique career for quite a while, and it all spilled out in that one piece. Not bad, I thought.

But I was not prepared for how much you, the TSL readers, would like it.

To say that the article generated a lot of positive feedback would be understating it greatly. I received about 30 emails commending the article, and there were probably another 50 message board posts praising it.

That doesn't sound like much, given the amount of traffic that the web site receives, but it was, without a doubt, the most feedback I had ever gotten on any one article.

It wasn't so much the amount of feedback, as the hyperbole therein. Let me give you some samples (each paragraph is an excerpt from emails that I received):

Email #1: Will, have you ever had any writing classes or any other kind of instruction? Your article "Goodbye Michael, We Hardly Knew You", is one of the best feature articles I've ever read. I'd put it up against anything I've read the past 25 years in Sports Illustrated. It's tight, emotive, and on the money.

Email #2: I have never written a letter in response to any article I have read. Without wasting anymore of your time, I would just like to say you that you have touched every point, emotion, and thought every Hokie fan has felt over this last week. Your article was so well written and thought out I can not put it into words.

Email #3: I think you have outdone yourself in the 1/11 article, *Goodbye Michael, We Hardly Knew You*. You have hit the nail so squarely on the head that it borders on pure literature. You have expressed my thoughts exactly and I am happy for that perspective - on it all - to be presented for others to appreciate.

Email #4: Just read your article on Michael Vick, and I couldn't pass on the opportunity to compliment you on an outstanding piece of journalism. I'm sure you'll hear it from thousands of other folks, but your article captured my exact thoughts and feelings to the period about this situation, and I found reading it to be a very cathartic and healing experience. You have a rare gift, sir, and you make use of it very well.

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Email #5: I've read a lot of stuff the last 2 or 3 days from ESPN to Sporting News, Fox, ABC, NBC CBS, MSNBC, and other outlets, but this is the best I've seen to date - from a home boy that created a wonderful web site dedicated to the Hokies. It's good because you are a Hokie and a fan like all of us and you speak from the heart.

As I mentioned, I have written a ton of articles over the years. Some have been ignored, some have been praised, some have been criticized.

And some of them I've been very proud of. Like my writeups of the 1999 Tech/WVU football game and the 1999 Boston College game; my multi-part series "A Quiet Career" about Andre Ray; the three-part series on the Virginia Tech club lacrosse team; "Destiny's Doorstep," which was written after Frank Beamer almost left for UNC; and "Searching for Answers," a look into the Virginia Tech men's basketball locker room after a humiliating loss to Duquesne.

(In case you want to read any of the referenced articles, the game reports can be found through TSL's Football Page, and the columns mentioned are in the 2000 TSL Columnist archives. Click the TSL Columnists link in the left-hand border of the home page and check out the archive links in the left-hand border of the page that loads.)

They were all fine pieces of work, at least on par with "Goodbye Michael" in terms of their clarity, their content, and in many cases, the potential to bring emotion bubbling to the surface. And even though all of them were well-received, the entire group of them combined didn't generate as much commentary as "Goodbye Michael."

The comments centered around two main themes.

1.) "You wrote exactly what I was feeling."

This comment doesn't surprise me, because you're all Hokie fans, and even though I'm writing as a journalist, at the core I'm a Hokie fan too.

I had an interesting thought. Sure, I said what many of you had been thinking all along, but ... I wonder how many of you even knew you felt that way. I'm betting that a lot of you didn't even know that you felt a lot of the thoughts expressed in the article.

Vick's career was different, completely different from that of any Tech football player or athlete before him. And as we all got caught up in the 1999 national championship game and the Vick Heisman hoopla, including the magazine covers, I wonder how many of us even realized how ... uncomfortable that made us all.

We loved having Michael Vick on Virginia Tech's football team. We loved to watch him play, and we loved the attention he brought to Virginia Tech. But he was, as I said in the article, never accessible to us. He was never "one of us."

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It was different, and it was weird, and even though having him here was a plus overall, I think a lot of you had kidded yourself into thinking that Michael's presence was a good thing *in every way*.

Well, it wasn't, folks. Vick's mega-star status, which was neither his fault or ours, chipped away at the very foundations of Virginia Tech football. For one thing, while he was here, the hype was all about one player, instead of the team as a whole, and that, my friends, is not what Virginia Tech football is all about. For God's sake, the guy had a police escort off of the field after every game! How weird was that?

2.) "I was in tears by the end."

This comment, and the number of you who said something similar, was a surprise. Yes, I've written articles before that were supposed to bring a tear to your eye, but that wasn't the intent of the "Goodbye Michael" article at all.

Why was that? Why had an unassuming story about a sophomore's dash for the cash brought forth such emotion from the fans who read it?

Was it because you were sad you would never get to see him play again? Were you worried about where the Virginia Tech football would go from here? Were you disappointed that Michael had not yet achieved the things you dreamed about — a Heisman Trophy and a national championship?

Or was it something different? Were you perhaps shedding a tear over the loss of your own innocence as a Virginia Tech football fan? After all, Hokie fans had never had the Heisman hype machine go tearing through their program, elevating a player to icon status, to the point where the NFL came calling with millions of dollars and whisked him away early, even though he wasn't nearly ready and his Tech career was only half over.

In the sixteen months of Michael's career, a tornado whipped through Blacksburg. It didn't tear the place up, and it left all the building standings, but it swept away a lot of things that are now gone, never to return. We are left behind with a Hokie team that will very much resemble Hokie teams of the past and will be competitive and strong, but nothing else is the same.

Was that why some of you were so emotional about the issue? In just eight short seasons, since Virginia Tech won the 1993 Independence Bowl, the Hokies have scaled ever greater heights and have left very few new plateaus to achieve. As we move onward and upward, there is less and less to get excited about, but much, much more to feel disappointed in and complain about.

For example, these days, a trip to the Independence Bowl would be cause for much wailing and rending of garments, not a call for celebration like it was in 1993. Maybe a lot of you sense the changes that are sweeping over the Tech football program, and although you're excited by the progress, you're a little saddened at the same time, for more obscure reasons.

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Corny and melodramatic? Sure. After all, it's only football, not life and death. But we do get wrapped up in it. To the point where an article that wasn't intended to invoke an emotional response somehow does.

Beamer vs. Vick: The Hit Statistics

I don't want to turn "Inside TSL" into a monthly recounting of hit statistics, but I thought you would be interested in hearing what the hit statistics were for Michael's announcement, versus the hit statistics for the Beamer-to-UNC drama of late November.

Let me preface this presentation by pointing out that the two events were fundamentally different. There was much more uncertainty surrounding Beamer's announcement, up until just a few hours before his press conference. But with Vick, we all pretty much knew what was coming at least a day or two before Vick announced it, maybe earlier.

And while the loss of Vick may cost the Hokies a run at the Rose Bowl and a possible national championship next year, the loss of Beamer would have ripped all four tires off the rims of the Hokie football program, and the Hokie Express would have ended up in a heap in the ditch. Any rational thinker clearly sees that the loss of Beamer and his staff would have been much more destructive than Vick's early exit.

Having said that, let's take a look at page views and message board posts for the three days surrounding the Beamer saga and the three days surrounding the Vick saga.

Date	Page Views	MB Posts
Average Day	120,000	1,000
Sun, 11/26/00	280,141 (2)	1,966
Mon, 11/27/00*	606,637 (1)	4,424
Tues, 11/28/00	215,364 (7)	1,738
Tues, 1/9/01	238,481 (5)	2,167
Wed, 1/10/01	242,118 (4)	2,258
Thurs, 1/11/01**	248,598 (3)	2,294

* Beamer's press conference

** Vick's press conference

The number in parentheses next to the page view statistics tells you where that particular day ranks in the history of HokieCentral.com/TechSideline.com hit statistics. In other words, for the six days shown, they are six of the top seven traffic days of all time.

To boil it down, the Beamer storyline produced days 1, 2, and 7 in page view traffic. The Vick storyline was responsible for days 3-5. But the message board posts do not track with the page view statistics, because only one day of the Beamer saga — Nov. 27th, with a whopping 4,424 message board posts — had more posts than any given day of the Vick saga.

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It appears that while people were hanging on a thread with regards to the Beamer news, and therefore were hitting the site to get information, more people seemed to have *something to say* about the Vick news. That's understandable, because the story of a 20-year-old not-ready-for-the-NFL sophomore having millions dangled in front of him, and subsequently deciding to leave school early, is complex and worthy of debate.

I presented the hit statistics here, and talked about the article here, because I thought you might find it to be of interest. But in the eternal circle of life that is college football, I have noticed that on the message boards, the talk of Vick has already died down, and speculation as to who the next quarterback is going to be is now going strong.

Hokie fans are nothing, if not resilient. The current chatter about Grant Noel, Jason Davis, and a host of others who will compete for the starting quarterback job just goes to show that life does indeed go on.

See you next month.