

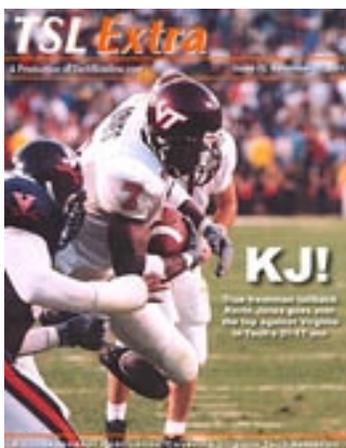
TSL Extra

Issue 13, November 20, 2001

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On the Cover
Photo of Kevin Jones scoring from one yard out in Virginia Tech's 31-17 victory over Virginia. Photography by Mike Ingalls. Photo copyright 2001 Maroon Pride, LLC.

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TSL EXTRA

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Dear Readers:

I don't think last weekend's Virginia game could have possibly gone any better. Not just because the Hokies won 31-17, but because the two players we're profiling this month, Kevin Jones and Colas Colas, had breakout games. We had already decided to profile Jones and Colas, because they were elevated to the starting lineup recently, and our timing — and theirs — couldn't have been any better.

Jones, as you know, ran for 181 yards on 37 carries against UVa, and Colas had a monster game, racking up 1.5 sacks, 3 total tackles for loss, and 2 QB hurries. He sacked UVa QB Bryson Spinner on the very first play of the game and never looked back.

Not only did Jones and Colas do well, but we got a great cover photo of Jones (taken by TheSabre.com's Mike Ingalls) going over the top to score his 1-yard touchdown. So this issue certainly fell into place at the last minute, so to speak.

This issue contains nine articles, the most ever, so many features that I could barely fit them in the table of contents. In addition to the Jones and Colas pieces, we've got a long interview with star-studded DT prospect Jonathan Lewis, who shares his thoughts on what's important and what's not important in the recruiting battle for his signature.

All in all, that's three future stars. Jones is already a star, Colas is a star in the making, and Lewis will most likely be a star, whether he goes to Virginia Tech or elsewhere.

Speaking of defensive tackles, the longest article this month is by former Tech tackle Jeff Holland, who gives us the lowdown on Tech Strength and Conditioning Coach Mike Gentry, including several entertaining inside stories about what it was like to play — and work out — under Mike Gentry. It's a can't-miss feature that provides great insight into the VT football program.

Then there's an article on the Hokie season ticket phenomenon, previews of the men's and women's basketball team (the women knocked off #17 ODU in their second game of the year), and a better-than-usual "Inside the Numbers" that breaks down sack production in the Beamer bowl era of Virginia Tech football.

Last, and certainly not least, comes "Inside TSL," where we've got a new contest for you.

The holiday season is approaching, it looks like the Hokies are Gator Bowl-bound, and you've got a 49-page TSL Extra to read. Yes, these are good times.

Enjoy issue #13.

Will

Kevin Jones: On the Fast Track

Freshman sensation Kevin Jones has lived up to the hype.

by Neal Williams

Michael Vick was the first selection in the National Football League draft in April. Virginia Tech fans know he can play a little bit. They had the joy of watching him for two years as the Hokies posted back-to-back 11-1 seasons. No one questions his talent.

Yet he sits and watches and learns this season with the Atlanta Falcons.

Kwame Brown, fresh out of high school, was chosen by the Washington Wizards with the first pick in June's National Basketball Association draft.

The ink was barely dry on his high school diploma when he was putting a pen to a kajillion dollar contract to play in the NBA. Clearly, Brown has some talent.

He, too, sits and watches and learns this season.

There is a learning curve at every level of every sport. Very few people jump up a level and dominate. College football is no different.

You can make a strong argument that the Hokies' prized tailback, freshman Kevin Jones, is well ahead of the learning curve.

Has he had an All-America season his first year in Hokies' colors? Nope, though he stands a good chance of becoming the Big East Conference's freshman of the year. Unless he has a monster game in the season finale against Miami – and it can't be ruled out – he won't have a 1,000-yard season.

But is there a Hokie alive who isn't thrilled with Jones? If there is, best check real quick and make sure he or she is really alive.

For all practical purposes, Jones is college football's No. 1 pick. You recruit rather than draft at the collegiate level, but Jones is the guy EVERYONE wanted. He was the consensus No. 1 recruit in the country. But like Vick and like Brown, he had plenty to learn. Still does.

The difference is he's already had a chance to show what all the fuss was about, and he's delivered. We know. Believe us. We know.

"Kevin had no idea when he came here of all the things we do," Tech running backs coach Billy Hite said. "It's taken him a while, like it has taken all of our guys. He's really done an outstanding job of picking up things."

Quick recap of Jones at Cardinal O'Hara High in Chester, PA, outside of Philadelphia: 5,878 career rushing yards and 84 touchdowns. A track standout as well, a guy who ran a 4.26 seconds in the 40 at Florida State's summer camp. Accolades galore by magazines and prep recruiting services.

Going into his final regular season game of his first season at Tech, Jones has a team-best 797

rushing yards on 181 carries. That's a 5.65-yard average. He had a very impressive 181 yards on 37 carries (fourth most carries in a game in school history) in the Hokies' 31-17 victory over Virginia. He's started only two games.

"I think I've caught on pretty well," Jones said.

Let's go back to when he came and look at how Jones has caught on "pretty well." More like very well, but let's not argue with the young man's assessment.

For starters, a college freshman is usually 18 years old. Jones showed up at Tech at 18, turning 19 only 11 days before the season opened. Instead of being among the oldest guys on the team, the freshman is now one of the youngest again. Jones has teammates who are 23 years old.

There's a pretty big difference between 19 and 23. "Speed and strength were the biggest differences I noticed right away," Jones said.

Jones had a leg up there because he's strong and fast already. The son of a strength coach, Jones stands out among freshmen. "Physically, he's not a freshman," Hite said.

Jones also came in hobbled. He had sprained an ankle in a prep all-star game in July and was not at full strength for his first two weeks as a Hokie. Just when he was rounding into shape, he suffered a bruised thigh in practice. It was three games into the season before Jones was running at anywhere near full strength

Now, let's drop a playbook on you that's heavy enough to cause injury itself. Math and science books aren't the only thing a college freshman on the football team has to lug around with him.

"All the blocking assignments were the big difference," Jones said. "I had to block some in high school but it wasn't that hard or anything."

Said Hite, "Things happen out here so fast. People change defenses on you and now your guy is coming from another position. It's one of those things. As Kevin sees more of it, the better he will get. When you have the responsibilities he has in our protections, you're talking you can put a quarterback out for the year if he's not right most of the time."

As for the running part of it, Jones showed quickly that he was a natural. Not that he was perfect. He'd miss holes. He'd try to make something when it wasn't there and get into trouble. That, his father said, was his biggest shortcoming in high school and a reason why he got injured so much.

"I'm hoping Tech helps him get over that," Thomas Jones said before his son reported to preseason practice. "I've put a tape together for him of the plays where he got hurt and it's the same kind of thing. He's always trying to hit the home run. That's not a bad thing, but he has to learn that there are times where it just can't be done. You have to take what you can get."

There was never any question Jones would play as a freshman. He's way too good to redshirt. And given the tendency of many stars to bolt early for the pros, Tech knew it had to get out of Jones what it could. A player can't turn pro until he's been out of high school three years. Three years' worth of playing beats two of playing and one of sitting.

Jones' development was speeded up by necessity when first-string tailback Lee Suggs went out for the year in the season opener. Suddenly, Keith Burnell was No. 1 and Jones was the top backup. The two shared the position well until Tech ran into its midseason roadblock and lost two straight with bad performances on the ground in each. Jones was getting a bit frustrated. His carries fell a bit.

He wanted the ball.

He's getting it now.

Jones' first start came in a 35-0 victory over Temple. It really wasn't an outstanding performance for him, although he did get a chance to showcase his speed. He had an 87-yard touchdown run and was pulling away from his pursuers as he crossed the goal line. It helped him to a 155-yard afternoon.

A week later against Virginia, Jones turned in the jaw-dropper. Gaining 181 yards is impressive. Gaining them in the fashion Jones did is considerably more impressive. He had 73 of those yards in the fourth quarter. Tech, up 31-0 at one time, had seen Virginia get a tad too close for comfort. It needed something to drain the momentum out of the Cavaliers. Jones took care of that.

Everyone in a Virginia uniform knew what was coming. Everyone in Scott Stadium knew what was coming. Heck, everyone watching on ESPN knew what was coming. Jones was going to get the ball. Every play.

He did, and he couldn't be stopped.

That is a mark of greatness. With eleven minutes to go, the Hokies gave Jones the ball on six straight plays. He ground up 46 yards and helped Tech take five minutes off the clock.

"I wanted the ball in my hands," Jones said. "They just kept feeding me. I'm not going to complain. The offensive line was moving them back, the fullback was hitting the guy he was supposed to hit, and I was just following the blocks.

"I think I did OK against Temple, but it was the long run that put me over the top. This week was the topper. I didn't have the long run. I had a lot of effective short runs."

Short if your idea of short is 6 or 8 yards. Virginia coach Al Groh called it power football that the Cavaliers were powerless to stop.

Hite doesn't like to have a back carry that many times. It wears them out. The game was an exception, and this tailback may be an exception. "He was breaking tackles, running hard, finding holes," Hite said. "I just felt like the way he was running, it looked like he got stronger. I thought about taking him out for a breather. I kept watching his reaction as he got up. He's a freshman. He doesn't know you're supposed to be tired after 37 carries. He told me all week he was ready for the challenge. He was excited.

"He was as impressive as anyone you'll see over those last 10 minutes."

Jones can't even think of going pro for another two years, two years that promise to be pretty exciting. The learning isn't finished yet, either.

"I don't know that I'll carry it 37 times every week, but I think I can do it every week," Jones said. "My goal when I came here was to just come out and play well. I didn't have a yardage goal. I think I've reached my goal.

"There are still things I can do. I can make better decisions. I can get upfield quicker, things like that."

Interview With Jonathan Lewis

One of Tech's top recruiting targets gives us his thoughts in an in-depth interview.

by Will Stewart, TechSiideline.com

One of Virginia Tech's top recruiting targets this year is 6-2, 290-pound defensive tackle Jonathan Lewis of Varina High School in Richmond, Virginia. Lewis, the brother of current Hokie defensive lineman Kevin Lewis, is being recruited to help fill the void that will be left when five senior defensive tackles depart Tech after the 2001 season.

Jonathan Lewis, if he comes to Tech, will have the opportunity to play as many as three seasons alongside his brother, who is a redshirt freshman this season. Lewis is ranked as the #5 player in the state of

Virginia. Rivals100.com ranks him as the #13 defensive tackle in the country. He has scheduled all five of his official recruiting visits and will pick from the quintet of Virginia Tech, Virginia, Miami, Florida State, and Penn State.

We recently spoke with Jonathan to get his thoughts on the recruiting process and how he will make his decision.

I've read that you have a pretty tight family. When it comes time to make your decision, how heavily is your family going to be involved in helping you make that decision?

They'll probably be in it strongly. They'll have some say where I go, but it's pretty much my decision to make where I want to go. It's me who has to be there every day, so I have to be comfortable with it.

Are you going to include Kevin in that discussion?

Yeah, I guess so. But he's left it up to me, also.

Do your mom and dad and Kevin indicate any preference at this point?

Not really.

What part will academics play in your decision?

Not as big a part, because I'm going to major in History, and everybody that I'm looking at has a good History program. I'm looking into some good schools — Virginia Tech, UVa, Penn State, Miami of Florida — those are all good schools, education-wise. If I get a degree from any of those five schools, I can do a lot with it.

What leads to your interest in History?

I've always had a knack for history. It's just something that I'm interested in.

Among your five visits that you've got scheduled, what school do you think is the strongest,

particularly if you're thinking about going into History?

I guess it would probably be UVa, because they always talk about UVa as a strong academic school. For a regular student, you've got to have about a 1250 (SAT score) to get in, be top 5 in your class, all these requirements. I guess Penn State, too. I've heard a lot about the strong academics at Penn State, too. I don't know much about Miami or Florida State, but I'm sure they've got good educational programs, also.

The schools you're considering include two from the Big East, two from the ACC, and one from the Big Ten. What are your thoughts on those three conferences, and is the conference that the football team is in going to play a big role in your decision? What comes to mind when you think of those three conferences?

Probably just the same, really. Big Ten, run the ball. I can be a run-stuffer. The ACC probably has more teams that get out and pass, so I could be more of a pass-rusher. The Big East has more of a mix — Virginia Tech runs, Miami runs and throws. I think whatever conference I go to doesn't make a difference. I can adjust the way I play. It doesn't make a big deal to me.

At 290, is there any chance you're going to play defensive end, or are you set as a defensive tackle?

I'm probably definitely going to be a defensive tackle.

I know you've got a tough weight program there at Varina. Do you think you can put on much more weight in college? Are you going to be a guy that winds up weighing 310 or 330?

I want to stay at my weight all through my college career. I went up to 290 during the offseason and was able to run well at 290. I guess it's okay. I was running well at 290, so I want to stay there. I don't want to get any bigger.

Miami is having a great year, Virginia Tech is having a pretty good year, and Florida State is having a pretty good year — a little down for them, but they're playing some young players. You look at Penn State and UVa, and they've got losing records, and they've struggled this year. Is playing for a team that is currently a winner important for you?

I would like to be part of a program that is rebuilding and win a national championship after some down years. That would be something special to do, just to be a part of that. I'm not really necessarily looking down on those schools (that are struggling).

Did you have a childhood favorite, a team that you rooted for growing up?

As far as pro teams go, I liked the 49ers. Kevin, he was a Notre Dame fan, so I guess I liked Notre Dame, too. He (Kevin) probably wanted to go to Notre Dame coming out of high school.

One of the things I had heard was that Kevin was interested in UVa and North Carolina as a senior in high school.

Yeah, he was. I think if UVa had offered Kevin, he would be at UVa right now. But UVa didn't offer

him, and Coach Cav (Tech assistant coach Jim Cavanaugh) came to visit Kevin at school, talked to Kevin at the lunch table a lot, and they offered Kevin. So he went to Tech.

Let's talk about Coach Cav a little. I imagine you've gotten to know him pretty well, because of Kevin. What do you think about Coach Cav?

Out of all the recruiters, Coach Cav is probably one of the best "people-persons." He knows a lot of coaches in the area, and he's not always so serious, or so silly, or whatever. He's an easy person to talk to.

If you look at the coaches for your five schools, it's an interesting mix. You've got Bowden and Paterno, who are legends and each have won over 300 games. You've got Frank Beamer, who has established a pretty good national reputation for himself. Then you've got Al Groh at Virginia and Larry Coker down at Miami, who are relative newcomers to head coaching in college. What are your thoughts for playing for a legendary coach, versus playing for somebody at the other end of the spectrum, like Groh or Coker?

The thing about the legendary coaches is, if I go there, are the legendary coaches still going to be there? Paterno might leave (retire). I don't think Bowden will leave, but Paterno already has his record for wins, so he might go ahead and give it up. I don't know. But a new coach like Groh or Coker, you don't know how long they're going to stay.

So you think a guy like Groh or Coker, it's possible —

They might leave.

But a guy like Beamer has been there (at Tech) thirteen years.

Right. He's had his up, down, and middle seasons.

Are you a little concerned that if you went to Penn State, Paterno might retire before you were done playing?

Not really. I mean, I've never met Joe Paterno. The only person I've met at Penn State is Bill Kenney, the D-line coach. Joe Paterno knows me, but I really haven't met Joe Paterno, so I don't know how much affect him leaving would have on me if I went to Penn State.

Knowing what you know about the schools, which school do you feel gives you the best opportunity to play early?

UVa, probably. They're talking about me potentially starting (as a true freshman), but Tech was saying that, too, or at least to be in the two-deep rotation as a true freshman.

Do you feel you could step in and contribute as a true freshman?

That's something I dream about. If I am able to step in as a true freshman, that's great, and I'm going to be happy, but if I'm not able to step in as a true freshman, that's something I can understand also.

Do you get a chance to talk to (former Varina teammate and friend) Mike Robinson up at Penn State much?

No.

When you do, does he try to get you to go there?

Mike wants me to go there. He tried to get me to go after he signed.

Do you know any players at the schools you're looking at, other than Kevin at Tech and Mike at Penn State?

I've talked to Billy McMullen (UVa) a couple of times. I know some other players at UVa.

Which of your favorite schools do you think has the best chance of playing for a national championship while you're a player there, and is that a big factor in your decision?

That's a big factor. Florida State is going to be a contender, Miami is going to be a contender, Virginia Tech is going to be a contender.

Any preference for playing in a 4-3 or a 3-4 system?

It really doesn't matter to me.

Do you consider yourself to be more of a run-stopper, a pass-rusher, or both?

When I'm playing well, a combination of both. I've got some good pass rush moves, and I'm big enough to stop the run.

What area of your game do you need to work on when you get to college?

My pad level. Sometimes in high school, it's kind of easy, so you have a tendency to kind of stay high, coming off the ball high. That's something me and my brother talk about all the time, about staying low. Reading the offensive linemen's stance and all that stuff, knowing the plays in college. You've got a lot of plays and stunts you need to know.

Who's the best offensive lineman you've played against in high school. Who really stands out for you?

Probably Craig Lobrano (a former Varina teammate who died at practice on September 5, 2000, of heat stroke).

How much older than you was he?

One year.

Were you pretty close with Craig?

Yeah, I was. He was like my white brother. We were real close.

Didn't you for a while wear a T-shirt or jersey underneath your pads with his number on it?

I still do. Yeah. We've also got a black wristband that we all wear for him.

One of the things that comes up a lot is negative recruiting. If a coach talks down about another school, is that going to turn you off? Is it important to you that recruiters not do that sort of thing?

Yeah. I mean, just sell your school, don't knock any other school.

Let's go through your five schools, in the order that you're going to take your visits, and you tell me what you like about each school. First, Penn State.

I like (defensive line) Coach Kenney. My friend Mike Robinson is there. They also said I could play early. It's about six hours away, the Big Ten Conference is a good conference, they play Michigan every year, Ohio State every year, big competition. You know you're going to play on TV. You know you're going to get on ESPN at least four times a year playing with Penn State.

Tell me what you like about Virginia Tech.

My brother's there. We've got a chance to do something special there at Virginia Tech. It could be something special, a story about two brothers on ESPN, or Sports Illustrated. It could be something special there.

Tell me what you like about Miami.

They're winning. Just like Penn State, you're going to be on TV a lot. You'll probably go to the pros quicker out of Miami than any other school — same with Florida State.

What do you like about Florida State?

Just like Penn State and Miami, you're going to be on TV a lot, people are going to be able to see you. You know that if you play well, your name's going to be out there, and you're going to have a great shot at pro football. And I think everybody gets fired up for that war chant.

Tell me about Virginia. What do you like about Virginia?

Virginia's probably got an awesome recruiting class coming in. As far as commits, they've got a lot of good commits coming in. I think they're getting in some fresh blood, starting with this recruiting class. They're going to have potential stars out there.

How big of a consideration is a shot at the NFL for you?

That's a big consideration for me. I don't think you'll work that hard in the weight room — you know, we've got things called "Speed Mondays" every week — for four years. I guess I wouldn't work as

hard if I didn't think I had a shot at the NFL. It's a dream. I think a lot of kids dream of playing pro sports, being in the NBA or NFL. So yeah, that's a big dream, that's something I'm really thinking about.

People who follow recruiting are always talking about whether it's important to players if other players are going to a certain school. When you talked about Virginia, you brought up some of the kids that had verbally committed to them. Does it really swing your opinion if you see a school like Virginia or Virginia Tech suddenly getting commitments from a lot of good recruits? Do you want to go there and be a part of that?

Oh, you want to go to be a part of something good, yeah.

Are you thinking about players who have already verbaled there?

Yes, like Anthony Martinez. I've known Martinez since I was about six years old. Keenan Carter, I've been able to meet him.

Are there any players out there that haven't verbaled to any schools that you're keeping your eye on?

Not really. Well, I'm looking for my cousin Marcus Lewis. I want to see what he's going to do. He went to Varina, he's a linebacker. He made all-state, and he's at Fork Union now.

Who's recruiting him?

Virginia Tech, Tennessee, Maryland, some other schools. I think Cav is recruiting him (for Virginia Tech).

Can you name a single most important factor in your decision-making process? Is there one thing that will sway you more than anything else?

My comfort level at the school.

I've heard recruits say that before, and comfort level means different things to different players. What does it mean to you?

Do I like the people there? If I go there, am I going to worry about home, or am I going to be homesick? If I go there, am I going to be able to do my work without everybody about me partying all the time? You've got to find the right thing for you.

Since you're close to your family, how big a factor is distance going to play?

I don't know right now. I think me and my family will stay close, anyway. We can use the phone. I know I'll talk to my family at least two times a week, that's how close my family is. I'll always want to know what's going on in my neck of the woods when I'm in college. If I'm four hours away or an hour away, at UVa or Tech, I'll probably call two times a week to see what's going on with my friends and family.

Your last visit is to Virginia on January 18th. When are you going to make your decision?

I think about February. Mike (Robinson) waited until February. I'm not as flashy as Mike, so maybe I'll go a little earlier.

Last question: who's your favorite school right now? Who are you leaning towards right now?

If it all stopped right now, it would have to be Virginia Tech. I've been to Virginia Tech the most. The two schools I've seen are Virginia and Virginia Tech, and I've been to Virginia Tech the most. So as it stands now, I'm leaning towards Virginia Tech before I take my visits.

Thank you, Jonathan. I appreciate you taking time to talk with us.

All right.

Cols Colas: The Making of a Defensive End

The running back from Plantation, Florida has turned into a pretty good defensive end.

by Art Stevens

Charley Wiles, an assistant football coach at Virginia Tech, was watching tape of a recruit a couple of years ago.

The prospect was Cols Colas Jr., who was making his mark as a running back at South Plantation High in Plantation, Fla. He was a kid who had 1,064 rushing yards and 11 touchdowns as a senior.

He was a 6-foot, 200-pounder who could really, really run. He became Florida's state 100-meter champion in the spring. He clocked a 10.49 for 100 meters, which is

moving. He could last, too. He went 21.3 in the 200 meters and 41.2 in the 400 meters.

Wiles coaches Tech's defensive linemen. Conventional wisdom might lead one to believe that he wouldn't be paying too much attention to a running back. Conventional wisdom would be wrong in this case.

One play in particular got Wiles' attention.

"There was an interception, a fumble, some kind of turnover," Wiles recalled. "Cols came from the other side of the field. He just ran by everybody and looked really good doing it.

"He went and tackled the guy. You could look at his body, he's built well. He showed speed, he showed power. I thought right then he'd make an excellent defensive end."

Three years later, Colas is proving Wiles correct. A redshirt sophomore for the Hokies, he became a starter at defensive end nine games into the 2001 season. He looks as if he'll be difficult to dislodge.

His education as a football player is far from complete. But Colas has made more than enough progress already to show that the tag of "future star" that was hung on him is probably not wrong.

Dare we say it? Corey Moore.

"Well," Wiles said, "he does have a lot of the same attributes as Corey Moore."

Colas is still 6-0. He's no longer 200 pounds. He's packing 240 now and guess what? He's faster, not slower. Thanks to some serious dedication to strength coach Mike Gentry's program, Colas sounds like a campaign for the Olympics.

"I've gotten bigger, stronger and faster," Colas said.

Dan Marguriet, Colas' high school coach, noticed. "The size he has now has to be a bit scary for an offensive lineman," Marguriet said. "He's gotten so much bigger without losing his quickness. Virginia Tech has honed his skills up pretty good."

To understand just how far Colas has come, a look back is required. Football hasn't been part of his life for very long. He's a lifelong Floridian with an "Islands" background. Listen closely when Colas talks, and you can pick up a trace of that wonderful lilt. His father, Cols Colas Sr., is from the Bahamas. His mother, Evelyne Colas, is from Haiti.

Colas was fast from the start. Track was his thing. "He knew how to run," Marguriet said. Colas played around with a soccer ball, though he was never big into organized soccer. He wrestled and "was a heck of a wrestler," Marguriet said. "He's just go in and be so quick he'd be all over you in a second."

He decided to give football a serious try his second year of high school.

"He had almost no knowledge of the game, but he was real receptive, a very hard worker," Marguriet said. "He had terrific instincts, and you could tell he was going to be a very good player. He was always willing to work."

Marguriet knew Wiles' assessment of Colas' best position was correct, because he'd used Colas as an end during Colas' junior year before moving him to offense as a senior. He felt all along defensive end would be Colas' collegiate position "and it's to Charley's credit that he saw it that way, too, and to Cols for being receptive to it.

"I had no doubt Cols would be successful. I was a little worried someone would pick him up as a running back. I didn't think that was his best spot for the future."

Colas' transition to end didn't happen right away. He spent his redshirt season working as an outside linebacker before moving to end during spring practice. He proved to be a tireless worker. He added 80 pounds to his bench press his first year at Tech. The weight went on, and the speed improved. During the spring of 2001, he posted a 4.41 time in 40-yard testing. "I'd been 4.5-something before," Colas noted.

Colas didn't play too much as a redshirt freshman. He finished the year with 20 tackles. He continued his hard work in the weight room and returned for preseason drills as an integral part of the Hokies' defense.

By the middle of the 2001 season, it was clear to most observers that Colas and fellow "backup" Jim Davis were outperforming "starters" Lamar Cobb and Nathaniel Adibi. After the Hokies suffered back-to-back losses to Syracuse and Pittsburgh, the change was made. Colas and Davis became first string, Cobb and Adibi became backups.

The switch only made Colas more determined, more aggressive. During the Hokies' 31-17 victory over Virginia – the second game as starters for Colas and Davis – it looked like they were harassing Cavalier backs on every play.

Of Colas' 33 officially-credited tackles through the Virginia game, 14 were behind the line of scrimmage. He also had been credited with a dozen quarterback hurries, a number that seems very low.

“We have to play better,” Colas said. “They told us whoever is playing better is going to start, and I want to start. Me and Jim know we have to keep playing better if we want to keep on starting.”

Colas is quickly picking up the technical aspects of the game. He knows talent alone doesn't cut it at the collegiate level. Marguriet sees the difference when he catches the Hokies on television. Colas, when he first started playing, would put himself in position to make a play but wouldn't have the knowledge to finish it off. Not anymore.

“He'd overrun it, not break down quickly enough, things like that,” Marguriet said. “He found out that the game was a little more than just watching it on Sunday. He found there was a lot of responsibility involved. Then it was just a matter of adjusting his talent.”

He has learned a lot.

“Right now I'm doing much better because I'm knowing what everybody else on the defense is doing,” Colas said. “In high school, I didn't know the whole concept. I was just out there trying to make a play. That's why it was so difficult for me at first, until I learned the whole game. It came piece by piece.”

He has a lot more to learn.

“I think I can get a lot, A LOT better than I am now,” Colas said. “It's pretty exciting to think about. Right now, I think I'm good but I don't think I'm that good, especially with the tradition Virginia Tech has at defensive end.”

And that brings us back to Corey Moore, the ringleader of the Tech defense that made the national championship game after the 1999 season. Moore was the physical and spiritual leader of that team. Tech coach Frank Beamer called Moore “the great disrupter.” Moore was the national defensive player of the year in 1999. He was so fast, so strong that offenses had to adjust much of what they did to account for him.

Colas' redshirt season was 1999, so he saw up close what Moore was all about and finds any comparison flattering – if a bit over the top. “I want to become that type of player,” Colas said. “If I could be that successful, I'd be really happy.”

Those who know Colas wouldn't put it past him. He's still young as a football player. He has two full seasons ahead, plenty of time to grow physically and in his knowledge of the game.

“Cols is a super kid and a hard worker,” Marguriet said. “He's gotten much better every year he's played the game. He's awfully competitive, just hates to not be the best at his spot. He was in a group here that were all like that. They refused to lose a drill, lose a race. Those kids would go in the weight room and leave the bar on a guy's chest if he couldn't get it off.”

All of Wiles' ends have at least one more year. Cobb is a junior. Davis and Adibi, like Colas, are sophomores. That's plenty of competition to push Colas in his continuing quest to be a complete player.

“Speed, instincts, power, Cols has everything you want,” Wiles said.

Throw in some more knowledge, and look out.

“Rest When You Get Old, Sleep When You Die.”

If Frank Beamer is the main reason for the success of Hokie football, Mike Gentry isn't far behind.

by Jeff Holland

The title of this article is just one of the quotes that appears on the back of a Virginia Tech football player T-shirt. There are others, such as: “Sweat Blood” or “The Hotter the Fire, The Harder the Steel” or “Speed Kills, Strength Punishes.”

These mottos give a good indication of what the Virginia Tech strength and conditioning program is all about. And the man behind it all, Mike Gentry, is without a doubt the best strength coach in America. After reading this article, you will know why...

Gentry's Philosophy

“Since 1987, our strength and conditioning program has developed a tradition. We have a team dedicated to training hard and striving for excellence. The younger student-athletes see the upperclassmen's intensity and it makes everyone want to train to be one's best. Our strength and conditioning program is designed to help our student-athletes build overall strength, power and stamina, while helping them develop self-discipline and realize their potential as athletes. We have a comprehensive program utilizing strength/power training, plyometrics, functional conditioning and flexibility training. Our goal is to become one of the most physical teams in the nation.”

Background

Coach Gentry oversees the strength and conditioning training of athletes in 21 varsity sports. He is directly involved with the training of football and women's basketball and manages programs of nutrition. He received his bachelor's degree in physical education from Western Carolina in 1979 and received his master's degree from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1981. He also received his doctorate's degree in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis on motor behavior in 1999. He was the assistance strength coach at UNC-Chapel Hill from 1980-1982 and then he was the strength and conditioning coach at ECU 1982-1987. Then in 1987 he became the strength and conditioning coach at Virginia Tech...

The Beginning at Virginia Tech

In 1987, Virginia Tech's strength and conditioning program consisted of Coach Gentry and graduate assistant Jack Richmond. The focus of the program was just football. “The weight room was basically for football. The equipment was adequate but dated. I really had to come in and establish the program,” Gentry said. The Iron Hokie program was something Gentry put in place to give the players personal goals to aim for in the four lifts: bench press, squat, hang clean, and push press.

Gentry had some specific goals in mind with this program. First, he had to convince the athletes to trust him and his staff enough to put their heart and soul in the program. Next, he had to build a base of strength with the younger athletes and as they progress, the training gets sports-specific. The coaches then try to instill work ethic and discipline so they won't miss workouts. “When an

athlete better understands the strength and conditioning program means results on the field,” Gentry said, “they are more apt to want to train.” Gentry’s goal for the strength and conditioning program was to have a total program including four parts of: strength and power; flexibility; speed development; and conditioning.

“Our goal is to become one of the most physical teams in the nation.” Proof of Virginia Tech’s improvement in strength and conditioning over the past 14 years can be seen in the following:

- Spring 2000 – 21 football players had 40 times of 4.5 seconds or lower, including 8 with times 4.3 seconds or lower.
- On the spring 1999 max out results: “I felt this was the best max session we’ve ever had for a winter. This was the best speed we’ve ever had.” (probably referring to the 19 football players who had a 40 time of 4.5 seconds or lower)
- According to the 2001 Virginia Tech Football media guide, if you break down the number of football players who received Super Iron Hokie status within any given year, you can see the improvement in strength: 1988 – 2; 1989 – 5; 1990 – 4; 1991 – 5; 1992 – 8; 1993 – 7; 1994 – 6; 1995 – 8; 1996 – 13; 1997 – 15; 1998 – 12; 1999 – 22; 2000 – 19; 2001 – 14.
- On why more football players are achieving Super Iron Hokie status: “I think several factors are involved. These guys have committed themselves to training and have continually improved. It also says a little about our recruiting. We’re recruiting top athletes now. And I think it says we’re fueling them the right way in terms of nutrition and supplements. We’ve really dialed in our training and it’s paying off.”
- On former QB Jim Druckenmiller: “If there is a stronger QB in the nation, I’d like to see him.”
- On former offensive linemen Jim Pyne and Jim Petrovich: “Pyne and Petrovich are as strong as any centers in the country.”
- On former rover Cory Bird: “He is the bellcow of the strength and conditioning program. He may be the most outstanding strength and conditioning athlete we’ve ever had here.”
- On when former defensive lineman, Corey Moore ran a 4.38 in the 40 yard dash: “The pro scouts had disbelief in their eyes after he ran,” former assistant strength coach, Jimmy Whitten said.
- On former offensive tackle Chris Barry: “As strong as 40 acres of onions.”

Accolades and Accomplishments

These are just a *few* of the accolades and accomplishments of Coach Gentry:

- Spring 2001, seven Hokie athletes named National Strength and Conditioning Association All-American for 2001 – Cory Bird (football), Josh Redding (football), Tere Williams (women’s basketball), Lisa Givens (lacrosse), Mary Lowzinski (softball), Chris Martin and Eric Hall (wrestling).
- In 1999, Coach Gentry became one of the few strength coaches nationally with a doctorate’s degree.
- In 1997, Coach Gentry was promoted to Assistant Athletic Director for Athletic Performance.
- In 1996 and 1995, Coach Gentry was a finalist for professional of the year by the National Strength and Conditioning Association.
- In 1995, the National Strength and Conditioning Association recognized him for Professional of the Year in the Metro Conference. Coach Gentry was selected by popular vote of the strength and conditioning coaches from the Metro Conference.

- *Bigger, Faster, Stronger Journal* has labeled Coach Gentry as “one of the great strength coaches in America today.”

The Merryman Center

When it came time to design the Merryman Center to fit the football program’s needs, former Virginia Tech Athletic Director Dave Braine allowed Coach Gentry to have input on the design of the weight room so that it would fit his needs. “I was fortunate enough to design it, so if I don’t like it. I don’t have anyone to blame but myself,” Gentry jokingly stated. Including the existing weight room and the new speed/agility room, Virginia Tech has 22,000 square feet of space for getting bigger, faster and stronger.

The new weight room has state-of-the-art equipment, including 12 self-contained power-lifting areas, 8 Olympic benches, 25 hammer machines, 2 sets of dumbbells (5-150 lbs) and 1 set of dumbbells (150-200 lbs), along with other equipment designed to improve strength and enhance performance.

The speed/agility room makes this weight room unique. Players use this 6000 square foot room to enhance speed and explosion. “I think that’s one of the unique things about it (the Merryman Center). We can do so many things in that room to improve agility and speed development. We’ll use that more in the offseason. But a lot of schools don’t have this luxury.”

The Nebraska Influence

In the spring of 1996, Dave Braine and Mike Gentry visited Nebraska to look at their athletic program. Braine looked at the administration portion of Nebraska’s athletic department, and Gentry examined the athletic performance portion, which includes weight training and nutrition.

“I think Nebraska does more with developing athletes than anyone else now. Obviously, they recruit good athletes. They win national championships in a lot of sports. But they’re in a remote part of the country, and a lot of their players are from the state. They’ve taken those players and developed them.”

Weight Lifting: Gentry has combined some of Nebraska’s weight training methods with his own to make Virginia Tech bigger, faster and stronger. At Nebraska, their staff believed that the things which correlate to the most success on the field are the 10 yd sprint, the 20 yd shuttle run, the vertical jump and the 40 time.

Nutrition: When Amy Freel was hired as coordinator of student life in 1999, she wanted to offer her knowledge in the field of nutrition. Gentry jumped at the chance. She is Virginia Tech’s first sports nutritionist. It’s her experience as a dietician that’s paying off for Virginia Tech. She is continuing to educate coaches and athletes about nutrition, diets, losing fat, gaining lean muscle mass and eating to improve performance.

Eventually, she wants to get involved with Virginia Tech’s “Nutrition Oasis” – a supplementation station for Olympic sports athletes where they can get pre-practice and post-practice energy drinks (the same ones used at Nebraska), pregame/postgame meal planning, grocery shopping tours for athletes, and a recipe book for athletes.

Also, Gentry introduced the concept of the “The Training Edge”, a cafeteria line at Dietrick Dining Hall designed for health conscious individuals, which he got from Nebraska and seeing what they do with nutrition.

Sports Psychology: Another area Gentry thought could be improved was the need for a sports psychologist, someone besides coaches for student-athletes to talk to and to help them deal with problems both on and off the court or field. “I’ve always felt that was an important element. And some of our coaches had sought some help in the past. We just needed the resources. We want to be a holistic model of an athletics department and we wanted to – and needed to – include sports psychology in that model.”

Gentry, along with Dr. Bob Miller (associate director of the Thomas E. Cook Counseling Center located at McComas Hall) and Dr. Gary Bennett (licensed psychologist at the Cook Counseling Center), Jim Weaver (who graduated from Penn State with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s degree in college counselor education) and Dr. Brenna Chirby, helped get everything in place to start doing the job of sports psychology.

Next was getting the athletes to come see the sports psychologist. After his knee surgery, current Virginia Tech cornerback Larry Austin went to Dr. Chirby before and after the surgery. So far the word of mouth has gotten around, and the number of athletes meeting with the sports psychologists have increased greatly.

“It’s a great resource for our coaches and our athletes. It’s a great tool and that’s why we want to continue to develop it and make it better. We’ve improved a lot in areas of strength and conditioning, nutrition and in sports psychology, and in other areas as well,” Gentry said. “It’s all about becoming a well-rounded athletic program and helping student-athletes. We want to give them all the resources we can put them in position to be successful.

“We’re trying to model our program after Nebraska’s, because they were one of the first to realize the importance of nutrition and sports psychology. I want to continue to direct the strength and conditioning program, but we also want to gradually develop these other areas. We want to do it right.”

Walk-ons

It’s no secret that Virginia Tech has one of the best walk-on programs in the country. The secret of their success is simple – they get *Gentrified*. For example:

John Engelberger: “He’s just an incredible strength athlete. He ran a 4.55 40, and that, to me, might be the most impressive number I’ve seen. That’s more impressive than a player who weighs around 200 running a 4.3. You expect those players to do it, so its not much of a surprise, but John’s time was exceptional,” Gentry said. “John Engelberger is the poster boy for our strength and conditioning program. When he came here as a freshman John weighed 210 lbs and ran a 4.75 Now (1999) he weighs 269 and ran a 4.55 and became the 1st person in school history to push jerk over 400 lbs.”

Michael Stuewe: “Gentry deserves a lot of credit. He treats everyone the same, regardless if you’re

a walk-on or on scholarship. Everyone does the same lifts and he'll try to motivate you the same as anyone else. Nobody gets a chance to relax with Coach Gentry around." (Note: Stuewe added 23 lbs of muscle and decreased his 40 time from 4.81 to 4.42.)

Danny Wheel: "The real influence on me that made me stand out from the rest of the players was Gentry. He really pushed the weights on me, telling me that to stand out in front of the coaches, I had to work hard in the weight room, so I did that. When you lift weights in the weight room, it translates on the field because you notice you feel stronger than other people." (Note: Wheel earned Super Iron Hokie status five times, and his 40 time decreased from 4.93 to 4.68.)

Kerwin Hairston: "Coach Gentry. Four years of being with him will put weight on anyone." (Note: Hairston went from 231 to 270 lbs and his bench press increased from 235 lbs to 340 lbs.)

Jarrett Ferguson: In August 2001, he benched 390 lbs, squatted 605 lbs, power cleaned 351 lbs, push jerked 361 lbs, had a 38.5" vertical jump, and earned his 3rd Elite Athlete Award aka "The Excalibur Award".

Quotes from Coach Gentry

- "We put a premium on speed, from Coach Beamer on down. When Coach Beamer first came here, he recognized that speed was one of the most important ingredients of winning and that we didn't have enough speed. He and his staff made an effort to recruit faster players, and now that we're recruiting against the top teams in the country, you're talking about guys who can run great times."
- "We do workouts a little differently too. Most schools train their players 4 days a week. Our big guys spend four days a week lifting. But with our skill players, we train them 3 days in the weight room and then work them for 2 days on nothing but speed. And I think other teams are going to start training that way."
- After the 40 time testing in 1999: "Our team is getting faster for several reasons: (1) Coach Beamer has believed in recruiting speed. We did not have good team speed 12 years ago when we first came here and it's been a mission to recruit players, especially skill position guys, who can really run. (2) The things we do in here to develop speed are working. We are not here to develop power-lifters. We are here to develop football players. Every day before workouts, every player on this team spends time in our speed and agility room. We really work at getting faster every day."

Quotes from Others

- Coach Beamer: "There is no question about the value and importance of weight training as an ingredient to winning. We're very fortunate to have Mike Gentry running our strength and conditioning program."
- Former Virginia Tech Athletic Director, Dave Braine: Mike Gentry is "the best strength and conditioning coach in the country."
- Virginia Tech Women's Basketball Coach Bonnie Henrickson: "We've always had the best strength and conditioning coach in the country in Mike Gentry." Henrickson credited Gentry for helping the women's basketball team make strides in weight room. "There are very few

women's coaches in the country who can say that their strength and conditioning coach actually trains their team...he directs it and he will get after you."

- Former Virginia Tech football player and assistant strength coach, Jimmy Whitten: "I couldn't have worked under any better than coach Gentry."
- ABC's Gary Danielson called the Virginia Tech strength and conditioning program "one of the best in the country."
- Former Alabama coach, Mike DuBose, after the 1998 Music City Bowl: "Usually SEC teams have an advantage in this game, but not only do we not have an advantage in this game, Virginia Tech is a much faster team than us."
- Former Virginia Tech football player Lawrence Lewis: "Without him (Coach Gentry) I would not be the man that I am now. Gentry was hard but fair. He got you ready for not just football but also life. I am still playing football and I feel I owe it all to Virginia Tech and especially Coach Gentry."
- Former Virginia Tech football player Kirk Gray on Coach Gentry: "He is hard. His fire burns and burns and burns. That's why his favorite saying is 'The hotter the fire, the harder the steel.' Also, he believes in running and running and running some more."
- Quote from a Hokie Huddler from December 1996: "Tech should give Mike Gentry a raise every year. It's incredible what he does with those guys. They wear everybody out in fourth quarter."

Unique Experiences with Mike Gentry

When I was a freshman in 1991, I wasn't on the dress squad. Therefore, when the dress squad traveled on Fridays for away games, the other players had to lift. Coach Gentry would give you the option of lifting at 6:00 am or coming in the afternoon. Since Coach Gentry traveled with the team, an assistant strength coach would monitor the weight room.

One Friday morning during the 1991 season, J.C. Price and I lifted at 6 am. We "finished" our workout in about 20-30 minutes. (Note: It is impossible to finish a Gentry workout in 20-30 minutes). The following Monday, Coach Gentry heard about our *quick* workout and called J.C. and I into his office. To sum it up, he chewed our butts off and warned us that he would run us out the program if we ever did anything like that again. I can laugh about it now, but back then we were "punk freshman" and didn't know any better. Needless to say, JC and I *never* slacked off in the weight room – ever!

There has always been a rumor/running joke that Coach Gentry could control the weather and make it hot and humid anytime he wanted. During the summer, Blacksburg doesn't really get *that* hot and humid. However, one summer we were about to do some running drills on the practice field. It was an overcast day and it looked like it was about to rain. Many of the players thought the running would be cancelled or perhaps moved inside to the Rector Field House. No way! Minutes before we started the sun came out, and it started getting very hot and muggy. Coincidence? I think not...

Two interesting stories from former Virginia Tech football player, Kirk Gray:

Virginia Tech vs. Maryland – September 1, 1990 (VT 13, MD 20)

"Coach Gentry and the strength coach from Maryland were not real friendly, and he made the team

aware of this during preseason workouts. They crossed paths somewhere earlier in their careers and it wasn't pretty.

"During much of the game, they spent a fair amount of time standing across from each other with their arms folded staring each other down. I was actually standing next to Coach Gentry when all of this happened. It was late 2nd quarter or early 3rd quarter, when former Virginia Tech player Bo Campbell returned a punt and ran towards our sideline. He came out of bounds a few yards past where we were standing.

"One of the Maryland players ('a big rangy fella') didn't tackle Bo Campbell, but he ran right into Coach Gentry. It was obvious this guy was looking for Coach Gentry. The Maryland player lowered his shoulder at full speed and crashed into Coach Gentry. He went flying back under the player bench which landed on top of him, as well as the Gatorade table and coolers. Players ran to help Coach Gentry up because it looked like he got blasted. Coach being *Coach*, he just jumped back up and violently shrugged off all attempts of assistance. He dried himself off and returned to his position on the sideline.

"Since I was standing very close to him it looked very intentional, but from the outside looking in it probably looked quite harmless. After everyone calmed down and the concern about Coach Gentry's welfare had passed, he leaned over to me, looked straight ahead and said, '*that would have killed a lesser man.*' No smile, no giggle, no nothing. At the time, his attitude about the whole thing...his reaction...made me believe he really was "Iron Mike". He just didn't preach it to us. He lived it too. Show no weakness, no chink in the armor.

"For a long time he had 'VT FE' on his license plate. I was thinking, 'what does that mean?' Obviously, 'VT' is for Virginia Tech. Well, 'FE' is the symbol for iron. Virginia Tech Iron is how he identified himself!

"Years later when I was working with Coach Gentry and this story came up, I asked him if he thought his counterpart at Maryland had set up the hit. Coach Gentry said yes. He felt like it was intentional. I asked Coach Gentry if it hurt. '*I don't ever remember feeling any pain.*' was the response I got."

West Virginia vs. Virginia Tech – October 6, 1990 (VT 26, WVU 21)

"We played West Virginia, which was ranked in the top 25. In 1990, we had a chance to be very good, but just couldn't get over the hump. The preseason practices as well as the summer preparation (running, lifting, etc.) was extremely tough and a lot of the players went through it.

"A few minutes before we run out of the tunnel, we are in our usual meeting room in Jamerson Athletic Center. The atmosphere of the room is usually pretty quiet. Some players talk and motivate other players, most players sit quietly. Coach Beamer usually comes in and says a few words. After Coach Beamer was finished, he asked if anyone else had anything to say. Coach Gentry stood up and asked if all of the coaches could step outside because he wanted to talk to the team.

"Once they left, Coach Gentry started to pace back and forth at the front of the room with his head down. I could tell he was building up inside, but his voice never changed. He must have known that our team had a chance to be good (Note: the 1990 team finished 6-5), and this game may be

the one that turns it for us. He kept talking about how hard we worked all summer and that they (WVU) were not working as hard as we did.

“Coach Gentry also said that when he was watching them in warm-ups, he noticed that they were fat, sloppy, and were breathing heavy and sweating already. Coach Gentry’s voice began to build with adrenaline ever so slightly. As he continued talking, the room began to get heavy with anticipation and just at the right moment, Coach Gentry picked up one of the folding chairs and threw it against the blackboard and started screaming that we should get out there and kick their asses. The room exploded, and everyone ran out of the room to the tunnel. Needless to say, we beat their ass!”

Ironman Competition

In the summer of 1995, Coach Gentry and Jimmy Whitten started the Iron Man Competition. They got the idea from ESPN and the magazine *Milo* – it had some great ideas about doing the event. In fact, Jimmy Whitten, who is the ECU strength coach now, does the Iron Man Competition at ECU. “It (the Iron Man competition) gives the players a chance to compete and break the routine of training – whether they look forward to do it or dread it,” Gentry stated.

I had the honor and (dis)pleasure of competing in the very first Iron Man Competition. Back then, we did the back squat, stadium run, keg toss, sled pull, car push, and tire toss. It was actually fun for the most part because it did break the monotony of summer lifting and running.

However, the worst event for me was the car push. Pushing a car 60 or 70 yards was excruciatingly painful afterwards. I could not stand up for 15-20 minutes after the event because my legs felt like jello. I’m not kidding. I tried to stand up, but I would just fall back down. I remember T.J. Washington did the car push right after me and he couldn’t walk either.

Wednesday Morning Running

I just thought I’d mention this. If you got caught skipping a class or didn’t fulfill your required study hall hours, Coach Beamer would make you do *Wednesday Morning Running* with Coach Gentry. Sometimes at our team meetings, Coach Beamer would jokingly say that Coach Gentry doesn’t like to do Wednesday Morning Running, but he wasn’t kidding. He hated to do it. Put it this way, I **never** had to do Wednesday Morning Running.

Final Thoughts

In my opinion, Mike Gentry is the best strength and conditioning coach in America. Like many players have said before, he made me the player I was. Without him, I know I wouldn’t have made it in Division I football. He is absolutely the best motivator I have ever met. Year after year, other teams (college and professional) try to steal him away from Virginia Tech. But year after year, he stays with Virginia Tech.

Once you give 100% effort in the weight room 100% of the time and earn his respect, he becomes more than a strength coach. He becomes your mentor and friend. J.C. Price and I kinda learned the hard way. And occasionally, he will joke around with you...if you’re lucky.

I would like to point out that some of the stories you have read about Coach Gentry should not be misinterpreted. I actually left out a few stories about Coach Gentry that only former athletes (primarily football players) who actually got to interact with Coach Gentry would understand and appreciate. But, the stories I did write about should give anyone a good idea of what the Virginia Tech strength and conditioning program is all about...

"Speed Kills, Strength Punishes."

Note: Jeff Holland played defensive tackle for Virginia Tech from 1992-1995. Most of the information is from past issues of the Hokie Huddler and VT media guides.

Tickets, Please

Once an easy ticket, admittance to a Hokie football game is gonna cost you.

by Tamlin Bason

If you want to watch Virginia Tech football games, you basically have a choice between two investments. The first—buy a big screen TV and a new recliner. The second—donate money to the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund and become a member of the Hokie Club.

If you are not a member of the Hokie Club and you are not currently a student, there is one simple solution to watch a Hokie foot-

ball game: “Watch it on TV”, says Sandy Smith, the Director of Ticketing Services at Virginia Tech.

Over the past few years, Tech football has soared in terms of popularity and national recognition. All of this is just fine and dandy for the program, but success comes at a price, and the fans foot the bill.

Over the past two football seasons, only four groups of people have been able to attend football games at Lane Stadium: (1) Coaches and players; (2) Fans from opposing teams; (3) Virginia Tech students and guests of students; and (4) Hokie Club members.

Hokie Club members are part of an elite organization who all have one thing in common: they donate large amounts of money to the Virginia Tech Athletic Department. With the success of the football program in the last couple of years, seating has been very limited.

“We give top priority to the Hokie Club members, and the games have been selling out quickly,” Smith said. “We let the contributors get a chance to go to the games, the ones who pay for the scholarships.”

Hokie Club members have devoured all tickets in the past two years, leaving no tickets remaining for non-donating fans. Smith said that his department has not sold an individual game ticket in two years because they simply haven’t had any left over.

In 1993, there were 10,056 season tickets sold, according to the 2000 Football Media guide. That number steadily increased over the next few years, reaching a little more than 12,000 the following year, and in 1995 season ticket sales had jumped to 14,124. In 1996 the number was 16,087 but sales remained stagnant for the ‘97 season, with only 16,675 applicants for season tickets sales. In ‘98 sales increased by another two thousand, but things were about to change drastically.

In 1998 the Hokies cruised to a 9-3 record and a convincing victory over Alabama in the Music City Bowl. The success was followed by a jump in season tickets sales. In 1999, season ticket sales increased by over 25 percent, leaping from 18,433 to 23,816. Those 23,816 season tickets holders got to witness Tech’s most historic season to date, including an undefeated record and a trip to the Sugar Bowl to play for the National Championship. The next year, a record 35,000 applications poured in requesting season tickets. Of those 35,000 requests, 29,440 season tickets were sold, almost tripling the total sold in 1993, just seven years earlier.

If the number has declined in the 2001 campaign, it is only because of lack of space rather than waning interest. Anyone who has been to the stadium will notice that behind the South end zone sits cranes and bulldozers, rather than Orange and Maroon faithful.

In the 2000 season, Lane Stadium held 56,272 people, but due to reconstruction that number has dropped to 51,220. However, when Tech opens its 2002 season, the South end zone expansion will be finished, adding an additional 11,000-12,000 seats. Smith said that they are unsure of the exact number of new seats that will be created.

According to the 2001 Virginia Tech Football Media Guide, the seats will be arranged in a double deck structure. The seats will run along the entire south end zone, but will not connect with the existing East and West seating structures.

Smith said that the new seating will be delegated to Hokie Club members who are not currently allotted tickets. As of now, there are no plans to rearrange seating, moving fans from the West bleachers to the new facilities. This means that alumni and contributors who currently occupy seats will not be forced to give up those seats.

Currently, seating arrangements are determined by loyalty, and of course pocket books. Who gets that prime real estate along the 50-yard line? "It is based on donations and longevity within the programs," Smith said.

Hokie Club membership is diverse, with various levels and benefits depending on amount of money donated. The entry level is the Hokie Gift Level, with the minimum annual donation of \$100. However, the annual categories extend to Platinum Gift Level, which requires a hefty annual donation of \$5,000 and up. The greater the donation, the better the chance of receiving tickets.

Hokie Club members do not only receive one ticket for membership. On the contrary, many members receive upwards of four tickets for every Virginia Tech home game.

Ticket orders are routinely taken through the HokieTickets.com web page maintained by Smith and his associates. Hokietickets.com allows fans a chance to purchase tickets if available, although the football tickets links have required little maintenance in the last few years. The same message has appeared: "All season tickets have been sold."

Since there have been no individual ticket sales for two seasons, the traffic on the site is mainly in vain. Therefore, the web site for fans who wish to attend football games is hokieclub.com. This site describes all of the separate clubs in great detail, including benefits and prices for particular status.

Another site that fans who wish to see Tech football games should check out is walmartcom, or other such appliance-laden web pages. With the Holidays approaching, there should be some great deals on big screen TV's and recliners.

Men's Basketball Preview

Improved depth and better play at the point will make Hokie men's basketball more bearable this year.

by Curt Spear

With November 17th having arrived just a few days ago, Virginia Tech's men's hoops team is gearing up for its second season in the Big East. As most analysts expected, the Hokies took their lumps in last year's Big East debut season, finishing with a 2-14 conference record. Head coach Ricky Stokes had to throw a lot of youngsters into the fire earlier than he probably would have liked, and the results were predictable.

Last year's players are a year older and wiser now, and with the addition of a couple of freshmen and two key junior college transfers, this year's team has more talent, experience and depth than last year's. It is both fair and realistic to expect the Hokies to be better, but the questions are how much better, how quickly, and how much the improvement will show up in the record and conference standings. Before answering those questions, let's take a closer look at the team.

PROJECTED STARTERS

PG (point guard): Eric Branham
 WG (wing guard): Carlos Dixon
 WF (wing forward): Bryant Matthews
 PF (power forward): Terry Taylor
 C (center): Carlton Carter

Top Reserves: WG/PG Brian Chase, PF John Smith, WG/WF Joe Hamilton, PF/C Mbindo Dongo

AT THE POINT (PG)

By last season's end, it was evident to Stokes that Tech needed some help at the point. Highly-touted frosh Chris Exilus, who has since transferred, struggled early and lost confidence as the season went on. By mid-February, he was a shell of the player who had scored 20 points against VMI in his first college game.

Carlos Dixon (6'7") and Brian Chase (5'10") gave admirable efforts taking turns as the full-time point guard, but neither was particularly effective at creating for their teammates, both turned the ball over too frequently against defensive pressure, and both were more productive working off-the-ball as scorers. For all the talk about Virginia Tech's lack of muscle and depth up front, Stokes' #1 need was for a mature, steady hand to run the point.

Enter Eric Branham. Branham, a 5'11" guard who played at Hagerstown Community College last season, has drawn praise from the Tech staff for the stability he has brought to the position in practice and in the first exhibition game, an 83-57 Virginia Tech win over a Nike Elite touring squad. In that game, Branham scored 14 points, drained two of three from 3-point range, and did not commit a single turnover.

Virginia Tech desperately needs to improve upon last season's offensive chemistry – or lack thereof – and turnover statistics. More than any other individual on the roster, Branham's development will be the key in those departments. The early returns have been favorable, but a broken hand is keeping Branham out of action at the beginning of the season. Fortunately, he is not expected to miss too much time, and should be back by late November or early December.

Most likely, Dixon and Chase will fill in as part-time point guards if and when Branham is fatigued, in foul trouble or injured. Both posted assist-to-turnover ratios of less than one a season ago, so if either is forced into longer-term duty at the point for whatever reason, that could be a problem again.

ON THE WING (WG, WF)

If Ricky Stokes is to fulfill his pledge to bring up-tempo, press-and-run basketball to Tech, he's going to need a stable of wing players who can run the floor and handle the ball. Last year, a set of promising newcomers arrived with the potential to develop those kinds of skills. While Dixon, Bryant Matthews (6'7") and mid-season addition Joe Hamilton (6'6") showed flashes of brilliance, their youth and lack of experience was evident. Dixon and Matthews in particular have a lot of promise, but necessity pressed them into service far sooner than Stokes probably would have preferred. Hamilton also had moments of greatness and produced fairly well in the minutes he was given, but as a mid-year enrollee, he hadn't been able to practice with his teammates before mid-December, so it was only natural to expect everyone's chemistry to be off.

Stokes' hope is that now that those three guys have been through a year's worth of Big East wars, they can team with Chase to bring some athleticism and scoring punch to the wing guard and forward positions. While they are only sophomores, Dixon and Matthews provide a combination of size, athleticism and explosiveness that nobody else on this team can. Both run the floor and finish the break well, and both should flourish in a press-and-run system.

Dixon, a dangerous deep shooter, was the Hokies second-leading scorer as a freshman last season with 11.0 ppg. Matthews, who is more adept at slashing to the hoop, posted a very respectable 9.1 ppg despite often playing out of position at power forward. Those two have excellent upsides, but must improve their efficiency. Dixon's FG% was in the mid-30's for most of the season, and Matthews' percentage, while better than Dixon's, still needs to improve.

Both have a year of starting in the Big East under their belts, both have added some much-needed strength in the off-season, and with natural progression, both should be better and more efficient players than they were a season ago. Look for Dixon to start at the wing guard spot alongside Matthews at wing forward.

What about Brian Chase? Chase was the Hokies' leading scorer a season ago (12.9 ppg), was the most accurate 3-point shooter in the Big East (46.8%), and is the most experienced player on VT's roster. Despite all that, he may very well find himself coming off the bench instead of in the starting lineup. For all of Chase's talents, he has struggled with turnovers when forced to be Tech's primary ballhandler and distributor. Stokes will likely go with what he hopes is a steadier hand at the point in Branham.

Given that, if Stokes were to start Chase at the wing guard, he would have two guards under 6' on

the court at once – which could cause significant offensive and defensive match-up problems. Chase will get his minutes, but they are likely to come in relief of Branham or Dixon, with Tech playing a lot of zone when Chase and Branham are playing simultaneously. The best guess is that Chase will be Tech's first reserve off the bench, and if Tech suffers any early scoring droughts, Chase will be the "instant offense" guy to enter the game and give the Hokies a different look.

Hamilton might be the most versatile player on Tech's roster. A fantastic athlete, he can play either guard or forward as a slasher/scorer type. He was one of Tech's most productive players in terms of points-per-minute last year, but like Dixon and Matthews, needs to be more judicious with his shot selection. Hamilton is Tech's only senior on the perimeter, and must demonstrate poise and judgment. If his shot selection and decision-making improve, he can give Stokes some "oomph" off the bench.

6'7" freshman C.J. Pigford may earn a few minutes. He will scrap with the best of them, but his minutes will probably be limited behind the more experienced players in front of him. He may be a bit of a 'tweener, playing some minutes on the wing and some minutes at the power forward spot.

IN THE POST (PF, C)

The post is the hardest area of the Virginia Tech team to project. The power forward and center positions appear to be wide open for anybody that wants to claim them. Whoever produces will start, and if anybody struggles for any extended period of time, they'd better be looking over their shoulder. Stokes should have at least one or two more options in the post this year that were not around a year ago.

JUCO transfer Terry Taylor might be the best bet to lock up one of the starting post positions. At 6'7" and 275 pounds, Taylor is probably the strongest member of Tech's frontcourt, and has surprising agility for his build. While he won't overpower as many opponents at this level as he did in junior college, Taylor has good enough scoring tools to contribute, and he should put up better offensive and rebounding numbers than Tech saw from any of last year's frontcourt starters.

After that, it's anybody's guess. 6'11" Carlton Carter would give Tech more height in the middle than any other player, but even after putting on 16 pounds in the off-season, he is still at a relatively slight 212 pounds and might still get pushed around a bit by Big East heavyweights. If Carter wants to start, he'd better improve upon last season's FG%, which was mired in the low 40's. A 6'11" F/C needs to shoot a higher percentage than that.

6'9" Mbindo Dongo brings a great deal of enthusiasm to the court and could win the center spot. Dongo's skills aren't particularly refined, but at 6'9" and 240 pounds, he's one of Tech's strongest post players, and he will score a few points and grab several rebounds per game as a result of sheer hustle and hard work.

6'8" Jon Smith was given a starting spot in the exhibition against Nike Elite, but Taylor's arrival may cut into his playing time over the long haul. A good athlete and excellent physical specimen, Smith hasn't yet developed the consistency that his fans and coaches would like to see.

Harding NaNa, a 6'8" freshman from Notre Dame Academy in Middleburg, Virginia, has been given the "project" label by many experts, but there's no denying his work ethic and aggressiveness. Seton Hall was interested in NaNa before last spring's signing period, but couldn't reel him in after Tommy Amaker left for Michigan. While it may be another season or two before NaNa begins to make a name for himself at this level, his is a name worth remembering down the line.

The wild card among VT's plans for the post could be 6'9" Dimari Thompkins. Thompkins, regarded as a top-125 prospect a few years ago, has been out of basketball after failing to qualify academically at Hargrave in 1999. He will reportedly become eligible after completing a community college course this fall, and should join the Hokies in December. With Thompkins' size, strength and mean streak, he could be an immediate contributor.

THE BOTTOM LINE

With the continued development of last year's youngsters and the arrival of the junior college newcomers, there's little doubt that Virginia Tech will be better in 2001-02. But how much will it show up in the won-loss record, and how much will it show up in the conference standings?

The out-of-conference schedule holds only three games against teams who finished in the top 160 of the 319 Division I teams in last season's RPI ratings. The December 1 showdown at Virginia will be the marquee game. The Jim Thorpe Association Classic will pit Tech against traditional Ohio Valley Conference power Murray State, then either Louisville or Wisconsin-Milwaukee in the second round. All three of those teams were in the RPI top 125 last year.

Outside of those games, Virginia Tech's toughest challenges will be a visit to Florida State, who will feature a couple of highly-touted newcomers, and a grudge match against Radford, in which Tech will be seeking to avenge the loss to the Highlanders in 1999-2000. Virginia Tech is likely to be favored in at least eight of its out-of-conference games. In Big East play, things will get tougher. Four of the first five league games are at Cassell Coliseum, which means getting off to a good start will be critical.

Conference play will be difficult. In the East Division (Tech's division), Connecticut and Boston College should battle for the title as Caron Butler and Troy Bell battle for conference Player of the Year honors. Diminutive John Linehan and Providence's tough defense should carry the Friars into the upper division as well. Miami welcomes back F/C Elton Tyler from his academic difficulties, and figures to get a lot of production from sophomore Darius Rice. St. John's and Villanova could find themselves battling for fifth and sixth place.

On the West side, Georgetown and Syracuse figure to be a step ahead of the pack, followed by Notre Dame. West Virginia hopes that a promising freshman class can help them step forward, while Seton Hall may take a step back without Tommy Amaker and Eddie Griffin. Pittsburgh's talent base ain't what it used to be, and Rutgers will struggle after Todd Billet's transfer.

Where does that leave the Hokies? Tech should win something on the order of eight non-conference games, maybe nine with a break or two. Stability from the point guard spot and improved

depth in the frontcourt could help the Hokies step up from two conference wins to four or five. If Branham and Taylor are as good as advertised, 12 wins overall and four or five in conference is certainly possible. That may or may not be enough to get out of the basement in the East Division, but even if Tech doesn't pull off a jump to sixth place, the Hokies figure to be much closer than they were a year ago.

There is still much work to be done, but at long last, the train appears to be headed in the right direction.

Women's Basketball Preview

Entering Bonnie Henrickson's fifth year, the Hokies have questions galore.

by Jesse J. Richardson, Jr. and Todd Clark

As the Hokie women's basketball team enters the 2001-2002 season, several questions linger. The coaches picked the Hokies to finish sixth in the conference, while one publication picked them fourth. The addition of four new freshmen and one transfer, as well as some key preseason injuries, complicate matters.

In the Big East, several teams (most notably Notre Dame) have experienced key person-

nel losses, as have the Hokies. Connecticut and their brilliant shooting guard Diana Taurasi are a lock at number one. The order behind the Lady Huskies is anyone's guess. The Hokies could finish as high as second or as low as sixth in the conference, depending on the answers to the following questions.

Will anyone step up to replace the leadership and offensive voids left by the departures of Tere Williams and Amy Wetzel?

Tere Williams and Amy Wetzel leave as two of the greatest players in team history. They scored the bulk of the points last year. More importantly, they were clearly the team leaders. Will anyone step up to fill this void? The most likely candidates are shooting guards/small forwards Sarah Hicks and Crystal Starling. These veteran players have the ability to both score and lead this young Hokie team.

Mollie Owings, a fan favorite, may get some starts early due to injuries. She is athletic and can play tough defense, but lacks the scoring punch needed at shooting guard.

Will anyone step up at the point guard position?

Since the storybook ride to the Sweet Sixteen in the 1998-1999 season, the Hokies have searched to fill two needs. The first is to find a consistent point guard to replace Lisa Witherspoon. Junior Emily Lipton was thrown to the lions as a freshman and performed admirably in 1999-2000. Last year, Lisa Guarneri showed flashes of brilliance, but performed inconsistently. This year, Lipton has reclaimed the starting role, at least for now. Lipton has yet to overcome her own inconsistency or to show that she can lead the team at the point. Don't be surprised if Starling moves to point, as Amy Wetzel did during the last two years.

Can any of the inside players provide physical play?

The other key player from 1998-1999 that the Hokies have yet to replace is Michelle Houseright. Often overlooked, she provided the gutty, physical presence and leadership in the paint. Sophomore Ieva Kublina is an outstanding 6'4" power forward who will play the high post on offense. She can shoot the three and is fundamentally sound. She may help fill the scoring void but has yet to show that she can mix it up down low.

Rayna Dubose and Erin Gibson are the two freshman post players. Gibson is the most likely to see significant playing time this season. She is a 6'2" wide-bodied glass and space eater. Her soft hands and ability to run the floor continue to surprise. Gibson will contribute this year, most likely as the back up to Kublina and Jones at the four and five spots.

Dubose shows great promise. She is 6'3" and athletic, similar to Georgetown standout Rebekkah Brunson. Brunson has a nonstop motor though, and Dubose has not shown that yet. She needs more polish than Gibson. If she matures quickly, she could help this year. Gibson has a mean streak and will hopefully play the role of enforcer. However, Kublina and Gibson are both quiet and reserved. To expect either of these young players to provide leadership at this point is probably a stretch.

Six foot two-inch junior center Chrissy Strother returns after shoulder surgery this summer to repair the injury that plagued her last season. A wide-bodied bruiser, Strother may see significant playing time, perhaps as a starter for the hobbled Nicole Jones, at the beginning of the year. However, when Jones fully recovers, and as Erin Gibson learns the system, Strother's minutes likely will decline significantly.

Senior Jones will move from center to power forward this year, but will likely play low post on offense. Her improvement during her freshman year, when she blossomed into a starter, led to high hopes for her future. Although a solid performer since that year, she has not improved as much as many expected. She will lend experience and solid play.

Will any of the newcomers provide significant contributions?

For the Hokies to excel this year, they must receive significant contributions from at least two of the incoming players. Besides Gibson and DuBose, the Hokies have three other newcomers, all perimeter players.

Amy Lingenfelder, a 5'8" transfer from Georgia Tech, figures to see significant time at shooting guard once she qualifies after first semester exams. Lingenfelder was a freshman standout at Georgia Tech during the 1999-2000 season, starting 11 games. She can shoot the three, a skill much needed by this edition of the Hokies. I can see Starling, Lingenfelder and Hicks starting at the one, two and three spots once Lingenfelder becomes eligible. Either Starling would man the point, or the three could share the duties. Hicks has seen some playing time at point in the past, but very little. Fran Recchia, a 5'7" point guard from Texas, shows promise but needs seasoning to play the point in the Big East.

Davina Simmons, a 6'0" sophomore small forward, was slowed by injuries last year. She shows the speed and quickness that is sorely missing on the team. She is a slashing scorer. If she can grow quickly, she can provide scoring punch and athleticism off the bench.

Kacy O'Brien, a 5'11" shooting guard, is the other freshman. She has been slowed by some pre-season nicks and is unlikely to see significant playing time this year.

Conclusion

If healthy, the season will start with Lipton, Starling, Hicks, Jones and Kublina in the starting lineup. After Ligenfelder becomes eligible, the lineup could change to Starling, Ligenfelder, Hicks, Jones and Kublina.

The starters, with the exception of Starling, lack the necessary quickness to play with the elite teams. However, the newcomers, if up to the challenge, give Coach Bonnie Herrickson some flexibility. Tech can go big with Kublina, Gibson and DuBose on the front line and Strother providing additional muscle from the bench. Or Tech can go quick with Starling, Simmons and Dubose in the lineup.

In conclusion, the Hokies remain a mystery this year. They are likely to finish neither as high as second, nor as low as sixth in the conference. One asset that cannot be overlooked is coaching. In short, Virginia Tech has the best coach in the country. Coach Herrickson faces another challenge this year in cobbling together diverse players, many very young, into a cohesive unit.

Inside the Numbers: Sackmasters

If you're going to play the attack defense,
you've got to be able to bring the heat.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Since Phil Elmassion installed the Hokie defense in 1993, the cornerstone of its philosophy has been one simple edict: attack the quarterback. As a matter of fact, the word "attack" is part of the term that is used most often to describe this defense, which doesn't really have a formal name but is most often referred to as the "attack defense."

The philosophy is simple: first, stack the line to stop the run. Second, using a gambling,

blitzing style, pressure the other team's quarterback relentlessly until he makes a mistake in the passing game. You'll occasionally give up the big play, more so when your personnel is inexperienced or doesn't know their assignments, but very few teams will be able to mount sustained drives.

The opposing offense will typically have to convert a lot of third downs to mount long drives, and if you're pressuring the QB, he will more than likely make a mistake before he can convert enough third downs to take the ball all the way downfield.

Blitzing is important to the success of the attack defense, but getting pressure from the four down linemen is probably more important. Blitzing may look intimidating and may make the fans happy, but a truly effective defense is able to pressure a quarterback with the four down linemen while keeping the linebackers and safeties in coverage.

Watching the 2000 and 2001 versions of the Hokie defense, one nagging suspicion cannot be escaped: the Hokies haven't been very good at pressuring the quarterback during the last two seasons, particularly with the four down lineman, and particularly from the defensive end spot. A fan base and coaching staff that was spoiled by pass rushing greats like Cornell Brown, John Engelberger, and Corey Moore find themselves looking for that next double-digit sacker from the defensive end position — and not finding him.

Without great passing rushing defensive ends the last two seasons, the Hokies as a team have still been very solid. The 2001 defense, after ten games, was #1 in the country in yards allowed per game. So while their sack statistics have been down the last two years, it has not crippled the ability of the team to win nor of the defense to be effective.

But still, what are the numbers behind this nagging perception that the Hokies just don't bring the heat like they used to? If we start compiling sack statistics of the Beamer Bowl era (1993-present) and start taking a closer look, what do we find ... Inside the numbers?

(Note that in the following statistical analysis, all stats are regular season stats only. Bowl games are not included.)

Total Sacks

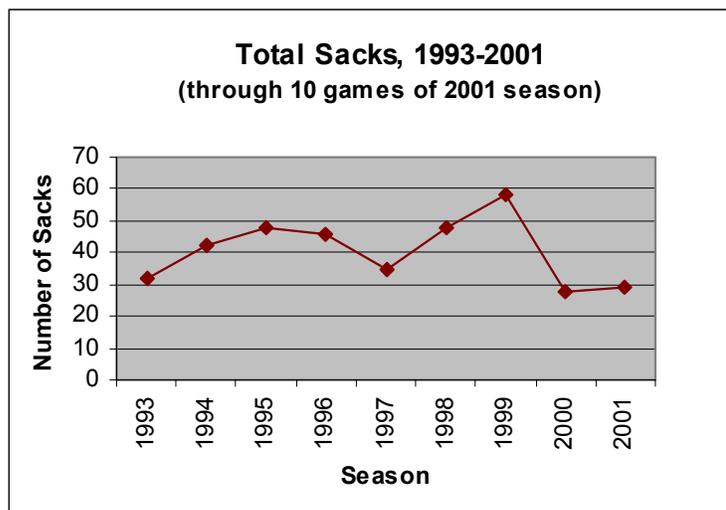
In 1993, in the first year of the attack defense, the Hokie defense was young. Tech started nine players who were freshmen or sophomores. They took their lumps often that year, but by the time they flattened Indiana 45-23 in the 1993 Independence Bowl, the Hokies were gelling and coming into their own defensively, behind true freshman defensive end Cornell Brown.

The 1993 Hokies posted just 32 sacks. It sounds odd to say “just” 32 sacks, because that’s almost three sacks a game. But in the years since then, Hokie fans have become used to 40 sacks or more a season, and Virginia Tech even approached 50 sacks in a couple of seasons in the mid-90’s, before finally shattering that mark with 58 sacks in 1999.

After the 1993 season, only one Tech defense failed to register more than 40 sacks in a season; the 1997 Hokies, who were breaking in six new starters and were riddled with injuries, only totaled 35. From 1994-1999, Tech averaged an impressive 44.1 sacks a season.

Season	Total Sacks	Top Sackers
1993	32	D. Knight 4, J.C. Price 4, 6 tied w/3
1994	42	C. Brown 11, J. Baron 5, G. DelRicco 4
1995	48	C. Brown 14, J.C. Price 8, H. Coleman 7
1996	46	C. Brown 8, K. Hairston 6, J. Engelberger 6
1997	35	J. Engelberger 6, C. Moore 4.5, K. Hairston 3.5, N. Williams 3.5
1998	48	C. Moore 13.5, J. Engelberger 7.5, M. Hawkes 5.5
1999	58	C. Moore 17, J. Engelberger 7, C. Bird 6
2000	28	N. Adibi 5, D. Pugh 5, J. Davis 3.5
2001*	29*	B. Taylor 4.5, J. Davis 4.5, D. Pugh 3.5, C. Colas 3.5

* Through 10 games



But in the year 2000, Hokie sack production fell off a cliff, and Tech only registered 28 sacks, a dropoff of 36 percent from the 44.1 sacks-per-season average of 1993-99. That was less than half the total of 1999 and the lowest in the eight seasons of “attack defense” football. The lack of production was traced primarily to a green corps of defensive ends, a two-deep rotation that consisted of three freshmen and a sophomore.

So far in the 2001 season, the Tech defense hasn’t fared much better, posting 29 sacks in their first ten games. Given that Tech’s last opponent, the Miami Hurricanes, have only given up two sacks all season long (that is *not* a misprint), Tech is not likely to add many more sacks to their 2001 total. If they don’t get to Miami’s Ken Dorsey at all on December 1st, it will be the second year in a row the Hokies have not totaled over 30 sacks.

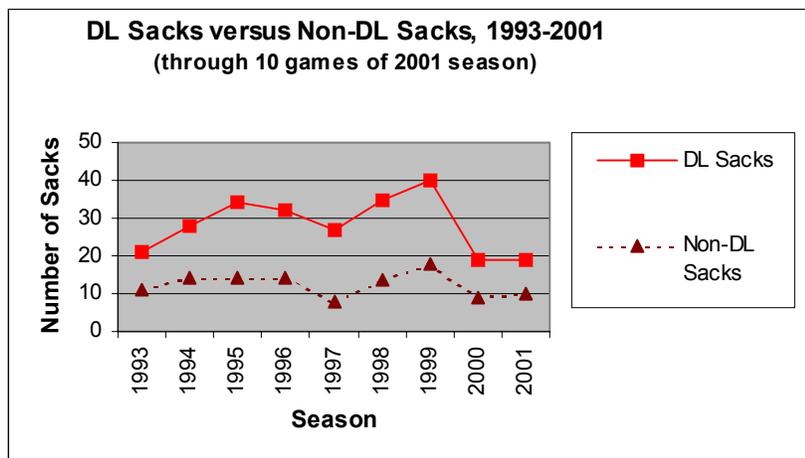
Why the big dropoff? The answer lies in sack production, or lack thereof, from the defensive line, most notably the defensive ends. Let’s break things down a little further.

Defensive Line Sacks Versus Other Sacks

The Hokie defenses from 1993 to the present have received 69.5% of their sacks from their defensive linemen. The year-by-year percentages range from a high of 77.1% in 1997 (27 of 35 sacks) to a low of 65.5% so far in the 2001 season (19 of 29).

Season	DL Sacks	Other Sacks	DL Percent.
1993	21	11	65.6
1994	28	14	66.7
1995	34	14	70.8
1996	32	14	69.6
1997	27	8	77.1
1998	34.5	13.5	71.9
1999	40	18	69.0
2000	19	9	67.8
2001*	19*	10*	65.5
Totals	254.5	111.5	69.5

* Through 10 games



The last two seasons have been uncharacteristically unproductive from the defensive line. From 1993-1999, the DL averaged almost 31 sacks a year. The last two seasons, they have averaged just 19, a dropoff of nearly 40 percent.

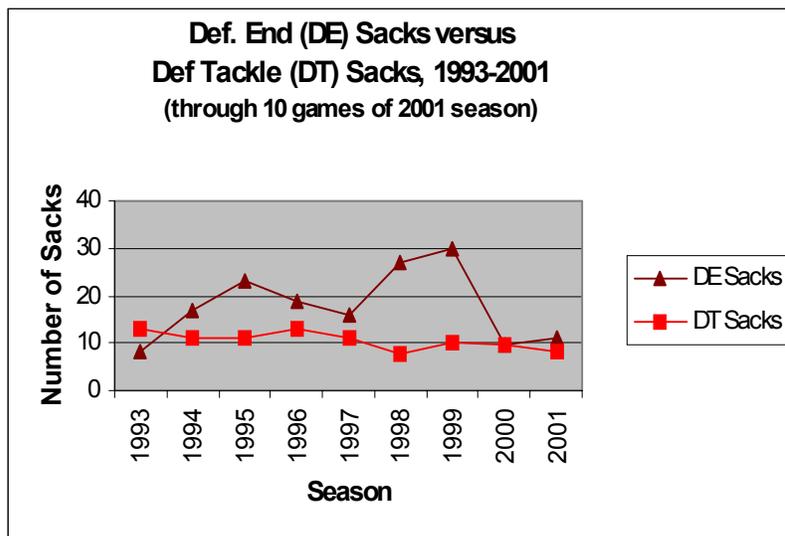
What about sacks from the other positions? From 1993-1999, the Hokies averaged 13.2 non-DL sacks a year. In the last two years, they have averaged 9.5, a dropoff of 28 percent. This is much less than the 40 percent decrease in production of the defensive line, but it is still significant.

Defensive End Sacks Versus Defensive Tackle Sacks

When you start to analyze the defensive end spot versus the defensive tackle spot, you sadly start to find out that the blame for the dropoff in defensive line sack production is not shared between the DE's and DT's.

Season	DE Sacks	DT Sacks	DE Percent.
1993	8	13	38.0
1994	17	11	60.7
1995	23	11	67.6
1996	19	13	59.3
1997	16	11	59.2
1998	27	7.5	78.3
1999	30	10	75.0
2000	9.5	9.5	50.0
2001*	11*	8*	57.9
Totals	160.5	94	63.1

* Through 10 games



You can see from the table and the graph that sack production from the defensive ends has fallen off dramatically in the last two seasons. From 1993-1999, the Hokies averaged 20.3 sacks a year from the defensive end spot, and that includes the ultra-low total of 8 from 1993. If you look at 1994-1999, Tech averaged 22 sacks a year from the defensive ends.

But in the last two seasons, the Hokies have gotten just 10.3 sacks a year from the defensive ends, a decrease of 49.3% from the 1993-1999 average.

You can see from the figures that sack production from the defensive ends fluctuates wildly over time. It peaked with the great defensive lines of 1995 (Cornell Brown) and 1999 (Corey Moore and John Engelberger) and dipped in other years. Sacks from the defensive tackles, on the other hand, have been remarkably consistent of the years.

The tackles averaged 10.9 sacks per year from 1993-1999. They have stayed relatively close to that figure the last two seasons, but yet sack production is down, to 8.8. This is a reduction of 19.3% from the norm.

Of course, over the last two seasons, the defensive end rotation has included mostly freshmen and sophomores, while the defensive tackle rotation has been led by David Pugh and Chad Beasley, who were juniors in 2000 and seniors in 2001.

Conclusions

In absolute terms, the reduction in sacks from the defensive line can be traced mostly to the big dropoff in production at the defensive end spot. If the ends were averaging 20 sacks per year (the norm) instead of just 10 the past two seasons, the team as a whole would have close to 40 sacks the past two seasons.

And those sacks could have been vitally important. It's very doubtful that an improved pass rush would have made much difference in the 2000 Miami game or the 2001 Pittsburgh game, both blowouts, but an extra sack or two could have made all the difference in the world in the 2001 Syracuse game. And if the Hokies had won the Syracuse game and were 5-1 in the Big East going into the Dec. 1 clash with Miami, instead of 4-2, they would still have a shot at a BCS bowl.

At this point, you can't predict whether the quartet of Nathaniel Adibi, Cols Colas, Jim Davis and Lamar Cobb will ever be as effective as the defensive end groups that were led by Cornell Brown in the mid-90's and Corey Moore in the late 90's. In 1993, 1994, and 1997, those defensive end groups, when they were composed primarily of freshmen and sophomores, were not very effective, either. The DE's averaged around 13.5 sacks per game in those seasons, but in 1995, 1996, 1998, and 1999, when they were mostly juniors and seniors, those DE's averaged almost 25 sacks per game.

Next year will tell the tale of the current crop of defensive ends. Cobb will be a senior, and the others will be juniors. If they're ever going to increase their production and take their place among the great Virginia Tech defensive lines of the past decade, it will start next season. Look for defensive end sack production to increase to 20 sacks per game or more, and for overall sack production to get back up into the range of 35-40.

But on the other hand, the maturation of the defensive ends may be offset by youth at the defensive tackle, linebacker, and Rover spots. All of those positions, with the exception of the Whip linebacker spot, will get cleaned out by graduation at the end of this season.

The Data

You can download the sack data and view it, either as a web page, or as a Microsoft Excel 97 spreadsheet.

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue013/sackstats.htm>

To download the data yourself in Microsoft Excel 97 spreadsheet format, head to this link:

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue013/sackstats.xls>

(Right-click the link and do a "Save Link As" or "Save Target As" to save the Excel file to disk.)

Inside TSL: Short Takes

Another contest, survey results, and how
"crunch time" is going.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

This month in "Inside TSL": last month's contest results, a new contest for this month, the results of our on-line demographic survey, and how "Crunch Time" is going.

Last Month's Contest Winner

As you'll recall, last month's contest was to name the date and time of the 500,000th post on the Football message board. Our winner is Graham Tiller, who guessed Nov.

11th at 10:42:12 a.m. The post occurred on Nov. 11th at 10:39:21 a.m, which means that Graham was only 2 minutes and 51 seconds off! Not bad, and Graham is the proud winner of our \$300 leather attache/laptop case.

The second place finisher was off by over an hour, so it wasn't even close. Congratulations, Graham! And hey, folks, we only had 105 submissions, so if you didn't participate in this one, jump into future contests, because at this point, there isn't much competition!

"Future contests"? That's right, we've decided to go monthly with our contests. So, without further ado....

This Month's Contest

Since we've decided to do the contests on a monthly basis, we'll have to scale back on the prizes we're giving away. This month's prize is 75\$ of store credit at TechLocker.com, and it will go to the person who most closely guesses the answer to the following question: How many yards rushing will the Hokies have against Miami?

Here's the full rundown on the contest and how to enter:

The Prize: \$75 of store credit at TechLocker.com.

The Contest: Answer this question: How many yards rushing will the Hokies have in their December 1st game against Miami? And the tiebreaker question: How many points will the Hokies score in the game?

How to Enter: Answer both questions — Tech's rushing yards and Tech's points — by sending an email to contest@techsideline.com (note: NOT will@techsideline.com) with the subject line "TSL Extra Rushing Yards Contest," and include the following information:

Your full name

Your email address

Contest: How many rushing yards Tech will have against Miami

Tiebreaker: How many points Tech will score against Miami

For example, if I wanted to enter, I would format my answer like this:

Name: Will Stewart
Email Address: will@techsideline.com
Tech's rushing yards against Miami: 178
Tech's points against Miami: 17

Note that since the game is on December 1st, your entry must be received by midnight on November 30th to be valid!

Send in your entry, and good luck!

On-Line Demographic Survey Results

Recently, we conducted a demographic survey on-line, in order to get a better feel for our readership and to provide potential advertisers with a good picture of our readership. We received nearly 2400 responses, and many of you expressed interest in knowing the results. So here are the highlights:

Age Range	Percent
Under 18	0.6%
18-34	49.5%
35-44	23.5%
45-54	17.9%
55 or over	8.1%

92% of respondents are male. 7.6% are female. And I assume the other 0.4% are still trying to figure things out.

55.7% have a household income greater than or equal to \$75k/year, with 34.3% over \$100k/year.

61.7% live in the state of Virginia, 8.5% live in North Carolina, and all other states have a percentage of less than 4%.

98.5% have some college schooling or are college grads.

69.4% own their own home.

50.5% have children.

93.9%, when asked if they would purchase something over the Internet, responded yes (this is good for us!).

80.2% own a cell phone.

70.3% visit TSL at least once a day, with 22.3% visiting frequently (3 or more visits per day).

21.8% live in Roanoke/Southwest Virginia; 17.3% in Northern Virginia/DC; 15.2% in Richmond/Central Virginia; and 5.6% in Tidewater/Virginia Beach.

92.2% access the site from home, 83.2% from work.

Interesting stuff, huh? See you next month, and don't forget to enter that rushing yardage contest.

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