

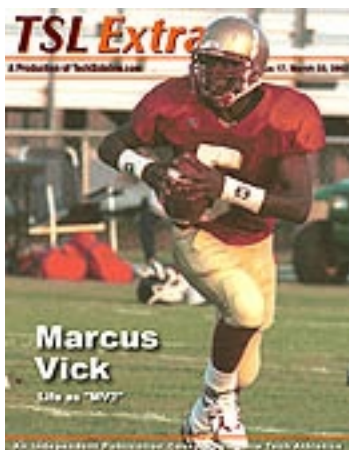
TSL Extra

Issue 17, March 22, 2002

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Photo of Marcus Vick rolling out taken by Michael Ingalls. Cover photo copyright 2002 Maroon Pride, LLC.

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TSL EXTRA

The TSL Extra is an electronic subscription supplement to TechSideline.com, the premier independent publication covering Virginia Tech athletics. The TSL Extra is produced monthly and costs \$24.95 per year to subscribe. For subscription information, please visit TechSideline.com and click the "TSL Extra" link in the left hand border of the TechSideline.com home page.

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Dear Readers:

“Go to the light, Carol Ann! Go to the light!”

Bonus points to you if you know what movie that line is from (I’m sure most of you do). Why do I start this month’s letter from the editor off with that quote? No good reason, other than I’m bleary from no sleep for about a week now, and I thought that quote was applicable to spring football.

You’re thinking: Um, yeah, okay. But really, Virginia Tech spring football used to be conducted in obscurity and in privacy, with a few thousand fans showing up for the spring game, but no one paid any attention to the month of practices beforehand, and the traditional media — TV and newspapers — didn’t cover it.

Then along came a 9-year bowl game streak, and the winning, combined with the Internet, led to spring football becoming the third season (the real season and recruiting are the first two seasons). Spring football, thanks to increasing media coverage, higher spring game attendance, and daily practice nuggets from BeamerBall.com, has stepped from the darkness ... into the light. Kind of like Carol Ann.

Okay, it’s a bit of a stretch, but I told you, I’m getting punchy.

This month’s TSL Extra includes exhaustive previews of the offense and defense that break the team down position-by-position and tell you who’s stepping up, who’s holding serve, and who might come on strong this spring. Spring football is when football players are made, through hard work, dedication, competition, and repetition.

It is during the spring that players learn their position, develop their game, and even move to different positions. A lot will be settled in the coming month, before the Spring Game on April 20th.

We’ve also got a Marcus Vick profile that gives you a different take on Marcus, concentrating more on Marcus the person, instead of Marcus the football player. Our other recruiting profile is Amherst RB/DB Brian McPherson, a player who seems like he was always destined to wear the orange and maroon.

Add to that articles about Tech men’s basketball (from the always informative and entertaining Jim Alderson), football player power ratings (all hail Cols Colas), and “Inside TSL” (more thoughts on the UVa flier), all wrapped up in an awesome Marcus Vick cover, and you’ve got another great version of your monthly Hokie fix. It’s Friday, so quit work and read the TSL Extra!

Enjoy issue #17.



Marcus Vick: Life as MV2

How Marcus Vick and family deal with Michael's stardom.

by Neal Williams

Marcus Vick turned 18 on March 20, and he got a pretty nice present from his big brother Michael.

A Playstation? A stereo? A big ol' TV? Get serious.

For his 18th birthday, Marcus Vick got a Cadillac Escalade, courtesy of Michael. That, says the Cadillac.com web site, has a base price of \$49,480. That's without the extras. As presents go, that's the big leagues.

"It's pretty cool," Marcus said.

Even without such a fancy birthday present, Marcus Vick has found that being the younger brother of Michael Vick – formerly of Virginia Tech and currently of the Atlanta Falcons – is a pretty good deal.

He loved it back when Michael was at Warwick High in Newport News, and the family didn't have the resources that come with the contract Michael received for being the top pick in the 2001 National Football League draft.

He loves it now.

"He's always been the big brother, watching over me," Marcus said. "It's also like we're buddies, too. I can talk to him about anything."

Yes, being the second Vick son is all good. That doesn't mean it doesn't come without its pressures. Those pressures figure to intensify this

summer when Marcus follows his brother's collegiate path and enrolls at Virginia Tech.

He's been dubbed MV2 and the "2" is very telling.

Someone came before him and that someone did very well. Fair or not, big expectations lurk over Marcus Vick. Grant Noel, the Hokies' quarterback in 2001, had to deal with comparisons to Michael Vick simply because he followed him under center at Tech. Imagine being his younger brother – similar name, similar game.

The people who know him best – his mother Brenda Boddie, his prep coach Tommy Reamon and Marcus himself – say he's well equipped to deal with the pressure of being the second Vick to quarterback the Hokies.

"It will be just like it's always been," Marcus said, "everybody watching me coming behind Mike. It's been that way all my life. I've never been without him, don't know what it's like to not be Mike's little brother. So it will feel the same for me."

As Mrs. Boddie said, it's just Warwick High all over again – albeit on a much bigger stage. Michael set a very high bar there, and Marcus followed without problem. The bar at Tech is astronomically high. No one expects a problem.

"He can handle it. He did well for himself at Warwick," she said. "Marcus is tough. He has a lot of confidence in himself. It seems like he can get through anything. He wants to do anything to make his team win. He has a real go-getter attitude."

Mrs. Boddie says she doesn't like to compare her only sons (she also has two daughters – Christina is older than the boys, Courtney younger), but knows it is unavoidable. She does it herself.

They look alike.

“All the children, when they see Marcus, they’ll ask if it is Marcus or Michael,” she said with a laugh. “We pick my daughter up at school and that’s what we’ll hear. Even with their baby pictures, I’ll be like, is this Michael or Marcus? I have to look real close, they look so much alike.”

They sound alike.

“Sometimes I can’t tell one from the other when they’re on the phone,” Mrs. Boddie said.

They often act alike.

“Marcus likes being like Michael,” she said. “There’s a pretty big age difference (about four years), but they’ve always had a good relationship. When Marcus was younger, Michael wouldn’t let him go a lot of places with him. Then Marcus started growing up and Michael looked one day and they were about the same height.

“They’re good buddies, but Michael is still always trying to protect him.”

Both are quiet around people they don’t know well and open up more in familiar surroundings. Michael is definitely the most talkative.

“Kind of like pulling teeth, isn’t it? Reamon said of initiating a conversation with Marcus. “He is quite quiet.”

Said Mrs. Boddie, “Both of them are a little quiet. And then sometimes Marcus can just talk, talk, talk. I guess they get that from me. I just love to talk.”

His brother’s success has been an inspiration to Marcus. He sees what the work can do. He hasn’t let the fact that his brother is in the big leagues both professionally and financially get in the way of a work ethic. He could ride his brother’s coattails and never want for a thing, but he has chosen to keep working and make his own name.

Football-wise, Marcus is ahead at this point.

“Yes, he is more prepared than Michael was coming out of high school,” Reamon said. “He has more exposure with what is expected. He is more football-intelligent at this stage. He’s been prepared a lot more specifically for what to expect in college. He can pick up things, read defenses. He has a very good touch on the ball Michael didn’t have.”

He has a field presence, too. Reamon recalled a game where Marcus led Warwick on a late game-winning drive.

“That drive was one of the best I’ve seen, second to nobody, including (John) Elway,” Reamon said. “That drive was, in essence, everything we’ve worked on and put in so much time on. This is college stuff we’re running, pro stuff. And he handled it so well.”

Mother and coach say that everyone in the equation benefited from Michael’s experience. Marcus watched and learned. Mrs. Boddie, who says she doesn’t know much about football, sure sounds like someone who knows the game. She, too, learned watching Michael and knew more when Marcus played.

Reamon has also learned from experience.

“Remember, I also coached (former UVa and current Saints QB) Aaron Brooks, along with Michael,” Reamon said. “Just like with our children, as coaches we learn from our mistakes and the next ones in line benefit. He benefited from my mistakes, things I learned from working with the others, to make him even better.

“Marcus did not play quarterback his sophomore year. He was a receiver. Michael was so aggressive, a lot more cocky. Marcus had a chance to take his time. Was I going to throw him to the wolves? No way. Even as a receiver, he was learning about quarterback. He certainly gained a greater idea of what the receivers were doing.”

Off the field, Marcus got a lesson, too. It didn't take long for Michael to become a national star. He was on magazine covers, he was on television. As a professional, the "spotlight" got brighter. Demands on his time became greater.

"We've done quite a lot of talking about these kind of things and he did learn a lot from Michael," Reamon said. "He has a good level of maturity. Some people have the personality that fits into that kind of situation. He has that. I can't make up words to express his ability to be in that kind of situation. Not many kids have it, a media-exposed brother and the younger brother sees all that happen. Now it becomes a part of him, and it's something he's grown accustomed to."

It helps, too, that Marcus has seen success have a positive effect on his brother. His circumstances have changed. The family is certainly better off and able to enjoy the fruits of that success. But Michael, Mrs. Boddie said, remains the same ol' fun-loving, devoted son and brother he was before the big contract.

The family therefore remains the same. Their home is bigger, newer, nicer. The people inside are the same.

"Michael is just a sweet person," Mrs. Boddie said. "Both of them are kissy/huggy types. I guess they got that from me. We're just a good, close family. We've always been close, me and my children. Nothing has changed. He's still the same old Michael. He doesn't have the big head, doesn't talk about all he's got, nothing like that. Marcus is the same way. His brother can buy him nice things and none of it goes to his head.

"It's funny how many people can't believe that we act normal. I still go to my daughter's school and eat with my bus driver friends. I used to drive a bus. I still do what I used to do."

What she's done for years is go to football games at Warwick High and Virginia Tech. Her

paths will be much different this season. She has a new Winnebago, and she's going over the Hokies' and Falcons' schedules figuring out ways she can make as many of each team's games as possible. She figures she's certain to make all the home games.

"I'm really excited about the season," Mrs. Boddie said. "I have the whole offseason to see how I'm going to do this, but I've been doing it so long I'm a pro at it."

Michael has been around in recent weeks, hanging with his brother and working out with him some. Soon, he'll head back to Atlanta for mini-camps and intense preparation for his first season as the Falcons' starting quarterback.

It won't be too long before Marcus Vick will head to Blacksburg and enroll at Tech. His mother said he doesn't plan to enroll early. When practice starts, he'll be ready.

He's said his preference is to redshirt. Grant Noel, who started all twelve games in 2001, is a rising senior. Michael Vick took a redshirt season and told Marcus it was beneficial. But Marcus won't turn his nose at playing as a freshman, either.

"I'm going to be ready. I may not even play," he said.

Reamon shares Marcus' thoughts. A redshirt season is not a bad idea.

"There's no ego involved here, no I-have-to-play-now," Reamon said. "Marcus has no pressure. Noel is the quarterback. We have total respect for that. He has one year, what he does next year is his show.

"I think the media may try make more out of it. Our point of view is that it is Noel's job. Marcus will learn, watch. The media may ask for Marcus to get on the field. We're not. He is prepared. He can make the same kind of throws they make there right now. When he gets there, he can

fake a handoff to (Kevin) Jones and throw a deep out route. You're not talking about anything magical here. You're talking something he can do.

"He's ready, *if* they need him."

Reamon is convinced that, between Marcus' prep days and his family, he definitely has the foundation he needs. The rest comes in time.

"You have to have the right guidance," Reamon said. "You can talk all the noise you want about talent. You have to have development and guidance to do some of the things that come into the public eye as good. He is very comfortable. He is a great kid."

The last sentence is the best for Mrs. Boddie. It's nice having a couple of top-notch quarterbacks in the family. It's nicer having a couple of top-notch sons. Take away the football and she'd still be happy.

"To me, they're both great boys, great sons," she said. "I keep telling my mother and my friends, I wouldn't have ever thought they'd grow up to be such great quarterbacks. I laugh about it, smile about it. Thank the Lord."

Brian McPherson: True Hokie

Amherst's Brian McPherson will be right at home when he heads to Virginia Tech this fall.

by Will Stewart, TechSiideline.com

He committed to Tech at a football camp last July, far away from press conferences and television lights and early February hoopla. He was only offered one other scholarship. He played for a mediocre football team that would have been a bad football team, really bad, were it not for him. He easily qualified academically. He stuck to his commitment, he didn't visit other schools, and he didn't decommit.

It was for these reasons and more that Amherst running back Brian McPherson, who will play defensive back at Virginia Tech, is nearly a forgotten recruit. While Hokie fans spent October through February obsessing over heavy-weight recruits like Ahmad Brooks, Justin London, Mike Imoh, Jonathan Lewis, and Marcus Vick, McPherson had already made up his mind, and he never wavered.

McPherson stands 6-0, weighs 180 pounds, and runs a 4.5 forty, almost the exact same physical credentials possessed by former Hokie cornerback great Ike Charlton coming out of high school. And like Charlton, the Virginia Tech coaches feel that McPherson's future is at cornerback, where he has the physical tools and footwork to go a long way.

In a year in which the state of Virginia was well-stocked with high school talent, McPherson was rated the #23 prospect in the state by Doug Doughty of the Roanoke Times and was not as

highly recruited as many of the national names ranked ahead of him in-state. But he got the attention of Virginia Tech coaches at their football camp last July, when McPherson visited the camp, worked out for one day, and was offered a scholarship by the Hokies.

McPherson was noticed by former Hokie defensive back Torrian Gray, who was coaching at Maine last year but was in town to help Frank Beamer out with his football camp. "I got there a little bit late," McPherson recalls of July 17, 2001, the day he went to Tech's camp, "so I was working with his group. He had kind of the younger kids, not the top-notch players. So I worked with him for a while, and we took a break, and then when he came back, he had me work out for (VT defensive backs) Coach (Lorenzo) Ward in the big group with the better players."

Ward and VT Coach Frank Beamer liked what they saw. Boom, done. Scholarship offer extended, scholarship offer accepted, just like that.

"When we put Brian through our defensive back drills, he was simply outstanding," Ward told BeamerBall.com. "His footwork is what sets him apart. He has good size, so he can be physical. But what makes good corners is the ability to swivel those hips and change direction without giving up ground to the receiver."

Amherst High Coach Mickey Crouch thinks that McPherson's ability extends beyond his footwork and smooth hips. "You don't have to see him but one time run and jump, and you know he's an athlete," Crouch says. "As far as athletic ability, he's second to nobody that we've had through the years. His athletic ability is unbelievable."

Once the scholarship offer was extended, McPherson didn't think about it very long. "Tech is my style. Tech is ruthless, with great defense, and I like that. It fits with my attitude well. I love the coaches and the campus, and it's where I want to be."

He's the latest in a long line of Amherst players to sign with Tech in the last five years: David Pugh (1997), Camm Jackson (1997), Tim Sandidge (2001), and now McPherson (2002) have all come from Crouch's program to play for the Hokies.

Says Coach Crouch, who has coached in the state of Virginia for 31 years but is now retiring, "I've been friends with Frank and Rickey Bustle for forever, as long as Beamer's been there. We sort of struck up a friendship, and Rickey was a personal friend of mine. He would come by the house, and we'd have a beer or two and chat.

"The thing about Tech is, those coaches are sincere, and they do care about the kids. They're not just a piece of meat, like a lot of schools. I love all the kids that I've coached, and I don't want them to go somewhere where they're going to be shoved on the back burner and forgotten, and Tech doesn't do that. I'm personal friends with Frank and Rickey, but the rest of the coaches up there, they're great, too. They've really got an outstanding coaching staff, and they've done a great job with the kids that we've sent up there."

A Virginia Tech Guy

The Hokies got in on McPherson early, uncovering a hidden gem, but there is a long time between the hot days of mid-July and the frigid days of early February, when recruits sign their names to their letters of intent. In other words, a lot of time for other schools to try to mine the diamond in the rough once the Hokies had uncovered him.

But McPherson would have none of that, and only a couple of programs continued to try to contact him. WVU was the most persistent. "UVa called me after I committed to Tech, but I wasn't here. I don't know if they were going to offer me, or what. West Virginia did offer me, though. They kept pursuing me, but finally, I told them, no, Tech is where I want to go. They kept saying, we've got this camp you can go to, come

visit our campus, and all that stuff, but I just told them no."

Virginia had been recruiting McPherson early, but they never offered him a scholarship and cooled once he committed to Tech. After his junior year, and before he committed at Tech's camp, the Cavaliers recruited him. "At first, UVa was contacting me," McPherson says, "and they really wanted me. There was a lot of interest." McPherson went with the Amherst team to Virginia's camp last summer, "But they didn't offer me."

Then McPherson shows how much of a Hokie he is. "They (the UVa coaches) seemed kind of weird to me. I really didn't like them that much. They seemed kind of arrogant. We're this, and we're that, and all this, and all that. I really didn't like that. I didn't like UVa that much, I didn't like the campus, and when I came to Tech, I just liked the coaches. I fit well with the coaches. I just liked Tech a lot more than I liked UVa."

And with McPherson, his affection for Tech and dislike of UVa go farther back than just last summer. "Growing up, I definitely liked Tech. I really didn't like UVa that much. Whenever UVa and Tech played, I was always pulling for Tech."

Carrying the Team

McPherson started for three years in high school, playing strictly as a cornerback his sophomore season. Then Crouch moved him to offense to take advantage of his ability.

"We moved him into the offensive backfield as a junior," Crouch says. "We were having trouble moving the ball, because we didn't have a very good offensive line, so we threw the ball to him, too. Even though he was a running back, I nominated him for all-district as a receiver, and he was voted first-team all-district as a receiver."

Amherst went 4-6 that year. Running behind a young offensive line, McPherson ran for nearly 800 yards and caught 17 passes for 435 yards.

His senior year, Crouch played McPherson almost exclusively as a running back. "He rushed for over 1300 yards (1,360) in ten games. He saw very little time as a defensive back, because if we had lost him ... we probably wouldn't have won a game. I had to do it."

Amherst went 5-5 in McPherson's senior year. "If we didn't have him in the backfield," Crouch insists, "I'm telling you, we wouldn't have won a football game. And every game we lost was by just a few points. We lost five games by an average of five points."

The one game that really stands out to Crouch is McPherson's 17-carry, 243-yard, 3-TD effort against William Fleming in the 2001 season opener. McPherson scored on runs of 9, 55, and 45 yards and set up another TD with a 70-yarder.

"He broke three long runs," Crouch remembers, "and all three times, it looked like he was going to be tackled in the backfield. We beat them 26-17. He just took it on himself to do it. That was as good a performance as I've seen from a running back since I've been here."

"I told our coaches that, you know, they recruited him as a cornerback, and although he's not the caliber of running back they have up there (at Tech), I think he's one of the best running backs I've ever coached. This year, people hit him in the backfield a lot of the times, and he still got big gains and long touchdown runs. He broke a lot of tackles. He's so strong and so fast that he can put a shoulder into you and go, or he can run around you. He's got a little stop move. He can be running full speed, stop on a dead stop, and cut back and change direction. Sort of like Barry Sanders."

Trying to Beat Big Brother

When asked what has motivated him in his life to succeed, McPherson says, "I've had a pretty normal life, but I have an older brother, so I'm

always trying to do better than he has done. Like in football, I try to be better than my brother, I try to lift more than him, that kind of stuff."

He's talking about his older brother Kerry, a 1998 graduate of Amherst High who signed to play football with Hampton University out of high school. Kerry only lasted two years at Hampton and is back home now. "He didn't get along with the coach, and didn't like it there," says Brian. "It was just a bad situation for him."

Crouch remembers Kerry McPherson well. "His brother was probably the best hitter we ever had. His hitting was unbelievable. He never tackled anybody, he just hit them. I think we counted four or five kids he knocked out his senior year, knocked them unconscious. One game he knocked himself out. You'd have to see his brother play. He was vicious, I mean he was just a tough individual."

"Brian doesn't have that toughness, but I told him, 'You can be better than your brother.' I don't think he really thought he could be, until his junior year. I think to some degree, he was looking to live up to what his brother accomplished. I think he was trying to go his brother one better, and I think he did."

Looking Down the Road to Blacksburg

Of his ambitions at Tech, Brian says, "I'm going to try to graduate off the field, and on the field, I'm going to give it everything I've got and see what happens. I was going to go to college regardless (McPherson has a 3.2 GPA and scored 22 on the ACT), but I really wanted to play football in college."

Given that McPherson hasn't played much cornerback since he was a sophomore, Crouch thinks he's a sure-fire redshirt candidate. McPherson hesitates when asked if he agrees. "I'm not sure. I'm really not sure. I'm just going to see what it looks like when I get there, and weigh my options."

Crouch says, "I think they (Tech) man up a lot on the corners, and he's going to have to get his mind straight as far as turning and running with the guy, instead of looking upfield. We work on it and work on it, but we moved him to the other side of the ball (offense), so he's going to have to get back in his (defensive) rhythm."

"Our weight facility is the worst facility in the nation," Crouch laughs. "We've got a little ole hole in the wall back here that we use. We don't use a thing but free weights, no machines. I got a whole lot of our workouts from (VT Strength and Conditioning) Coach (Mike) Gentry, and Coach Williams over at Liberty. They're two of the best strength coaches in the nation."

"Our weight program has been great for us. We've never played a team that's stronger than us. Bigger maybe, but not stronger. McPherson's a strong kid. He benches about 350."

McPherson didn't really hit the weights until he was a senior, and he knows he's in for a shock when he arrives at Tech. "The weight room is not a problem for me. I kind of like lifting weights. I talked to Timmy (Sandidge), and he told me I better be working. Before he went up there, he really wasn't doing much, and he told me he about died when he got there. He told me, whatever you do, lift weights and get ready."

If he could change one thing about his high school career, he says, "I would have lifted more before my senior year. Before that, I really didn't lift much. I would have lifted harder than I did, so I would be in better shape than I am now. But I'm doing okay. Before my senior year, I just didn't feel like it. Right before my senior year, I had a weightlifting class, and I got into it. And I don't want to be thinking what if, so I wanted to go ahead and lift and see what I could do."

Crouch adds, "It's just like I told Pugh, and Sandidge, and all that bunch, what I'm doing is a piece of cake compared to what you're going to have to do for Gentry. We don't lift but twice a

week, because we're such a rural community. We lift and run on Mondays and Wednesdays, and it's a pretty tough three hours. What we do, I don't think you could do it three times a week."

McPherson, who describes himself as "kind of a quiet guy" (Crouch calls him a "jokester") who likes to read and play video games, knows one thing: he's looking forward to playing in an expanded Lane Stadium, in front of the Hokie faithful. He came to every home Virginia Tech football game last year, and of course, the one game that resonates in his memory is the Miami game.

"It was one of the most exciting games I've ever seen in my life," he says. "I was just sitting there witnessing. It was amazing. It was crazy. When they blocked that punt, everybody went wild."

He tries to imagine the South end zone filled in, and 64,000 Hokie fans cheering him on, and he can't quite get a grip on it, but he knows that he can't wait. "I'm just really looking forward to it. I can't even explain how it's going to be. I'm really looking forward to it."

Sounds like a true Hokie.

Spring Football 2002 Preview: Offense

Heading into spring football, we break down the Hokie offense, position by position.

by Art Stevens

For 28 days, from practice #1 on March 23rd until the Spring Game on April 20th, the Hokie football team will conduct 15 practices and hopefully settle some of the serious questions they face entering the 2002 season. Here's our comprehensive, position-by-position breakdown of the team, and its outlook as they get ready to enter Spring Football 2002. This article will focus on the offense, and a second article in this issue will focus on the defense.

Everyone knows where the big question marks are this spring on offense: quarterback, fullback, and wide receiver. Will Grant Noel remain as QB, or will Bryan Randall, Chris Clifton, or Will Hunt unseat him? Who will step in and replace stalwarts Jarrett Ferguson at fullback and Andre Davis at flanker? This spring, players will jockey for depth chart standing at those positions and others, but unfortunately, not all questions can be answered. Some players who project in the two deep, and one big wild card named Marcus Vick, won't even arrive at Tech until the late summer.

Let's dispense with the pleasantries and dive right in, starting with quarterback. All classes (freshman, sophomore, etc.) in this article refer to what class the player will be in the 2002 season, and all heights, weights, and forty times are taken from the winter testing figures on BeamerBall.com. If forty times are not listed, it's

because a player was not tested this winter.

Positions assigned to players are from the 3/20/02 version of the BeamerBall.com depth chart. Please note that this analysis concentrates almost exclusively on scholarship players, unless a walk-on has received playing time or played a major role in the past.

QUARTERBACK

Gone

Jason Davis (transfer to ETSU)

Returning

Grant Noel (R-Sr., 6-1.5, 221, 4.72)

Bryan Randall (So. 6-0, 213, 4.54)(first spring)

First Spring

Chris Clifton (R-Fr., 6-4, 200, 4.54)

Will Hunt (R-Fr., 6-0, 212, 4.65)

Everyone always asks me who I think the starting quarterback will be next season, and I have to chuckle. I tell them two things: (1) I don't know. (2) I'm not sure the *coaches* know.

Grant Noel has a year of experience under his belt (146-of-254, 57.5%, 1826 yards, 16 TD's, 11 INT's), but last season, proved completely unable to make exceptional plays throwing or running and did not respond in crunch time against Miami, Florida State, and arguably Syracuse (decent second half, but was ineffective in the first half).

Bryan Randall looked fleet of foot but performed very poorly in the passing game (12-of-34 for 114 yards, 0 TD's, 1 INT). He worked in garbage time with backup players, and he made a comment at season's end that his arm was sore from too much throwing in the preseason.

Chris Clifton is a gifted athlete who did not pick up the offense as quickly as Randall in the early fall, so Randall was the only freshman QB who didn't wear the redshirt. **Will Hunt** runs the

option well and knows the offense on paper, but he struggled in live passing drills last fall and was handed a redshirt. Hunt played QB on the scout team last fall, but that was just as much a function of the fact that VT had no true freshman wide receivers, so Clifton saw WR duty on the scout team (where he was reportedly impressive).

Noel has the advantage of coming into the spring with 711 plays from scrimmage to his credit last year. He knows what he's good at, he knows what he stinks at, and he knows what he needs to work on this spring. He knew none of that last spring.

Noel has a definite leg up on Randall, Clifton, and Hunt, for multiple reasons: (1) experience; (2) seniority and (3) he's totally unfit to play another position. Whereas Randall (safety or rover), Clifton (wide receiver), and Hunt (rover or whip) are physically suited to play other positions, Noel is not. As odd as it sounds, that's to his advantage in the QB battle.

The dynamics of this situation, with multiple QB's with multiple talents, are very complex, and Marcus Vick looming on the horizon makes them even more complex. My sources have told me contradictory things about what the coaches think will happen at the QB situation, so to try to predict what is going to happen here, both in the spring and in the fall, is folly. But I'll do it anyway.

Predicted Post-Spring Quarterback Depth Chart:

#1: Grant Noel

#2: Bryan Randall

Others: Clifton to wide receiver, Hunt to defense, with the possibility that Hunt or Clifton may be retained as the #3 QB for the 2002 season.

Admittedly, Noel and Randall could be flip-flopped. If Randall's arm shows more pop and his comfort and familiarity with the offense improve, he may present a serious challenge to Noel, because of his better footwork and run-

ning capability.

The Clifton-to-wide-receiver projection is based on the fact that the WR position is starting to get thin for the Hokies (and will stay thin if Fred Lee doesn't qualify). The Hunt-to-defense prediction is based on the fact that Hunt has been a QB dark horse for a while now, and Rickey Bustle, who recruited him and probably was in his corner more than any other VT coach (I'm speculating here), is no longer at VT.

TAILBACK

Gone

Wayne Ward
Keith Burnell
(switched to rover)

Returning

Lee Suggs (R-Sr., 5-11.5, 201)
Kevin Jones (So. 6-0, 211, 4.38)(first spring)

First Spring

Justin Hamilton (R-Fr., 6-3, 217, 4.53)
Cedric Humes (R-Fr., 6-1, 218, 4.43)

Lee Suggs is recovering very well from last season's knee injury, and he will likely see very limited work. The Hokie coaches have said they may put him in some contact drills here and there, to get him used to being hit again and to give him confidence in his knee, but the fact is, Suggs is a proven commodity and doesn't need the learning experience of spring football.

For **Kevin Jones**, however, this spring is critical. Jones made great strides last year in his Big East Rookie of the Year season, but this spring is a big opportunity for him to continue to work on the basics of hitting the hole, blocking, and picking up blitzes, among other things. As good as he was last year, Jones can take great steps forward in learning the position this spring.

Among the duo of **Justin Hamilton** and **Cedric Humes**, Humes is the one generating the most

buzz. Humes is a big back, bigger than Jones, Suggs, and every Hokie tailback since Ken Oxendine (6-1, 223) in 1997. With the logjam at tailback, either Humes or Hamilton will step into the #3 spot this spring, and being relegated to the #4 spot is a fate neither one of these players wants. To say that this spring is critical for the two of them is understating it.

Predicted Post-Spring Tailback Depth Chart:

#1: Lee Suggs
#2: Kevin Jones
#3: Cedric Humes
#4: Justin Hamilton

With Cedric Humes' size and speed, he's the most likely tailback to nail down the #3 spot. Hamilton played some scout team wide receiver out of necessity last fall, so if he loses the battle to Humes, a position change is not out of the question for him. But so far, it is only fans, not coaches, who have talked about that move.

FULLBACK

Gone

Jarrett Ferguson
Wayne Briggs

Returning

Doug Easlick (R-Jr., 5-11, 230, 4.70)
Josh Spence (R-So. 6-0, 232, 4.51)
Marvin Urquhart (R-Jr., 5-11, 255, 4.93)
Joe Wilson (R-Jr., 6-0.5, 256, 4.65)

First Spring

None

Doug Easlick took 154 snaps, caught four passes, and scored a TD last season and has been penciled in as the starter. That gives him a definite leg up on the players chasing him at this position.

Josh Spence is the most likely player to step up and take the #2 slot. After being shuffled be-

tween tailback and linebacker in previous seasons, Spence is now committed to the fullback spot, and he has dedicated himself to the position, having put on 22 pounds since his arrival in the fall of 2000. Spence is a bit of an athletic freak, notching a team-high 40-inch vertical leap in winter testing of a whopping 40 inches. Garnell Wilds tied him, but every other Tech football player was below 40 inches. Further proof of his explosiveness is his 10-yard dash time of 1.61, second only to Lee Suggs among the 11 running backs tested (which includes all tailbacks and fullbacks).

Marvin Urquhart and **Joe Wilson**, both getting ready to enter their fourth season with the team, have never been able to dent the depth chart at fullback, due mainly to weight problems. They simply weigh too much. Urquhart has been as heavy as 270 in the past (never on record, though), and Wilson, who is as strong as an ox, ballooned from 242 his redshirt freshman year to 261 last year, before dropping a few pounds down to 256. Perhaps one of them will be able to fight off Spence and take the #2 spot on the depth chart, but if they don't do it this year, they will probably both finish their careers in obscurity. Obviously, this spring is important for them.

Predicted Post-Spring Fullback Depth Chart:

#1: Doug Easlick
#2: Josh Spence
#3: Marvin Urquhart and Joe Wilson

Though Spence is an impressive physical specimen, Easlick has the edge in experience and will probably get the starting nod. That means that Easlick will rotate with Lee Suggs, and Spence will most likely come in when Kevin Jones is playing tailback. The backup duo of Jones/Spence presents a remarkably athletic tailback/fullback duo for defenses to contend with.

WIDE RECEIVERS**Gone**

Andre Davis
Emmett Johnson

Returning

FL Richard Johnson (R-So. 5-10, 180)
FL Chris Shreve (R-Jr., 5-11.5, 184, 4.43)
FL Shawn Witten (Sr., 5-11.5, 197, 4.81)
SE Ernest Wilford (R-Jr., 6-3.5, 216, 4.43)
SE Terrell Parham (R-Sr., 6-0, 187, 4.46)
SE Ron Moody (R-Jr., 6-1, 194, 4.44)

First Spring

None

Look up “injury” in the dictionary and you’ll see pictures of **Richard Johnson** and **Ernest Wilford** there. Johnson was slowed down during the season last year by a bad hamstring, and Wilford has the spring football injury down to an art form, which has cost him valuable development time in his career. But next season, Johnson and Wilford are expected to be the leaders in the receiving corps, and that leadership starts this spring, with them earning the starting flanker and split end jobs, respectively.

Behind them, look for **Terrell Parham** and **Shawn Witten** to continue to develop, but it’s unlikely that either one of them will unseat Johnson or Wilford, who are viewed as having more upside, for starting jobs. Both Parham and Witten will get a lot of playing time this fall, though, and they’ll bring good experience. The latest BeamerBall.com depth chart lists Witten as the first-teamer at Flanker, ahead of Richard Johnson, but I interpret that as a motivational tool for Johnson, and if Johnson stays healthy, I don’t think it will last.

At third string, walk-ons **Ron Moody** and **Chris Shreve** earn the coaches’ praise regularly, but for Moody, that praise has not developed into on-field performance yet. Shreve faces a similar uphill climb: walk-on workout warrior, but translating it to the field of play is a different matter.

We’ll get a good indication this spring what Shreve might be able to do.

Predicted Post-Spring**Wide Receiver Depth Chart:**

#1: FL Richard Johnson, SE Ernest Wilford
#2: FL Shawn Witten, SE Terrell Parham
#3: FL Chris Shreve, SE Ron Moody

TIGHT END**Gone**

Bob Slowikowski
Browning Wynn

Returning

Keith Willis (R-Jr., 6-5.5, 241, 4.59)
Jared Mazetta (R-So. 6-4, 254, 4.80)
Mike Jackson (R-So. 6-3, 241)

First Spring

Jeff King (R-Fr., 6-5, 258, 4.80)
Andrew Fleck (Fr., 6-3, 258, 5.17)

The coaches fired a warning shot across **Keith Willis’** bow with the March 20th BeamerBall.com depth chart. It lists Willis as the third-team tight end, with **Jared Mazetta** and **Jeff King** as co-second-teamers ahead of him (that’s correct — the first team spot was left blank).

The implication to Willis was clear: don’t be complacent, and don’t assume you’ve got the starting job won. Willis earned this slap across the face by not showing up for one of the six 6 a.m. winter workouts. He was sick, but you’re supposed to show up and report as sick, not stay home.

The Hokies typically like to use two tight ends, so two players from the Mazetta/King/Willis trio will move into position to get a lot of playing time next fall. **Mike Jackson**, continues to be bothered by a knee injury he suffered in the 2001 season, and he’ll be given limited time this spring, which will set him behind the others,

making it a three-horse race.

In terms of size, Mazetta and King are nearly carbon copies of each other. Mazetta only took 44 snaps from scrimmage last year, but he put in 147 plays on special teams and was the special teams tackling leader, so he's a playmaker. King, meanwhile, entered Tech last fall with the reputation of being a bruising blocker, but he caught very few passes in high school in Pulaski County's run-oriented offense. King is creating massive amounts of buzz among Tech insiders for his work in the weight room and his physical abilities.

Andrew Fleck was a January enrollee who had back surgery last fall before coming to Tech. Fleck has bulked up nicely (from 240 to 258) but needs to improve in his 5.17 forty to have a bright future at tight end.

Predicted Post-Spring Tight End Depth Chart:

- #1: Jeff King
- #2: Keith Willis
- #3: Jared Mazetta
- #4: Mike Jackson

We're going to go out on a limb here and predict that King, a great high school basketball player with good hands and good feet, will overtake Mazetta and King for the starting job.

OFFENSIVE LINE

Gone

- C Steve DeMasi
- RT Matt Wincek
- LT Tim Selmon
(left team)
- LT Thenus Franklin
(left team)

Returning

- LT Anthony Davis (Sr., 6-4, 320, 5.07)
- LG Jimmy Miller (So. 6-6, 310, 5.29)
- LG Anthony Nelson (R-Jr., 6-3.5, 334, 5.22)

- C Jake Grove (R-Jr., 6-3, 286, 5.00)
- C Robert Ramsey (R-So. 6-3, 306, 5.39)
- C Travis Conway (R-So. 6-5, 260, 4.99)
- RG Luke Owens (R-Sr., 6-3, 312)
- RT Jon Dunn (R-So. 6-7, 324, 5.19)
- RT Jacob Gibson (R-Jr., 6-4.5, 288, 5.06)

First Spring

- LT Reggie Butler (Fr., 6-5, 324, 5.37)
- LG Curtis Bradley (Fr., 6-2, 300, 5.29)
- C Danny McGrath (Fr., 6-2, 293, 5.23)
- RG Will Montgomery (R-Fr., 6-3, 286, 5.00)

Things are shaping up nicely for the Hokies on the offensive line. LT **Anthony Davis**, C **Jake Grove**, and RG **Luke Owens** all played over 500 snaps last year and will simply be honing their skills and locking down their starting jobs this spring. RT **Jacob Gibson**, who has been moved from guard to tackle, and RT **Jon Dunn** both played over 200 snaps, giving the Hokies five returning OL with good experience.

The problem is that Jacob Gibson (knee) and Jake Grove (back) have had chronic injury problems. If the coaches knew Gibson and Grove were going to be 100% healthy, they could put a starting lineup of (from left to right) Davis, Owens, Grove, Gibson, and Dunn on the field, and rotate in younger players as needed and desired.

As it is, **Jimmy Miller** has been placed at the #1 LG spot, and Owens has been moved from LG to RG, bumping Gibson from starting RG to backup RT, for the time being.

The coaches also like Grove at guard, but he has been penciled in as the #1 center for the time being. **Danny McGrath** is a 2001 recruit who didn't enter until January 2002. He put on nearly 30 pounds from the time he signed in Feb. 2001 until he enrolled in January, and his work in the weight room during the fall (he was living in Blacksburg) impressed the coaches. He'll be given a shot to "earn the backup center spot," according to line coach Bryan Stinespring. He is currently tied at #2 with **Robert Ramsey**,

followed by **Travis Conway** (who was recruited primarily as a deep snapper).

At the guard position, time is running out for **Anthony Nelson**. Nelson has resculpted his body since he signed with the Hokies several years ago, but he still suffers from a lack of speed and foot quickness. He runs the risk of being passed over in favor of young rising stars like **Jimmy Miller**, who is in front of Nelson on the depth chart, **Curtis Bradley**, and **Will Montgomery**.

Jimmy Miller, a 2000 recruit who delayed entry until January 2001 and was impressive last fall, played 160 snaps as a true freshman. Montgomery, a true freshman walk-on last fall, very nearly made the depth chart, but wound up redshirting and has a bright future. Bradley almost wasn't redshirted as a true freshman last season.

At the tackle position, **Anthony Davis** (656 snaps in 2001) and **Jon Dunn** (231 snaps) figure to have the two starting spots locked up. The most likely backups to them are **Reggie Butler** and former guard Jacob Gibson.

It's very hard to project where the offensive linemen will be when the spring is. There already has been a massive amount of player movement between the end of the season and the beginning of spring football, and there may be more. Gibson playing at tackle, for instance, is a move that may not last.

One thing is for sure: the new guys and the backups — Jimmy Miller, Reggie Butler, Curtis Bradley, Danny McGrath, and Will Montgomery — will get a lot of work this spring. The following depth chart has some significant differences from the BeamerBall.com depth chart (it shows Gibson at guard instead of tackle, and Bradley at tackle instead of guard, for instance).

Predicted Post-Spring Offensive Line Depth Chart:

#1 OL:
LT Anthony Davis
LG Jacob Gibson
C Jake Grove
RG Luke Owens
RT Jon Dunn

#2 OL:
LT Curtis Bradley
LG Jimmy Miller
C Danny McGrath
RG Will Montgomery
RT Reggie Butler

Predicted Post-Spring Offensive Depth Chart

With that run-down completed, here's a comprehensive look at my projected post-spring offensive depth chart. This is just one man's opinion; the most daring predictions are a projected move for Chris Clifton to wide receiver, Will Hunt moving to defense, and Jeff King cracking the two-deep.

We'll see how this projection matches up with reality as the spring wears on.

(See Next Page)

Predicted Post-Spring Offensive Depth Chart

Posn	1st Team	2nd Team	Others
SE	Ernest Wilford (R-Jr., 6-3.5, 216, 4.43)	Terrell Parham (R-Sr., 6-0, 187, 4.46)	Moody, Clifton
LT	Anthony Davis (Sr., 6-4, 320, 5.07)	Curtis Bradley (Fr., 6-2, 300, 5.29)	
LG	Jacob Gibson (R-Jr., 6-4.5, 288, 5.06)	Jimmy Miller (So. 6-6, 310, 5.29)	Anthony Nelson
C	Jake Grove (R-Jr., 6-3, 286, 5.00)	Danny McGrath (Fr., 6-2, 293, 5.23)	Robert Ramsey
RG	Luke Owens (R-Sr., 6-3, 312)	Will Montgomery (R-Fr., 6-3, 286, 5.00)	
RT	Jon Dunn (R-So. 6-7, 324, 5.19)	Reggie Butler (Fr., 6-5, 324, 5.37)	
TE	Jeff King (R-Fr., 6-5, 258, 4.80)	Keith Willis (R-Jr., 6-5.5, 241, 4.59)	Mazetta, Jackson
FL	Richard Johnson (R-So. 5-10, 180)	Shawn Witten (Sr., 5-11.5, 197, 4.81)	Chris Shreve
QB	Grant Noel (R-Sr., 6-1.5, 221, 4.72)	Bryan Randall (So. 6-0, 213, 4.54)	
TB	Lee Suggs (R-Sr., 5-11.5, 201)	Kevin Jones (So. 6-0, 211, 4.38)	Humes, Hamilton
FB	Doug Easlick (R-Jr., 5-11, 230, 4.7)	Josh Spence (R-So. 6-0, 232, 4.51)	Urquhart, Wilson

Spring Football 2002 Preview: Defense

A position by position analysis of Virginia Tech's defense as they prepare for spring football.

by Art Stevens

With five defensive tackles and three linebackers lost from the two-deep, the Hokies face a major defensive rebuilding job, particularly in the middle. That rebuilding job begins this spring, as younger players who have been waiting their chance vie to fill the many openings.

Some help is on the way next fall, as defensive tackles Big Jimmy Williams (from Pasadena City College) and Jonathan Lewis (from Varina High School) are expected to step onto campus and into the two-deep rotation at tackle. Lewis is said to be one of the most physically developed freshman the Hokie coaches have ever seen, and there are whispers saying that Williams may be one of the best interior defensive linemen ever at Tech. Time will tell.

Until then, the guys that Tech has on campus now will stage a knockdown drag out battle to see who gets to carry the mantle of one of the country's best defenses.

Let's take a position-by-position look, starting with the defensive ends. All classes (freshman, sophomore, etc.) in this article refer to what class the player will be in the 2002 season, and all heights, weights, and forty times are taken from the winter testing figures on BeamerBall.com. If forty times are not listed, it's because a player was not tested this winter.

Positions assigned to players are from the 3/20/02 version of the BeamerBall.com depth chart. Please note that this analysis concentrates almost exclusively on scholarship players, unless a walk-on has received playing time or played a major role in the past.

DEFENSIVE END

Gone

No one

Returning

Stud Cols Colas (R-Jr., 5-11.5, 239, 4.41)
Stud Nathaniel Adibi (R-Jr., 6-3, 254, 4.55)
End Jim Davis (Jr., 6-3, 251, 4.72)
End Lamar Cobb (R-Sr., 6-0.5, 223, 4.65)
End Jason Lallis (R-So. 6-0, 250, 4.66)

First Spring

Stud Brandon Frye (R-Fr., 6-4, 257, 4.93)

One thing's for sure: the Hokies won't be weak at defensive end. What they'll need this spring is for everyone to stay healthy and for the next Corey Moore to step up. The Stud defensive end position is usually manned by a quick, undersized guy with attitude (think Corey Moore and Cornell Brown), while the End position belongs to a bigger, more prototypical defensive end, more suited for the NFL (think John Engelberger).

The big news here is that **Nathaniel Adibi** has been switched to Stud, and **Lamar Cobb** has been moved to End. That flies in the face of the previous paragraph, since Adibi is built more like an Engelberger-type End, and Cobb is built more like a Moore-type Stud, but the move is designed to get **Jim Davis** and Adibi on the field together at the same time, a move that was experimented with last season. These guys have all been in the program (and on the field) for years, so the major focus this spring will be teaching the new positions to Cobb and Adibi.

Colts Colas has the best shot of being the next C. Moore or C. Brown. He played most of the last two years behind Cobb, but late last season, the coaches moved Colas ahead of Cobb at Stud (and Davis ahead of Adibi at End).

Colas, who played running back in high school, is growing into the Stud position and may be mean enough to play it well. Colas has an "edge" that the other guys on this defensive line might not have; witness his ill-timed push of Miami QB Ken Dorsey in last year's game — dumb move, but Colas did it because he's intense, a quality that is required to succeed at the Stud position. He's also a phenomenal athlete, as evidenced by his 4.41 forty time and his high power rating in this month's "Inside the Numbers" article.

While Colas is the most likely candidate to emerge as the next great defensive end at Tech, Jim Davis is not far behind. While Colas is a pash rusher, Davis is a complete player, albeit without the fire that Colas has. Lamar Cobb is a superb run-stopper who must work on his pass rushing, and Nathaniel Adibi is the type of player who is inconsistent when it comes to making things happen right at the line of scrimmage, but when he drops back into zone coverage or races after a running QB in the open field, he makes big plays.

For these four guys this spring, it's just a case of staying healthy, building on their strengths, working on their weaknesses, and adjusting to the position change. For **Jason Lallis** and **Brandon Frye**, their mission is to keep working, keep learning, and wait their turn.

Predicted Post-Spring

Defensive End Depth Chart:

#1 DE's: Stud Colts Colas, End Jim Davis

#2 DE's: Stud Nathaniel Adibi, End Lamar Cobb

#3 DE's: Stud Brandon Frye, End Jason Lallis

Yeah, I know, I'm not exactly going out on a limb here. That two-deep writes itself.

DEFENSIVE TACKLE

Gone

Chad Beasley

David Pugh

Derrius Monroe

Dan Wilkinson

Channing Reed

Returning

Tackle Mark Costen (R-Jr., 6-3, 275, 4.90)

Nose Kevin Lewis (R-So. 6-1, 281, 4.89)

First Spring

Tackle Jason Murphy (R-Fr., 6-2, 285, 4.97)

Tackle Kevin Hilton (R-Fr., 6-1, 272, 5.25)

Nose Tim Sandidge (R-Fr., 6-0.5, 272, 4.85)

Nose Chris Pannel (R-Fr., 6-3, 256, 5.05)

The bad news is, the Hokies lost everything, including the kitchen sink, at the defensive tackle position. Among the six players who will be playing the DT positions this spring, they had 71 total snaps from scrimmage last year, all of them belonging to walk-on **Mark Costen**.

The good news is two-fold: **Kevin Lewis**, who saw playing time in 2000, is done with a redshirt year, and ... well, the four freshmen will get a lot of reps this spring.

One interesting nugget about Lewis is that he will turn 22 years old on April 26th, just six days after the spring game. That means that he'll be 24 years old during his redshirt senior season, but it also means that Lewis isn't likely to mature much more physically, and his current weight if 281 is probably about where he'll stay. That's fine, that's big enough for most VT defensive tackles. Plus, brother Jonathan is on the way, and he already weighs 290.

Out of all the freshmen, **Jason Murphy** bears watching the closest. In high school, he had an incredible 30 sacks as a junior, 17 as a senior, and 60 total in a four-year career. Note that he is bigger than any DT on the roster right now, and

despite this, his 40 time is very competitive. If Murphy brings competitiveness and technique with those physical tools, he will be a great player. With all the talk of Jonathan Lewis, Kevin Lewis, and Jimmy Williams, Murphy is a forgotten man, but a potential ace in the hole.

So is **Tim Sandidge**, who is the fastest of all the defensive tackles in the forty and has been generating some good buzz. Sandidge is a mountain of a player who once weighed 290 but has trimmed down to 275.

Kevin Hilton and will probably lag behind the others for now. Hilton was sidelined by a foot injury last fall, slowing his progress Hilton was a defensive tackle all the way from the time he was recruited.

For **Mark Costen**, with all these talented scholarship players swirling around him (and more on the way in the fall), it's hard to figure out what will happen to him. He's at #1 on the depth chart right now ahead of Murphy, and this spring will settle the issue of whether or not he stays there.

Predicted Post-Spring Defensive Tackle Depth Chart:

#1 DT's:

Nose Kevin Lewis, Tackle Jason Murphy

#2 DT's:

Nose Tim Sandidge, Tackle Mark Costen

#3 DT's:

Nose Chris Pannel, Tackle Kevin Hilton

The #1/#2 Tackle position is really a toss-up between Murphy and Costen. If Murphy translates his high school success into college success, Costen may not be able to fight him off. If not, Costen should hold onto the reins at #2 tackle.

INSIDE LINEBACKER (Mike and Backer Positions)

Gone

Ben Taylor

Brian Welch

Jake Houseright

Returning

Mike Alex Markogiannakis (R-Sr., 5-9, 209, 4.87)

Mike Chris Buie (R-Jr., 6-0, 225, 4.59)

Mike Mikal Baaqee (R-So. 5-9.5, 223, 4.65)

Backer Vegas Robinson (R-Jr., 6-0, 239, 4.47)

First Spring

Backer James Anderson (R-Fr., 6-3, 218, 4.60)

Backer Blake Warren (R-Fr., 6-2.5, 221, 4.69)

Mike Jordan Trott (R-Fr., 6-3.5, 233, 4.82)

This spring is the time for **Vegas Robinson** to step up and be the man. He's already got the physical tools (he is the biggest *and* quickest linebacker the Hokies have, not to mention a strength and conditioning standout), and now is his chance to step into the shoes vacated by Ben Taylor and become a leader. If you're a Hokie fan and the coaches start saying positive things about Vegas this spring, be happy.

Assuming Robinson does step up, he'll be nicely backed up by **James Anderson** and **Blake Warren**. If Robinson, Anderson and Warren keep developing, the Hokies have a very nice flow of talent through the Backer position for the next four years. At this point, it's hard to figure out who among the duo of Anderson and Warren will take the upper hand in the coming years, as the coaches have said that both are intelligent and have a good feel for the game.

Mike is much more unsettled, and the coaches have responded by moving **Mikal Baaqee** from Backer (where there is an embarrassment of riches) to Mike. Baaqee is bigger and faster than walk-on **Alex Markogiannakis**, who would have seen serious playing time for the Hokies 10-15 years ago. He's a George Del Ricco type

with a real instinct for the game. Add three inches and 20 pounds and lop 0.3 seconds off his forty time, and he's a star.

The inability of **Chris Buie** to knock Markogiannakis down the depth chart last year speaks volumes about how far Buie has to go before he can contribute. He's got the physical tools that Markogiannakis doesn't have, but he remains behind him on the chart. He's a solid special-teamer, but he has never made much noise at the Mike position. It's do or die time for Buie this spring, lest he get passed over by **Jordan Trott**. Trott has impressed the coaches with his ability to "always be around the football," and he's got similar physical tools to what Jake Houseright had.

Predicted Post-Spring Inside Linebacker Depth Chart:

#1 ILB's:

Backer Vegas Robinson, Mike Mikal Baaqee

#2 ILB's:

Backer James Anderson, Mike Alex
Markogiannakis

Others:

Backer Blake Warren, Mike Chris Buie/Jordan
Trott

Robinson is an easy first-team call, and I also think that Baaqee's move to Mike will be permanent, and that he'll be the #1 guy at the end of spring practice. If Buie catches a spark (similar to what Willie Pile did prior to the 2000 season), he could take over the #2 Mike position, but Trott is close on his heels and working hard in the weight room.

OUTSIDE LINEBACKER (Whip Linebacker Position)

Gone

T.J. Jackson (transferred out)

Dirk Taylor

Returning

Mike Daniels (R-So. 6-0, 197, 4.59)

Brandon Manning (R-So. 6-0, 213, 4.52)

Deon Provitt (R-Jr., 6-0, 201)

First Spring

None

Despite the loss of T.J. Jackson (who struggled in pass defense) to a transfer, the Hokies are in good shape at whip linebacker.

Perhaps *the* surprise of last year was **Mike Daniels**, who moved from a backup safety position (where he was caught in a logjam with Willie Pile and Vince Fuller) to whip and performed very well. Daniels was a bit of a liability against the run, particularly in the Gator Bowl against FSU's big tailback, Greg Jones. Daniels has bulked up from 185 to 197 since last fall, bringing him close to Deon Provitt's weight.

Deon Provitt was the starter (over T.J. Jackson) at the beginning of last year, but he suffered a knee injury against Central Florida early in the season and was gone. He did not progress very well in his rehabilitation and will be "limited" in spring football, opening the door for Daniels and walk-on **Brandon Manning** to excel in front of him.

Manning is not to be taken lightly, as he weighs more than Daniels and Provitt and runs a faster forty time than Daniels (Provitt ran a 4.42 a year ago, when healthy). Manning also excels over Daniels by a very slight margin in vertical jump (34 inches to 33) and the ten-yard shuttle run (1.60 seconds to 1.61).

One concern with Provitt, even if he is able to recover from his knee injury, is weight loss. This

time last year, Provitt weighed 209 pounds (when he ran his 4.42). He is now down to 201. By comparison, Lee Suggs, who also suffered a knee injury last season, only lost three pounds, from 204 down to 201.

Predicted Post-Spring

Whip Linebacker Depth Chart:

#1: Mike Daniels

#2: Brandon Manning

#3: Deon Provitt

I think this is the way it will play out. If it does, Provitt will have to wait and see if he can get his starting job back from Manning and Daniels in the fall.

CORNERBACK

Gone

Larry Austin

Returning

BC Ronyell Whitaker (R-Sr., 5-9, 197, 4.45)

FC Garnell Wilds (R-Jr., 5-11, 194, 4.54)

FC DeAngelo Hall (So. 5-10.5, 200, 4.31)
(first spring)

BC Eric Green (Jr., 5-11.5, 186, 4.39)

First Spring

BC D.J. Walton (5-9, 197, 4.71)

BC = Boundary Corner; FC = Field Corner

Ronyell Whitaker and **DeAngelo Hall** are the bell cows here, with **Garnell Wilds** and **Eric Green** providing experienced backups, enabling the Hokies to rest their corners and keep them fresh.

The situation at cornerback during spring football is steady-as-she-goes. This area will not be one of focus for the coaches, other than continuing to develop the players they have. Hall will benefit the most from this spring, because (one more time) spring football is a time for learning, and Hall has yet to go through spring football.

He played well as a true freshman last season, and a full spring will advance his game.

D.J. Walton is likely bound for a Rover spot during spring football. He is by far the slowest cornerback on the team, and his build, according to the coaches, is more of a Cory Bird build, perfect for Rover. The coaches will try Walton, who is a great kid but just doesn't have good speed, at the corner position.

Predicted Post-Spring

Cornerback Depth Chart:

#1: BC Ronyell Whitaker, FC DeAngelo Hall

#2: BC Eric Green, FC Garnell Wilds

D.J. Walton moves to Rover

No real stretch here, although the Walton-to-Rover move is not set in stone.

FREE SAFETY AND ROVER

Gone

ROV Kevin McCadam

Returning

FS Willie Pile (R-Sr., 6-2, 205, 4.50)

FS Vincent Fuller (R-So. 6-1, 184, 4.33)

ROV Billy Hardee (R-Sr., 5-11, 191, 4.72)

ROV Michael Crawford (R-Jr., 5-11, 210, 4.55)

ROV Sam Fatherly (R-So. 5-10, 203, 4.39)

First Spring

ROV Keith Burnell (R-Sr., 5-11, 208, 4.21)

It was the best of times (Free Safety); it was the worst of times (Rover).

The Hokies are solid at safety, with third-year starter **Willie Pile** still on board. Pile was a quiet player who blossomed when presented the starting job opportunity prior to the 2000 season, and he hasn't looked back. The coaches rave about backup **Vincent Fuller**, who took 114 snaps (VT usually doesn't play their backup safeties and Rovers much) in 2001. For Pile and Fuller, they'll spend the spring learning and

developing at their position. In case of injury, the multi-talented **Billy Hardee** (it's hard to believe he'll be a senior next year) can play safety.

At Rover, VT will be hanging a "Rovers wanted — apply within" sign this spring. Hardee is currently listed #1 on the depth chart, with **Michael Crawford** behind him and **Sam Fatherly** bringing up the rear. Former tailback **Keith Burnell**, the fastest player on the team ever with his 4.21 forty, is listed fourth string simply because he has zero experience at the position.

You get the impression from listening to the coaches talk in the last few years that they want Crawford to step up, because although Hardee is capable and well-respected, Crawford is bigger by nearly 20 pounds and faster by nearly .2 seconds in the forty.

Fatherly, meanwhile, has had a very quiet career so far. He's got good speed, but the coaches almost never talk about him, and his media guide entries say, "Must continue to get stronger." Like others on the Hokie team, Fatherly is in danger of disappearing if he doesn't make a splash soon.

Burnell is a wild card, but given that he's a fifth-year senior, the coaches will probably want to move him up the depth chart and give him some playing time. VT moved him because of the depth at tailback, and Burnell wants a shot at the pros. The coaches will do everything they can to get him on the field, unless he's a total liability, in order to give him that shot.

In addition to those three guys, it's possible that CB D.J. Walton and QB Will Hunt may be given a look at Rover.

Predicted Post-Spring Safety and Rover Depth Chart:

#1: FS Willie Pile, ROV Michael Crawford
#2: FS Vincent Fuller, ROV Billy Hardee/Keith Burnell

All else being equal (and it may not be), I think that Crawford's size and speed advantage over Hardee, as well as the fact that he's a rising junior and not a rising senior, will lead to him being given the starting nod over Hardee. I think that Burnell will get equal playing time as Hardee, but we'll see.

Predicted Post-Spring Defensive Depth Chart

With that run-down completed, here's a comprehensive look at my projected post-spring defensive depth chart. You can see that it includes just five seniors in the projected two-deep. Given everyone that the Hokies have to replace at defensive tackle and linebacker, it's not a surprise to find out that the defense is that young.

We'll see how this projection matches up with reality as the spring wears on.

(See Next Page)

Predicted Post-Spring Defensive Depth Chart

Posn	1st Team	2nd Team	Others
Stud	Cols Colas (R-Jr., 5-11.5, 239, 4.41)	Nathaniel Adibi (R-Jr., 6-3, 254, 4.55)	Brandon Frye
Nose	Kevin Lewis (R-So. 6-1, 281, 4.89)	Tim Sandidge (R-Fr., 6-0.5, 272, 4.85)	Chris Pannel
Tackle	Jason Murphy (R-Fr., 6-2, 285, 4.97)	Mark Costen (R-Jr., 6-3, 275, 4.90)	Kevin Hilton
End	Jim Davis (Jr., 6-3, 251, 4.72)	Lamar Cobb (R-Sr., 6-0.5, 223, 4.65)	Jason Lallis
Mike	Mikal Baaqee (R-So. 5-9.5, 223, 4.65)	Alex Markogiannakis (R-Sr., 5-9, 209, 4.87)	Buie, Trott
Backer	Vegas Robinson (R-Jr., 6-0, 239, 4.47)	James Anderson (R-Fr., 6-3, 218, 4.60)	Blake Warren
Whip	Mike Daniels (R-So. 6-0, 197, 4.59)	Brandon Manning (R-So. 6-0, 213, 4.52)	Deon Provitt
BCB	Ronyell Whitaker (R-Sr., 5-9, 197, 4.45)	Eric Green (Jr., 5-11.5, 186, 4.39)	
FS	Willie Pile (R-Sr., 6-2, 205, 4.50)	Vincent Fuller (R-So. 6-1, 184, 4.33)	
ROV	Michael Crawford (R-Jr., 5-11, 210, 4.55)	Billy Hardee (R-Sr., 5-11, 191, 4.72)	Burnell, Walton
FCB	DeAngelo Hall (So. 5-10.5, 200, 4.31)	Garnell Wilds (R-Jr., 5-11, 194, 4.54)	D.J. Walton

Spring Football in a Nutshell

The Reader's Digest version of what to look for this year in spring football.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Okay, so maybe you don't have enough time right now to read those two long spring football articles elsewhere in this issue. Pull up a chair, and we'll give it to you in bullet form.

Ready to step into the limelight: After spending a few seasons in the program, these players have the opportunity to be first-time starters next season and will spend this spring trying to win first-string jobs and preparing to make their mark:

- WR Ernest Wilford
- WR Shawn Witten
- WR Richard Johnson
- TE Keith Willis
- FB Doug Easlick
- DT Kevin Lewis
- LB Mikal Baaqee
- LB Vegas Robinson

In danger of disappearing: These players have been around the program a few years, and if they don't get it in gear this spring, they may get passed over in favor of younger players, never to crack the two-deep and never to make an impact at Virginia Tech:

- OL Anthony Nelson
- FB Joe Wilson
- FB Marvin Urquhart
- LB Chris Buie
- ROV Sam Fatherly

Threatened by injury: These players enter the spring trying to recover from injuries that threaten to submerge them deep in the depth chart, perhaps on a permanent basis:

- TE Mike Jackson
- LB Deon Provitt

On the hot seat: These anticipated starters have unexpectedly been shuffled down the depth chart, sending them a message. What that message is is known only to the players and coaches:

- TE Keith Willis
- WR Richard Johnson

Fighting off all comers: These players are starters from last year or anticipated starters for 2002 who have potential replacements (in parentheses) breathing down their necks:

- QB Grant Noel (Bryan Randall, Chris Clifton, Will Hunt)
- TE Keith Willis (Jeff King, Jared Mazetta)
- WR Richard Johnson (Shawn Witten)
- FB Doug Easlick (Josh Spence)
- DE Cols Colas (Nathaniel Adibi)

On the move? These players might be moved to another position before spring practice is over:

- Bryan Randall: from QB to ROV or FS
- Will Hunt: from QB to ROV or Whip
- Chris Clifton: from QB to WR
- Justin Hamilton: from TB to WR
- D.J. Walton: from CB to ROV

When Tech Was Good in Basketball

Shedding light on how a Top 20 team became an also-ran.

by Jim Alderson

Occasionally, I am able to write TSL columns that generate quite a bit of interest, and one that did just that was “Basketball at a Football School,” where I commented on the low esteem in which Virginia Tech men’s basketball seems to be held among the administration and current student body.

It wasn’t always that way, and a number of e-mails found their way into my Inbox, all from older Hokies who remembered when basketball at Tech was something other than some sort of game that took place between football season and spring football. All of these e-mails contained the question “What happened?” giving me the inspiration for this piece, and drawing interest from Will.

As is often the case, I have opinions on the decline of basketball at Tech, and they are a bit different from that expressed by a couple of correspondents, that “firing Charlie Moir was the worst move Tech ever made.” More on that will come later.

While attempting to research this article, I discovered that very little material pertaining to Tech’s basketball history exists on the Internet. A Google search for “Virginia Tech basketball” yielded about 253,000 returns; obviously I didn’t check them all out, but about twenty pages in showed a collection of posts on the TSL basketball message board, recent game stories and more information on the more successful Tech women’s team.

Out of curiosity, I typed in a search for “Virginia Tech football,” and marveled as about 390,000 returns were produced, covering just about anything anyone cared to know about Frank Beamer’s team.

Refining my basketball search to “Virginia Tech men’s basketball” dropped the returns to about 91,000, and only five pages into this, Google was returning keywords, and I was noticing sites related to Virginia, Georgia Tech and West Virginia Tech, which was not exactly what I had in mind. I finally gave up when I spied a return under “Virginia Tech men’s basketball” that read “Gator Bowl photo album.” Yep, we’re a football school.

Since this article will be written largely from memory, my first ones of Tech basketball center on the opening of what was then known as Tech Coliseum (renaming it in honor of Stuart Cassell would come later) in 1964. I was able to discover the year from Google, as a brief history popped up in a search of “Cassell Coliseum” after a return headed “Sugar Bowl tickets to go on sale at Cassell Coliseum,” and then another from the Tech site instructing students in the protocol for picking up football tickets (search anything about Tech athletics, and you never get too far away from football).

Cassell was and remains a superbly-designed structure with its clean sight lines, steep rows of seats giving fans the feel of being right on top of the action, and its low ceiling, which traps noise and can create a very uncomfortable situation for opposing teams, as it has for much of its history. It is a far superior design to that of Virginia’s University Hall, with its goofy-looking balloon roof and circular seating design that seems to have been intended to keep spectators as far away from the playing floor as possible, which, given the state of Hoo basketball at the time, was certainly understandable.

Cassell is also a superior facility to one in use at the time and now, Duke’s Cameron Indoor Stadium. For those who sat up straight at that

sentence, I have been in Cameron many times, and my experience is not the televised ones of Dick Vitale gushing over the grand old palace, but cramped seating, narrow stairwells to reach one's seat and a near-total lack of amenities. Cassell is a much better venue to watch a game.

Tech's early years in Cassell were good ones. Howie Shannon ran a fairly good program, highlighted by a Final Four near miss in 1967 when Tech gave away a game to Dayton in the last minutes. Shannon's program was good, but not good enough, and when Tech President T. Marshall Hahn decided he wanted a greater athletic profile for his up-and-coming state university, Shannon suffered the same fate at the same time as football coach Jerry Claiborne and was fired, and Don DeVoe brought in, in 1971.

DeVoe had played alongside Bobby Knight at Ohio State, and brought to Tech the principles of man-to-man defense that both had learned under Buckeye coach Fred Taylor. DeVoe inherited from Shannon star player Allen Bristow, and in his second year re-tooled his roster with junior college players and shocked the basketball world by capturing the National Invitational Tournament in New York's Madison Square Garden. The NIT championship was a much stronger accomplishment than now, as the NCAA Tournament only invited sixteen teams, only one per conference, and Tech went through a very strong NIT field, beating Notre Dame in the championship game. Times were very good.

DeVoe's program leveled off the next couple of years, but he was recruiting strongly, and his 1976 team garnered an NCAA invitation. It was DeVoe's last Tech team. He never really fit into the Tech culture, and his wife chafed at living in a Blacksburg that was a far cry from the university town that today draws such acclaim for the quality of its life. DeVoe had sniffed around other job openings, then made a push when Fred Taylor retired at his alma mater, Ohio

State. This did not sit well with the Tech administration, and after DeVoe's refusal to disavow interest in OSU, he was fired. Some good times and some very bad ones lay ahead.

Brought in to succeed DeVoe was Charlie Moir, a former Tech assistant under Shannon who had gone on to big things, winning a Division II national championship at Roanoke and breathing life into a moribund Tulane program. He seemed to be a good choice, and was, for a while.

Moir inherited a good team from DeVoe, featuring players such as Wayne Robinson and Marshall Ashford, and recruited well, and won, but the college basketball landscape was changing. The NCAA expanded its tournament field from 16 teams, first to 32 and eventually to 64. Another rule change allowed initially a second team from a conference other than its champion, and later multiple teams from a conference.

This meant that the chances of an independent such as Tech copping a bid were greatly reduced, and it was time to find a conference home. Overtures were made to Tech's logical and geographical neighbor, the ACC, getting absolutely nowhere, garnering only two votes for admittance, from the Hoos and Clemson.

Due to the NCAA changes in participation in its basketball tournament, new conferences were springing up all over the place, and Moir, given a free hand by Athletic Director Bill Dooley, chose the Metro, which was the best option available, certainly better than the new Eastern Eight, which was about to have its best teams raided by the coming Big East, which had no interest in the rural Virginia Tech.

Tech hit the Metro ground running, winning the first conference tournament they played in 1979, a sparkling run that included a semi-final defeat of the Metro's flagship team, Louisville. Tech went on to an NCAA victory over Jacksonville, before being eliminated by an Indiana State

team featuring Larry Bird. Moir had recruited well, adding Dale Solomon and Jeff Schneider to Robinson and Ashford, and Tech seemed poised for a very bright future. There was trouble on the horizon, however.

Following that successful 1978-79 season, Moir lost a protracted recruiting battle with the Hoos, North Carolina and Kentucky for high school superstar Ralph Sampson. It was to set a pattern for Moir at Tech; he could recruit well enough to keep Tech competitive and around the top twenty, but he never got the big man (he was later to whiff on Melvin Turpin, who chose Kentucky, and Chris Washburn, who went to NC State) that might have put Tech into the top ten.

Worse still, Moir lost Sampson to the Hoos, and Terry Holland took him and ran, rocketing into the top of the rankings and the national spotlight, eclipsing Moir's still-winning program at Tech. And, as Sampson's Hoos career continued through the early 80's, another factor began to work against Tech: television.

The Metro had been founded with television in mind, but it was regional exposure. The early 80's saw the emergence of cable network ESPN, which hung its programming hat on college basketball and brought the weeknight national game to the tube. It also was choosing games based on viewing appeal, and the Metro, grafted onto the territories of two dominant conferences, the ACC and SEC, was generally bypassed in favor of games involving those two leagues.

Tech was televised plenty, but it was local coverage, and the Hoos with their very strong program and playing in an ACC that at the time was not the top-heavy league it is today, but instead a highly-competitive one featuring media-friendly characters such as Maryland's Lefty Drissell, Jim Valvano of N.C. State and Bobby Cremins of Georgia Tech, along with the patriarchal Dean Smith, began to get a lot of national exposure. The ACC dominated national coverage, and Tech, along with the rest of the

Metro, began to drift into television obscurity. It was to eventually lead to the Metro's dissolution, but not before Moir's recruiting was wrecked.

Moir had based his Tech teams on an inside-outside combination recruited together. He had inherited Robinson and Ashford from DeVoe, then built his teams around first Dale Solomon and Jeff Schneider, then Bobby Beecher and Dell Curry, who was won in a bruising recruiting battle with the Hoos. It was when Moir looked to replace Curry and Beecher that disaster struck.

One of the country's top point guard recruits in 1985 was Michael Porter, from Tech's backyard in Pulaski County. Everybody around recruited him, and it seemed a major coup when he committed to Virginia Tech. The celebration by Tech fans was short-lived, however, as Porter was soon arrested for a charge involving stolen checks. Porter was suspended from high school and never played a minute for Tech (he eventually went to junior college and ended up at St. John's, never fulfilling his enormous potential).

Porter was gone, and Moir's program was rocked again when big man Terry Dozier, recruited to replace Beecher, chose South Carolina over the Hokies. Moir had struck out. Things were going to get worse.

A sure sign of a basketball program in trouble is when large numbers of transfers start appearing, and quite a few were flowing into Tech. Moir was finding it increasingly difficult to recruit against the dominant ACC, and indeed, two years before the failed recruitment of Porter, Moir had lost Northern Virginia point guard Tommy Amaker to Duke, where young coach Mike Krzyzewski was no longer setting school records for most losses in a season or ACC Tournament marks for most lopsided defeats, but was instead building the foundation for what was to become a very, very good program. Moir was losing more and more recruiting battles such as that (another player Moir had coveted, forward Allen Williams from West Virginia, had also been lost to Duke), and in desperation

bringing transfers into his program. It would bite him.

Moir rebounded well from the loss of Porter, the next year corralling a little-known West Virginia guard named Bimbo Coles, who had a terrific career at Tech. It was trying to replace Dozier that Moir came to the end of his Tech road. Already in the program were transfers Johnny Fort and Wally Lancaster; Moir took another, a forward from N.C. State named Russell Pierre.

Many Hokies were upset when Pierre landed at Tech. Jim Valvano at State had a well-earned reputation for running a rogue program; he was a likeable rogue, to be sure, but his Wolfpack teams had players who were constantly in trouble, both academically and with the law. It would eventually tear apart his State program.

Valvano was well known for recruiting anybody and keeping them around no matter what they had done ... and Moir was taking the guy Valvano actually ran off? This was trouble, and it wasn't long in coming, as during Pierre's first and only year on the Tech basketball team, he was involved in welfare fraud, and then it was revealed he was having academic trouble, even with a Moir-crafted curriculum that included a class called "History of the Metro Conference."

Pierre was thrown off the team, and it was the wrong thing at the wrong time. Tech was already reeling from the very public firing and subsequent lawsuit of football coach/AD Bill Dooley, and the media pounced. Daily, Hokie fans opened their newspapers in dread, and were treated to stories about the woeful graduation rate under Moir, problem after problem with his players, and an NCAA investigation that gave Tech the rare double of having both its football and basketball teams on probation.

Moir had been running something other than an exemplary program at Tech. University officials did not react well to evidence of further athletic shenanigans, and Moir was abruptly fired on the eve of the 1988 season. The basketball program

has never fully recovered.

Moir assistant Frankie Allen was hired to pick up the pieces, and he proved to be totally not up for the job. He was fired the instant his contract ran out four years later and was replaced by Bill Foster, a stopgap measure who acted like it. Foster achieved success with one class, not recruiting behind them, and leaving when the last player in that class, Ace Custis, exhausted his eligibility.

Foster was replaced by assistant Bobby Hussey, who made one recruiting blunder after another during his brief tenure, and Tech now finds itself with young Ricky Stokes attempting to piece together some semblance of a program. Stokes has taken small steps, but has many more to go if he is to bring Tech back to the level of success achieved years ago. Stokes does have a fighting chance, as Tech finally has achieved what eluded Moir, membership in a dominant conference.

Looking back, I don't feel there was any one thing that caused Tech's severe basketball decline, but rather a combination: the emergence of the ACC as a television-centric conference and Tech's inability to find a conference home that would level the playing field; the loss of Sampson that enabled the Hoos rather than Tech to create a dominant program and the increasing recruiting difficulties this caused Moir; and the shortcuts he took as a result.

Many Hokies like Moir and feel he was treated unfairly, but it can be demonstrated that while Tech has endured some very poor coaching since, today's problems can be traced to the regime of Charlie Moir.

Inside the Numbers: Power Ratings

Our second annual power ratings installment gives you the lowdown on who packs the most punch on Tech's football team.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Last year, about this same time, we ran a nifty article on power ratings for VT football players, and we've returned for a second annual Power Ratings article.

The premise is simple. Message board poster "Technocrat" devised a way to calculate power ratings for Virginia Tech football players based on their height, weight, and 40-yard dash times. You can build a power rating formula that is as simple or as complex as you want it to be. Technocrat's power rating is pretty simple, from the standpoint that it only requires three points of data as input: height, weight, and 40 time.

You could devise a more complex formula that incorporates weightlifting numbers, vertical leap, shuttle times, etc., but we like the simplicity of Technocrat's formula, so it's what we go with. We're not sure *exactly* what it means, but you can boil it down to this: shorter, heavier, faster guys will get a high power rating; tall, skinny, slow guys won't. Think of a bowling ball hitting you at a high rate of speed versus, say, a beach ball rolling slowly into you.

What follows is an explanation of Technocrat's formulas, and then I'll give the results so you can find out which players scored highest in his power rating system. Since this is our second year doing this, will provide some comparisons

to last year's figures and let you know who improved their power rating the most.

As always, those of you who want the executive summary can skip ahead to the results (see the paragraph titled "The Numbers") to see how the players rank. The engineering and scientific types out there can muddle through the next paragraph (titled "The Formulas") on your way to "The Numbers."

As is always the case with "Inside the Numbers," the results are interesting and illuminating, and you can learn a lot about the VT football players just from examining the numbers.

The Formulas

Remember (one last warning), if the technical stuff puts you to sleep, you can jump right ahead to the next section ("The Numbers").

Technocrat's power rating formula is simple. He calculates a mass component and divides it by a speed component to give his final power rating. So if a player's mass component is 180.0 and their speed component is 60.0, their final power rating is $180/60 = 3.000$.

The speed component is created by squaring a player's 40-yard dash time and then multiplying by a "speed weighting" factor, which I'll describe later:

Speed Component = $[(40\text{-time})^2] * \text{Speed Weighting Factor}$

To derive the mass component of the power ratings equation, you must first calculate a player's Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is calculated by converting the player's weight to kilograms (divide pounds by 2.2 kilos/pound) and their height to meters (divide total inches in height by 39.37 inches/meter). You then divide weight (in kilos) by height (in meters) squared, and this gives you the player's BMI:

BMI = Body Mass Index = Weight in kilos /

$(\text{Height in meters})^2$

By the way, Technocrat didn't just make BMI up. Go to yahoo.com or your favorite search engine and do a search on "body mass index" and you'll get at least one link to the formula shown above.

To get the mass component of the power rating, you multiply the BMI by a "mass weighting factor."

Mass Component = BMI * Mass Weighting Factor

Lastly, to get the final power rating for the player, you divide the mass component by the speed component:

Power Rating = Mass Component / Speed Component

So what are the "speed weighting factor" and the "mass weighting factor"? They are numbers that you use to assign more "weight" to either the mass part of the equation or the speed part of the equation.

So if your mass weighting factor is 2 and your speed weighting factor is 1, that doubles a player's power rating over a 1:1 ratio. Likewise, a mass weighting factor of 1 and a speed weighting factor of 2 cuts the player's power rating into half that of a 1:1 ratio.

Note that changing the weighting factors does *not* alter how the players rank relative to one another, because they're just multipliers. If you change them, they affect all players' ratings proportionately. So if player A has a higher power rating than player B, his rating will remain higher no matter what you do with the weighting numbers.

The original spreadsheet that Technocrat sent to me had a mass-to-speed ratio of 5 to 3, so he chose to give more weight to the mass portion of the equation. That's fine with me, and as I mentioned, it doesn't affect how they rank with

respect to one another.

So let's start crunching some numbers!

The Numbers

Again, this formula only has three input variables: height, weight, and 40 time. All of the data for the spreadsheet that Technocrat sent to me were taken from "Gentry's Iron Palace" on BeamerBall.com, for Winter Max testing (done in the month of February).

Of course, some players were out with injuries and were not able to test, so the figures entered for those players were the most recent ones available (in most cases, fall of 2001). This information is also available on BeamerBall.com.

Technocrat did all the research and entered all of the data into the spreadsheet before sending it to me, so any errors in data entry can be attributed to him. Feel free to berate him on the message board if you find any mistakes.

Having said all that (drum roll, please), here are the power ratings for the top 15 players on Virginia Tech's spring football roster. Their ranking last year, if applicable, is also included:

Top 15 Power Ratings for Spring 2002

Rank	Name	POS	Ht. (ins.)	Wt. (lbs.)	40 Time	2002 Power Rating	2001 Rank	2001 Power Rating
1	Colas, Cols	DE	71.5	239	4.41	2.823	1	2.835
2	Burnell, Keith	ROV	71	207.5	4.21	2.727	7	2.581
3	Robinson, Vegas	LB	72.25	238.5	4.47	2.685	4	2.702
4	Wilson, Joe	FB	72.5	256	4.65	2.645	10	2.534
5	Spence, Josh	FB	71.75	232.5	4.51	2.607	34	2.353
6	Lallis, Jason	DE	72.25	250	4.66	2.590	30	2.379
7	Lewis, Kevin	DT	73.00	281	4.89	2.589	6	2.621
8	Sandidge, Tim	DT	72.5	272	4.85	2.583	NA	NA
9	Hall, DeAngelo	CB	70.5	200	4.31	2.544	NA	NA
10	Adibi, Nathaniel	DE	75.25	253.5	4.55	2.539	11	2.527
11	Davis, Anthony	OL	76	320	5.07	2.531	31	2.366
12	Nelson, Anthony	OL	75.50	334	5.22	2.525	17	2.454
13	Fatherly, Sam	ROV	70	203	4.39	2.524	49	2.215
14	Suggs, Lee	RB	71.5	201	4.28	2.520	9	2.558
15	Baaqee, Mikal	LB	69.5	222.5	4.65	2.502	26	2.386

Note: all height/weight/40 time data taken from winter/spring 2001 testing. Players displayed in italics were injured during the most recent testing period, and their data are the most recent data available. All data came from BeamerBall.com.

Seven players from last year's top 15 graduated, and seven of the other eight — Colas, Burnell, Robinson, Wilson, Lewis, Adibi, and Suggs — are present in this year's top 15.

The only player to drop out of the top 15 is fullback Marvin Urquhart, who fell to 20th this year. Ironically, Urquhart lost 10 pounds and shaved his 40 time from 5.00 to 4.93, but the result was that his power rating dropped, from 2.504 to 2.439.

Player Notes

Defensive end **Cols Colas** is the reigning power rating champion for the second year in a row, turning in a nearly identical power rating to last year. Colas' height and 40 time are the same as last year, but his power rating dropped slightly because he lost a pound from last year, going from 240 to 239.

Last year, Wayne Briggs and Jarrett Ferguson were right on Colas' heels, but this year, the gap is much wider between Colas and the #2 finisher, **Keith Burnell**. Burnell, who is moving from tailback to rover this spring, increased his weight from 206 to 207.5 and dropped his forty time from 4.28 to 4.21 ... and, believe it or not, lost a full inch of height, from 72 inches (6-0) to 71 inches (5-11).

Vegas Robinson holds steady from last year, and **Joe Wilson** makes a move from #10 to #4, based mainly on dropping his forty time from 4.78 to 4.65.

Posting an incredible improvement is fullback **Josh Spence**, jumping from 34th last year to 5th this year. Spence gained 10.5 pounds, dropped his forty time from 4.56 to 4.51 ... and lost *one and a quarter inches*, from 73.00 to 71.75.

So that's obviously one way to increase your power rating: shrink.

Jason Lallis, moving up from #30 to #6, did not shrink, but he did gain 6 pounds and drop his forty time, from 4.82 to 4.66. **Kevin Lewis** comes in at roughly the same place as last year.

Newcomers from the 2001 recruiting class into the top 15 are **DeAngelo Hall** and **Tim Sandidge**. The coaches have raved about Hall since he signed, and Sandidge's high power rating supports the positive comments they have made about him. They are trailed at #10 by **Nathaniel Adibi**, who makes a slight move from #11 to #10.

Out of the remaining five players in the top 15, Anthony Nelson makes a move into the top 15, and **Sam Fatherly** posts a huge jump from #49 to #13, based on dropping his forty time from 4.60 to 4.39.

Percentage Improvements

Which players made the biggest increase in their power rating from 2001 to 2002? Here are the top 15 in terms of percentage improvements.

Player	2002 Rating	2001 Rating	Percent Gain
Warren, Blake	2.126	1.820	16.8%
Murphy, Jason	2.458	2.145	14.6%
Warley, Carter	1.990	1.742	14.2%
Hall, DeAngelo	2.544	2.254	12.9%
Daniels, Mike	2.103	1.864	12.8%
Humes, Cedric	2.442	2.165	12.8%
Sandidge, Tim	2.583	2.291	12.8%
Clifton, Chris	2.158	1.922	12.3%
King, Jeff	2.218	1.985	11.7%
Pannell, Chris	2.096	1.876	11.7%
Spence, Josh	2.607	2.353	10.8%
Leeson, Nick	2.097	1.893	10.8%
Fatherly, Sam	2.524	2.299	9.8%
Wilford, Ernest	2.267	2.083	8.9%
Lallis, Jason	2.590	2.379	8.9%

Note the high number of young players in this list. Many of them were from the 2001 recruiting class and thus made the expected big improvement from the fall to the spring. In addition to those young players are some older players the Hokies are hoping will step up in the 2002 season: Jason Murphy and Tim Sandidge at DL, Mike Daniels at Whip linebacker, Chris Clifton at QB, and Josh Spence at FB, and Ernest Wilford at WR.

The Data

The data that went into this article are available as a web page or a Microsoft Excel 97 spreadsheet. The data include not just current scholarship players, but walk-ons and members of the 2002 recruiting class (using publicly available data, since the new recruits have not been tested by VT yet).

To see the full list of players ranked by power rating, check out this web page:

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue017/powerratings2002.htm>

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

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue017/powerratings2002.xls>

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

Inside TSL: Flyers, Fliers, and Letters

The webmaster's thoughts, reader feedback, and some hilarious emails. We think.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

A few weeks ago, I ran an article on TechSideline called “Adding Up the Years” that broke down the infamous University of Virginia football recruiting flier that Coach Al Groh handed out to football recruits. The flier claimed 56 years of pro experience for Groh and his staff, and I went through an analysis that showed, in my opinion, that it was closer to 40 years of experience.

(A sidebar: you can use either “flier” or “flyer,” as I did in the article, to refer to the handout. My dictionary says that one definition of “flier” is “a handbill,” and it also says that “flyer = flier.”)

While the decision to run that article may have looked obvious — I run a Virginia Tech web site, and UVa is Tech’s chief rival in recruiting — I put a lot of thought into it. I am always wrestling with the dichotomy of writing as an impartial journalist versus writing material that plays to a very biased audience.

I try to take a journalistic approach to things, remaining fair and neutral, but I’m also aware that scripting things with a pro-Virginia-Tech slant definitely plays to the TSL target audience. The “problem” with writing the article about the UVa flier is that it gives the appearance of an attack against the UVa coaching staff and program, which is most decidedly biased, slanted journalism.

Or is it? I struggled with that question.

But not very long. Ultimately, as I looked at the flier and analyzed it, I thought it was a very interesting story from a pure analysis standpoint, because of the conflicts within. Since when does assisting at a mini-camp, for which some UVa assistant coaches got credit for one year of NFL coaching experience, equate to being the head coach of the Jets, for which Groh got — you guessed it — credit for one year of NFL coaching?

I very quickly realized that I could have my cake and eat it, too — I could write a fair, balanced article that contained no shrill accusations, but instead simply stuck to the facts. So I went ahead with the article.

As I did, I wondered what reaction it would engender among not just the Hokie faithful, but among Virginia fans, who obviously wouldn’t care for the subject matter. Back in October 1998, I ran an article that shrilly wondered where the press coverage was for a post-game incident in which a UVa football player had knocked down a Georgia Tech fan and then assaulted him by jumping on him.

The Cavaliers had just lost a heartbreaker to GT in Atlanta, and in the post-game euphoria of GT fans rushing the field, TV cameras caught a UVa football player knocking a Georgia Tech fan to the ground and then jumping on him. A GT fan later filed a police report saying he had been punched by a UVa football player, but despite this, and despite the video evidence, the media was ignoring the incident.

So I posted a video capture, talked about the incident, and wondered loudly, *Where’s the media coverage?*

Virginia fans didn’t like the article. I recall getting one email from a UVa fan, who was brief and to the point: “Don’t f*** with the Hoos,” he said, and attached a virus. Don’t worry, I wasn’t dumb enough to click on the attachment and run it.

Sheesh.

I wondered if the flier article would bring up a similar reaction, and it did not. I think the article was so analytical and so fact-based that it was hard for even the most diehard UVa fans to (a) ignore its logic; and (b) get mad enough to send me a virus. They didn't even rip me too badly on the Sabre.com message boards.

I did receive two emails that stood out, though, and here they are. First, one that didn't think too highly of the article:

=====
Subject: Adding up the Years
To: will@techsideline.com

You have way too much time on your hands (as I must have for reading that whole article). Maybe you can lend a hand to Virginia and all the other schools who lump experience into the two categories that everybody cares about, playing and coaching. I look forward to reading Virginia Tech's guide and finding out about every detail of their coaches experience. Tech can't leave anything out, as that would be form of dishonest reporting, so if one of the coaches had as one of his responsibilities, collecting towels for an NFL team, it needs to be listed.

Living in Virginia, I like, respect and support the VA Tech football team, particularly the coaching staff, but articles like the one you wrote go a long way towards turning people like me off.

(Name withheld)
NC State 69

=====

All I can say to that is this: as the General Manager and Managing Editor of a web site that caters to Virginia Tech fans, the fact that I upset an N.C. State fan registers about a 0.0001 on my personal Richter scale. The dishes don't even tremble in the china cabinet.

The other email that stood out was this one:

=====
To: will@techsideline.com
Subject: Great Job

Will:

Your article on the Virginia flyer was one of the best independent (ACC-related) news articles I've seen in a long time.

You did a lot of research, stuck to the facts, didn't take unnecessary shots at Virginia and even gave UVa the benefit of the doubt in certain situations. I've always thought that approach carries infinitely more weight than the usual mean-spirited accusations and exaggerations many use to attack their rivals.

Congratulations on a job well-done.

Sincerely,
Dave Glenn
Editor, ACC Sports Journal

=====

That's high praise, folks. How high? Well, the ACC Sports Journal isn't a fly-by-night web site. It's a hardcopy subscription publication that has been published uninterrupted for the last 23 years. And at the bottom of Dave Glenn's email was the following bio information:

The ACC Area Sports Journal staff is led by award-winning editor and lead writer Dave Glenn, who has covered the league for 15

years. Glenn is the author of seven ACC-related productions/publications, including "Royal Blue: The History of Duke Basketball" (Raycom), "Tar Heels On Tape" (Village Companies) and "The History Of The ACC Tournament" (Raycom). Glenn also has contributed to the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Durham (N.C.) Herald-Sun, the Chapel Hill (N.C.) News, The Sporting News, the ACC Basketball Yearbook, the ACC Football Yearbook, the ACC Basketball Handbook, Lindy's Annuals, Athlon Annuals, College Sports magazine, Carolina Court magazine, The Wolfpacker, Cavalier Corner, Basketball News, the Prep Stars Recruiter's Handbook, PrepStars.com, accsports.com, goheels.com, acctoday.com and many other publications.

Wow. For somebody with that background to compliment me ... wow.

Feedback on "Is Change Afoot?"

Enough back-slapping, though. Let's move on. On February 21st, I ran an article titled "Is Change Afoot for the Hokie Offense?" that talked about Virginia Tech's growing reputation for having a poor passing team and for not developing quarterbacks for the NFL. I philosophized that VT might be getting ready, under new Offensive Coordinator Bryan Stinespring and new QB Coach Kevin Rogers, to add some passing spice to Tech's run-oriented offense.

To be honest, I wasn't happy with the article. It was pretty good, but I felt as if I was not clear on some points. And the following email, which is a bit long but is very interesting and informative to read, confirmed that I indeed had not done a good job of expressing myself. It's from a Nebraska fan. I have edited it for length by removing some comments about Nebraska and their offense.

=====
 Subject:Comments on 2/21 column
 To: will@techsideline.com

Will,

A friend of mine who is a huge VT fan sent me a link to your column this week. Since I do pay attention to Tech football I read it with interest and I have a few comments.

First, I happened to hear an interview with Patrick Dosh on the Greg Roberts (radio) Show, which originates out of Roanoke, on the day he verbaled to VT. In his comments to Roberts, I think Dosh answers your question about the future of the VT offense. Dosh stated that "it was obvious" that Bryan Stinespring had opened up the offense some already in the bowl game vs. FSU and that in his conversations with Stinespring after Bustle was hired at, if I recall correctly, Louisiana-Lafayette, he was told that Stinespring had plans to significantly open up the offense with a passing game that at least impressed Dosh enough that he initially chose VT. So, I believe that, depending on who emerges as the 2002 VT quarterback, the VT offense will open up significantly from the 2001 version.

My second point is that I completely disagree with your contention that VT needs to implement a more balanced offensive system and "the Hokies may be reaching their glass ceiling in terms of development." I'm a Nebraska fan and have been since I was born in Lincoln in the mid 1970s. Comments such as yours exactly mirror comments made by disgruntled Husker fans and col-

umnists after yet another bowl loss in the 1980s and early 1990s and were proven wrong three different times in the mid 1990s.

The problem that I saw out of VT this past season was that their offensive play calls simply were extremely predictable and designed to not lose the game rather than to win it. That is game planning and coaching, and in my opinion, Bustle's doing, not a flaw in the philosophy of "run first." Nebraska proved in the 1990s that you do not have to pass often to win National Championships. In 1997 against Tennessee, Nebraska was 9 for 12 passing for only 125 yds.

The difference is that Nebraska did not turn the ball over repeatedly and also rushed 68 times for 409 yds. Tennessee threw the ball 35 times, completing 25, for 187 yds and 1 pick. The difference is they could not rush the ball nor stop Nebraska's rushing game, the result was a blowout.

In 1995 vs. Florida Nebraska threw 15 times, completing six, for 105 yds and 1 pick. The Gators threw that game 38 times, completing 20 for 297 yds. The difference is the Gators threw three picks and were held to -28 rushing yards on 21 attempts while the Huskers piled up 524 yds which resulted in one of the biggest blowouts in college football bowl history (62-24).

My point is that a team does not have to pass a lot to win a National Championship, a team must pass effectively or in the case of Oklahoma and a team like Florida, run effectively, to win a National

Championship. The problem with VT this year against Miami and, in some situations against FSU, is that Grant Noel simply was not effective and thus forced VT into being one dimensional, and you can't win a game against a high quality D-IA opponent that way unless you get extremely lucky, or, as is the case with VT in a lot of games, the special teams and defense score points to bail out an inept offense.

I think VT is doing a fine job with their program given the fact that Frank Beamer has taken the Hokies from not even contending for a conference title to contending for a National Championship just a short time ago while routinely contending for a Big East title and a BCS bowl bid. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water, such radical changes aren't always necessarily needed, what's needed is patience.

Sincerely, Chris Martin

=====

The key line in Chris's email is this one: "... a team does not have to pass a lot to win a National Championship, a team must pass effectively."

That's really what I meant to say in my article and failed to say clearly. VT's problem this past season (and in 1997 and 1998) is not that they didn't fill the air with footballs — it's that they didn't pass effectively when they needed to.

By contrast, in 1999, the Hokie offense was very effective passing the football. Michael Vick only threw 9 times against Virginia, for example, but he completed 7 of them for 222 yards and a touchdown. That's effective, and it wasn't the only time Vick totally smoked a defense on just a few throws. Ditto Jim Druckenmiller.

So I didn't mean to advocate implementing a bunch of four-wide and five-wide receiver sets and going pass-happy. I meant to say that VT simply needs to pass more effectively than they have historically.

Um ... What?

Lastly, while we're passing on emails, let's throw in a few doozies.

One of the key aspects of our business, of course, is customer service. With TechLocker.com, TSL Extra, the message boards, and TSLMail in our suite of offerings, we of course wind up getting a lot of email related to shopping, subscribing, and posting problems.

And like any customer-service oriented organization, some of the emails we get are whoppers. Here's a sample of a few emails we've gotten that left us scratching our heads in bewilderment and laughing at the same time. Please note that although I print my responses here, I didn't actually send them out, they're just included here for your entertainment value.

=====
To: will@techsideline.com
Subject: why cant i compost messages on your boards?

I applied for a password and it was emailed to me. But i cant sign in, i like going on to the message boards for discussion. I dont think its fair that you only allow certain people. It makes you and the tech fans look one dimensional. You should allow other fans of other teams to voice there opinion. If they prove they cannot follow directions or rule regarding the web site then you should kick them off. It makes it look like you and your fans cant take criticism or anything else for that matter.

Hopefully you will allow people to apply. Or if not take the registration off, because its not fun for somebody to do it and not see anything.

thanks,
(name withheld)

P.S. No offense but i was reading all of your picks, and if I was betting on a game I would not ask you to be a consultant, you were wrong in all of VT's big games. You cant let your feelings for your team get in the way of a pick, it makes you lose your credibility. if you ever want to make it big, you got to prove your unbiased.

=====

Oh, look a credibility lecture from someone who ... oh, never mind. He's got a point. I did pick Miami to drill Tech 35-17, and look what happened ... the Canes only won by two points. Back to the maroon drawing board, with my orange chalk. — Will

=====
To: will@techsideline.com
Subject: every time

everytime i try to sign on it gives me crapp== i use the same password for manythings do i know thats not it- so what is the deal

=====

Sigh. – Will

=====
Subject: I need URGENT help.
To: will@techsideline.com

I'm constantly getting emails saying that i am sending them emails when i am not, most of the time i send emails through my hotmail ac-

count and ONLY use aol for personal friends, can you please tell me WHY this is happening and HOW i can fix it because people are yelling at ME for it when i don't even know whats going on. All i know is if they return my email its entitled "Hey There". I'm teirrified to think that i might of signed up or SOME-ONE has signed me up on some porn site and if so i want OFF IT NOW! This has been done without my consent and i want a reason why and how to get out of it. Please email me back as soon as you can before ANY of these stupid lil emails wind up on one of my aol friends email folders.

Yours Sincerly
(name withheld)

=====

Yes. Yes, you're right. You do need urgent help.
— Will

A Note About Last Month's Contest

Last month, I offered a \$75 TechLocker.com shopping spree to the person who could guess how many message board posts and how many page views were registered on the day that Justin London and Mike Imoh committed to UCLA and VT, respectively. The numbers had been posted on the message board, I said, but that post was gone, so unless you had a really good memory, you would have to guess.

Wrong. The exact numbers were posted in TSLMail #17, not the message board.

Of course, one of the contest submissions (there were only about 30, from TSL Extra's subscriber base of nearly 1,500 subscribers) "guessed" the figures exactly: 438,125 page views, and 2,904 message board posts.

Someone else got very close on the page view totals, which makes me wonder if they looked up the TSLMail and fudged it, because "guessing" exactly kind of gives away the fact that you looked it up elsewhere (a trick that the UVa students who were caught cheating in the "How Things Work" class don't seem to grasp. If you're going to copy your friend's term paper, don't COPY THEIR PAPER, know what I mean?).

Hmm, what to do, what to do? I would feel silly giving the \$75 shopping spree to someone because of their research skills instead of guessing skills ... or maybe not. Maybe I should reward that person for being the only one out of about 1,500 who remembered the TSLMail.

See you next month.

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