

TSL Extra

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On the Cover
Photo of Ben Taylor poised to strike in the 2001 Virginia game. Photo taken by Michael Ingalls of TheSabre.com. Cover photo copyright 2002 Maroon Pride, LLC.

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Dear Readers:

The other day, I received an email from a reader who complained to me that TechSideline.com “had no news” on it lately. I checked my calendar and thought to myself, “Yep ... right on time.”

Those emails start coming in this time of year, about a month after spring football has ended and the Hokie fan base starts to realize that there’s nothing going on and nothing to talk about. There are always a few readers who, without realizing it, blame this circumstance on the newspapers and Internet sites and send an email wondering why there aren’t any stories about the Hokies.

Hey, we didn’t create what my friend Jim Alderson calls “The Dead Zone,” folks; we’re just the victims of it.

I hate this time of year. I suppose it’s necessary, so that everyone can slow down and recharge their batteries, but it’s awfully boring, and usually, the only news is bad news. Have you seen the ESPN.com college football home page lately? It’s all stories about football players breaking the law and universities breaking the rules, as it always is this time of year. It always gives me flashbacks to that hideous summer of 1996, when it seemed that Tech football players couldn’t step outside their apartments without getting arrested en masse.

So at this time of year, we all sit here with nothing to do. Everyone except the Tech coaches, that is, who are traveling all over the state and all over the mid-Atlantic region, recruiting players.

Which brings us nicely to the point of this issue: recruiting content. For a mid-May issue, we’ve got lots of recruiting stuff for you, including the complete list of players who attended the Tom Lemming photo shoot in Blacksburg on May 5th, our first-ever TSL ranking of in-state players, and profiles of Fred Lee, Xavier Adibi, and Michael Malone.

On the football, non-recruiting side of the ledger, we’ve got (yet another) spring football wrapup, and we award the first of what we hope will be many TSL Extra Defensive Player of the Year awards.

Throw in a couple of other articles, and we have an issue that is surprisingly robust, given that it is being produced squarely in the middle of the Dead Zone. I get a feel for TSLX issues as they’re getting ready to go to press, and I like this one.

I hope you do, too. Enjoy issue #19.

Will

The Lemming List

We bring you the list of players who attended the Tom Lemming photo shoot earlier this month.

by Will Stewart, *TechSideline.com*

Early this month, one year after Hokie fans were enraged by recruiting analyst Tom Lemming's photo shoot in Charlottesville, the Tech coaching staff welcomed Lemming to Blacksburg for a similar shoot. The shoot was held on Sunday, May 5th under beautiful, sunny skies, and by all accounts was a big success.

Lemming, who produces his own recruiting publications and covers recruiting for ESPN, conducts a number of photo shoots each year in which he gathers top prospects from a region to a college campus in order to take some shots of all the players for his publications. Last year, he was contacted by UVa coach Al Groh about doing a shoot in Charlottesville, and Lemming shot pictures of the top prospects from the state of Virginia on UVa's campus on May 12th, 2001.

The move was a smart and aggressive one by Groh, and although there were many reasons why UVa's recruiting class ended up being so highly rated, the photo shoot, which gave top prospects the chance to get together and talk and be wooed by Groh and company, certainly contributed to the Cavaliers' recruiting success. 25 players attended the shoot, and 12 signed with UVa. Five signed with Tech.

The photo shoot rankled Tech fans, who (to put it nicely) questioned Lemming's involvement in the shoot and his constant hyping of Virginia's recruiting class throughout the fall and winter. Lemming wound up ranking UVa's class #5 in the country, and while others also gave their

class a high rating, Lemming rated it higher than everyone else.

The whole process seemed sordid to Hokie fans and turned many of them against Lemming. But recruiting often makes strange bedfellows, and the Hokie coaching staff, instead of throwing darts at Lemming, embraced the idea of doing a similar photo shoot at Blacksburg this year. Lemming was quoted by the Richmond Times-Dispatch the day before last year's UVa shoot as saying, "I talked to [Virginia Tech coach] Frank Beamer today, because they were concerned it was all for Virginia. I told him, 'I'll do it at Virginia Tech next year.'"

Lemming stayed true to his word. Led by new Tech QB Coach Kevin Rogers, who knew Lemming from Rogers' days at Notre Dame, Tech set up a photo shoot in Blacksburg with Lemming and held it May 5th, nearly one year after the UVa shoot.

It was a beautiful, sunny day in Blacksburg, and the Hokies pulled out all the stops. Tech coach Frank Beamer and Tech President Charles Steger spoke to the recruits, and the VT coaching staff pulled aside approximately half of the assembled players (along with family members that were accompanying them) and spoke with them one-on-one.

The recruits got a tour of the Merryman Center (including Legends Hall and the weight room), the Tech practice fields, Lane Stadium, and the Virginia Tech campus.

The photo shoot paid almost immediate dividends, as the Hokies accepted a verbal commitment from Centreville High School (Clifton, VA) offensive lineman Matt Welsh the following Tuesday. Welsh, the #3-rated player in the state by Doug Doughty, had attended the VT Spring Game and liked the Hokies before the photo shoot, but apparently, being on campus that day pushed him over the edge into committing.

2002 TOM LEMMING PHOTO SHOOT ATTENDEES (46 OF 48 PLAYERS)

IN-STATE PLAYERS (ROANOKE TIMES [RT] TOP 25)

RT RANK AND NAME	POS	HT	WT	HIGH SCHOOL	TOWN
1. XAVIER ADIBI	DE/FB	6-3	215	HAMPTON - PHOEBUS	HAMPTON, VA
2. VINCENT HALL	LB	6-1	230	WESTERN BRANCH	CHESAPEAKE, VA
3. MATT WELSH	OL	6-5	275	CENTREVILLE	CLIFTON, VA
5. KENNY LEWIS, JR	RB	5-9	185	GW-DANVILLE	DANVILLE, VA
6. BRANDON BROWN	RB/DB	6-1	190	GALAX	GALAX, VA
7. VERNON HAMILTON	WR	6-1	180	BENEDICTINE	RICHMOND, VA
8. EDDIE PINIGIS	OL	6-8	285	JEFFERSON FOREST	LYNCHBURG, VA
9. BARRY BOOKER	FB/LB	6-3	240	AMHERST COUNTY	AMHERST, VA
10. NOAH SUTHERLAND	DE	6-5	245	FLOYD E. KELLAM	VIRGINIA BEACH, VA
11. BRETT WARREN	LB	6-2	205	CENTREVILLE	CLIFTON, VA
12. PHILIP BROWN	CB	5-11	185	HAMPTON - PHOEBUS	HAMPTON, VA
13. FLORELL KISSEE	OL/DL	6-3	275	GAR-FIELD	WOODBIDGE, VA
14. CHRIS ELLIS	DE	6-5	230	BETHEL	HAMPTON, VA
15. ROY NORFLEET	RB/LB	6-0	200	WESTERN BRANCH	CHESAPEAKE, VA
20. ISAIAH GARDNER	RB	5-11	185	SALEM	VIRGINIA BEACH, VA
25. JOHN HEDGE	K	5-11	175	PULASKI CO.	PULASKI, VA

OTHER IN-STATE PLAYERS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

CHASE ANASTASIO	RB/DB	6-1	170	ROBINSON	FAIRFAX, VA
MARSHAL AUSBERRY	OL	6-5	311	WEST SPRINGFIELD	SPRINGFIELD, VA
DUANE BROWN	TE/DE	6-5	250	HERMITAGE	RICHMOND, VA
ROBBIE CATTERTON	WR/DB	6-3	185	KELLAM	VIRGINIA BEACH, VA
ALBERT CHILDRESS	OL	6-5	275	GRUNDY CO.	GRUNDY, VA
ALONZO COLEMAN	RB	5-11	188	HALIFAX CO.	SOUTH BOSTON, VA
MELVIN FAULK	NA	NA	NA	FRANKLIN	FRANKLIN, VA
GREG JACOBS	DL/OL	6-3	255	FORK UNION M.A.	FORK UNION, VA
TONY JENKINS	DL	6-2	205	WEST SPRINGFIELD	SPRINGFIELD, VA
AUSTIN JOHNSON	LB	6-3	205	RIVERHEADS	STAUNTON, VA
JOHN KINZER	TE	6-4	235	ROBINSON	FAIRFAX, VA
TOMMY LLOYD	TE	6-5	220	RIVERHEADS	STAUNTON, VA
JOSH MABE	QB	6-3	210	APPALACHIA	APPALACHIA, VA
NICK MARSHMAN	TE/DL	6-6	258	TURNER ASHBY	BRIDGEWATER, VA
FONTEL MINES	WR	6-4	205	HERMITAGE	RICHMOND, VA
DJ PARKER	WR	NA	NA	HAMPTON - PHOEBUS	HAMPTON, VA
CHARLIE PORTERFIELD	DT	6-5	283	ROBERT E. LEE	SPRINGFIELD, VA
CARLTON POWELL	DT	6-3	260	GREAT BRIDGE	CHESAPEAKE, VA
KORY ROBERTSON	DE	6-4	270	MAGNA VISTA	RIDGEWAY, VA
BLAKE SHUBERT	LB	6-0	225	ROBINSON	FAIRFAX, VA
JOHN TAYLOR	RB/LB	6-1	210	L.C. BIRD	RICHMOND, VA
EMANUEL TURNER	LB	6-3	230	AMHERST COUNTY	AMHERST, VA

OUT-OF-STATE PLAYERS

DONALD BROWN	CB	NA	NA	FREEDOM	MORGANTON, NC
CHRIS JEFFERSON	WR	6-3	165	FREEDOM	MORGANTON, NC
CHRIS HAWKINS	QB/ATH	6-3	185	SOUTHERN VANCE	HENDERSON, NC
JOHN INMAN	OL	6-4	305	THE WEBB SCHOOL	BELL BUCKLE, TN
VINCENT REDD	LB/TE	6-6	245	ELIZABETHTON	ELIZABETHTON, TN
JOEY RAZZANO	FB	6-0	230	MILFORD	MILFORD, OH
OMAR HASHISH	LB/DE	6-3	225	DE MATHA	HYATTSVILLE, MD
JOHN SHAW	DT	6-4	275	SPRING GROVE	SPRING GROVE, PA

The photo shoot also was directly responsible for Tech's second commitment of the 2003 recruiting class, DE Kory Robertson from Magna Vista High School (Ridgeway, VA). Robertson had never seen Tech's campus when he attended the photo shoot, and he liked it enough that when the Hokies extended their scholarship offer about ten days later, he immediately accepted it. There is no question that Robertson's attendance at the photo shoot was a big factor in his commitment.

The List

In addition to Welsh and Robertson, 46 other players attended the photo shoot. That's a total of 48 players — BeamerBall.com reported 46 players, but Doug Doughty and other sources said there were 48. The large majority of them were from the state of Virginia, and yes, we managed to get our hands on the complete list of players

Or at least most of them. Our list is 46 of the 48 players. You might wonder if perhaps the 48 quoted by some sources is an error, but no, we have been told that two of the players' names are not being revealed, and their identities are being guarded as closely as nuclear weapons secrets. Okay, bad example, but they *are* being kept under wraps.

The list we got included 38 players from Virginia, 3 from North Carolina, 2 from Tennessee, 1 from Ohio, 1 from Maryland, and 1 from Pennsylvania. 14 of the top 15 juniors in Virginia on Doug Doughty's list were there, and 17 of top 25.

The complete list of players appears on the facing page. We'll highlight a few of them in the following text. There's no rhyme or reason for talking about the players we're going to talk about, so don't read anything into it.

In-State Players from Doughty's Top 25

1.) Xavier Adibi, DE, 6-3, 215, Phoebus High

School, Hampton

Xavier is, of course, the brother of current VT defensive end Nathaniel Adibi. He is profiled elsewhere in this issue, and in that profile, he names VT and Maryland as co-leaders, but on Rivals.com three weeks ago, he gave VT a slight lead over Maryland. Virginia has not offered yet, but an offer is "imminent," according to one report. Adibi made Lemming's early Top 100 list on ESPN.com as a linebacker.

2.) Vince Hall, LB, 6-1, 230, Western Branch High School, Chesapeake

Hall is this year's stud in-state linebacker, and he joins Adibi as one of only two players from the state of Virginia to make Lemming's Top 100 list. Hall has already eliminated Virginia from consideration and has named Tech and Tennessee as co-leaders, with a large pack of schools following close behind. Rated the #1 player in South Hampton Roads by the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot.

3.) Matt Welsh, OL, 6-5, 275, Centreville High School, Clifton

Welsh is a Virginia Tech commitment and one of just three OL's the Hokies have offered a scholarship to (Tripp Carroll out of Charlotte, NC — who favors the Hokies and is one of the top players in North Carolina — is the second, and Marshall Ausberry from West Springfield High in Springfield, VA, is the third).

4.) Kenny Lewis Jr., RB, 5-9, 185, GW-Danville High School, Danville

Lewis is the son of former Hokie running back Kenny Lewis. The Hokies have not yet offered Lewis, and it's not clear if they will, but Lewis favors Tech. He has no offers at this point.

8.) Eddie Pinigis, OL, 6-8, 285, Jefferson-Forest, Lynchburg

At this point, Pinigis has not been offered a

scholarship by the Hokie coaches, but a lot of college coaches like him and his potential.

10.) Noah Sutherland, DL, 6-5, 245, Kellam High School, Virginia Beach

Sutherland so far has been offered a scholarship by East Carolina, but no one else. Virginia, Virginia Tech, and Maryland are also recruiting him. Rated the #2 player in South Hampton Roads by the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot.

11.) Brett Warren, LB, 6-2, 205, Centreville High School, Clifton

The Hokies have offered Warren, the brother of current Hokie Blake Warren, a scholarship, and according to Rivals.com, Tech is the only school to offer so far. Warren is reportedly a very, very heavy Tech lean at this point.

12.) Philip Brown, CB, 5-11, 185, Phoebus High School, Hampton

The Hokies lead for Brown, who is by far the best cornerback in the state and who has prototypical cornerback size in the mold of Ike Charlton and DeAngelo Hall. The Hokies lead over Maryland, Virginia (his only other offer besides VT), and WVU.

14.) Chris Ellis, DE, 6-5, 230, Bethel High School, Hampton

The Hokies are very high on Ellis at defensive end and feel that he is underrated. Tech recently offered Ellis a scholarship, and the Hokies lead for his services, over a pack of teams that includes Virginia (also offered), Maryland, Syracuse, Georgia, Notre Dame, and East Carolina.

15.) Roy Norfleet, RB/LB, 6-0, 200, Western Branch High School, Chesapeake

Norfleet's only offer at this point is from ECU, and at this point, that makes them his favorite, over a pack of schools that includes VT and

UVa. Rated the #3 player in South Hampton Roads by the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot.

20.) Isaiah Gardner, RB, 5-11, 185, Salem High School, Virginia Beach

Gardner's stock is rising fast, and according to a recent article in the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, the Hokies have offered him a scholarship. If Virginia Tech truly did make an offer, then it was very recent, because our Tech recruiting sources say that as of last week, Gardner had not been offered by VT. Rated the #4 player in South Hampton Roads by the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot.

Other In-State Players of Note

The Hokies have offered scholarships to:

DB Chase Anastasio (6-1, 170, Robinson HS, Fairfax)

OL Marshall Ausberry (6-5, 311, West Springfield HS, Springfield)

TE/DE Duane Brown (6-5, 250, Hermitage HS, Richmond)

TE John Kinzer (6-4, 235, Robinson HS, Fairfax)

TE Nick Marshman (6-6, 258, Turner Ashby HS, Bridgewater)

DT Carlton Powell (6-3, 260, Great Bridge HS, Chesapeake)

Out-of-State Players

QB/ATH Chris Hawkins, 6-3, 185, Southern Vance HS, Henderson NC: The Hokies like Hawkins as a QB and have offered him a scholarship.

LB/TE Vincent Redd, 6-6, 245, Elizabethton HS, Elizabethton, TN: Elizabethton is Shawn Witten's high school. Redd has a VT offer and made Lemming's early Top 100 list as a defensive lineman.

FB Joey Razzano, 6-0, 230, Milford High School, Milford, Ohio: The son of former Hokie and former Cincinnati Bengal Rick Razzano,

Joey has a VT offer (along with at least four other schools) and has named the Hokies and Ole Miss (where his brother is) as his co-leaders. He is the top fullback in Ohio and was named as the #25 player in the state of Ohio by G&W Recruiting.

DT John Shaw, 6-4, 275, Spring Grove High School, Spring Grove, PA: Shaw is one of VT's top defensive tackle targets, if not *the* top DT target. He made Lemming's Top 100 list as a defensive lineman.

The TSL Extra Top 40

Finally, after all these years, we break down and bring you a ranking of in-state prospects.

For years, people have suggested that I do a ranking of the top players in the state of Virginia. I always laughed off the suggestion, because I am wholly unqualified to do such a ranking. Historically, I have not followed recruiting close enough to be able to do a ranked list justice.

But as we move through the late spring and early summer, we work on revamping our recruiting database, and one of the fields that will be added to the new database is a ranking, for in-state players only, assigned by TSL.

So although I'm not qualified to do a ranking, I had to find someone who was by the time the database is revamped.

As fortune would have it, I was conversing with recruiting junkie HokieJeff the other day, and he told me in conversation that he was putting together a Top 25 list. Hmm, I thought, what an opportunity. One thing led to another, and HokieJeff agreed to put together not just a Top 25, but a Top 40, and to put it together for TSL.

He did it with input from some other recruiting junkies (message board posters TCB007, Hokie83, and HOKIE MAGIC), all of whom are not comfortable being called "gurus," and who don't purport to be the end-all and know-all of football recruiting. But these guys pay some serious attention to VT recruiting and in-state recruiting, so they're not just throwing darts at a wall.

HokieJeff put together a list and ran it by the

others, who moved players up and down. And voila, welcome to the first-ever TSL Extra Top 40 list of in-state players (the list is on the next page). Hold it up, examine it, slice it, dice it, flip it, slap it, and rub it down. Like all recruiting rankings, it's not meant to be a bible, just a launching point for discussion.

Jeff and company ranked the in-state recruits according to the following criteria:

- 1) number and quality of offers (please note that listed schools are not offers per se, only schools of interest);
- 2) player evaluations from members of the college coaching profession;
- 3) upside potential based on size, weight, and speed;
- 4) results of Nike or regional combines.

You'll note that five players tied for number 40. All possess the potential to be in the top 40 in Virginia; however, there was not a clear method of distinguishing one from the other at this point.

TSLX readers, please note: unlike most pay TSLX material, we will not prohibit you from reproducing this info on our message boards and distributing it freely. Later this summer, when our new recruiting database is launched, the TSL Top 40 will be officially announced and will be incorporated into the database and will be publicly available free material. We simply wanted to give you a first look at it here in the pages of TSL Extra, but beyond this setting, do with it what you wish.

The TSL Extra Top 40 (May 22, 2002 edition)

TSL					RT		Interest	
Rank	Player	Pos.	Ht	Wt	Rank	High School (Hometown)	(not necessarily an offer)	
1	Vince Hall	LB	6'1"	235	2	Western Branch (Ches.)	VT, UT, PSU, MD, UNC, Others	
2	Xavier Adibi	LB-DE	6'3"	215	1	Phoebus (Hampton)	VT, MD, UT	
3	Phillip Brown	CB	5'11"	190	12	Phoebus (Hampton)	VT, MD, UVA, ND, UT, WVU	
4	Matt Welsh	OL	6'5"	275	3	Centreville (Clifton)	VT Commit	
5	Chris Ellis	DE	6'4"	230	14	Bethel (Hampton)	UVA, VT, ECU, UGA, Others	
6	Marshall Ausberry	OL	6'5"	311		W. Springfield (Springfield)	UVA, VT	
7	Robbie Catterton	ATH	6'3"	195		Kellam (Va Beach)	ND, UVA, VT, Clem., Others	
8	Duane Brown	J ATH	6'5"	250		Hermitage (Richmond)	FL, FSU, Mia, VT, UVA, Others	
9	John Kinzer	TE	6'4"	235		Robinson	VT, UVA	
10	Shannon Lane	WR	6'0"	180		Salem (Virginia Beach)	UVA, MD, Mich, VT, Others	
11	Kenny Price	DL	6'4"	260		Kempsville	UVA, UNC, VT, Mich, Others	
12	Kory Robertson	DL	6'4"	270		Magna Vista (Ridgeway)	VT Commit	
13	Nick Marshman	J ATH	6'6"	258		Turner Ashby (Bridgewater)	VT, UVA	
14	Chase Anastacio	CB/S	6'1"	180		Robinson	Stan, Syr, UVA, VT, Others	
15	Barry Booker	J ATH	6'3"	240	9	Amherst County	VT, UVA, NCSU, UNC, MD,	
16	Noah Sutherland	J ATH	6'5"	255	10	Kellam (Va Beach)	MD, UVA, VT, ECU	
17	Brett Warren	LB	6'2"	205	11	Centreville (Clifton)	VT, MD, UVA, UNC, NCSU	
18	Danny Prentice	LB/FB	6'0"	214		Oakton	BC, MD, UVA, VT, PSU, Pitt,	
19	Flordell Kissee	OL	6'5"	285	13	Garfield (Woodbridge)	UVA, VT, Mich, Pitt	
20	Eddie Pinigis	OL	6'8"	280	8	Jefferson Forest (Forest)	VT, MD, WFU, UT, UVA, Others	
21	Isaiah Gardner	RB	5'10"	190	20	Salem (Va Beach)	Mich, Mich St, MD, Others	
22	Kenny Lewis, Jr.	ATH	5'9"	180	5	GW - Danville	VT, MD, Neb, Syr, UT, UVA	
23	Justin Bell	LB	6'2"	225		Mount Vernon (Alexandria)	VT, MD, PSU, UVA	
24	Roy Norfleet	LB/S	6'0"	205	15	Western Branch (Ches.)	Stan, Mich, VT, UVA, Others	
25	Albert Childress	OL	6'5"	271		Grundy	VT, UVA	
26	Carlton Powell	DL	6'3"	260		Great Bridge (Ches.)	VT, MD, UVA, ECU	
27	Vern Hamilton	WR	6'1"	180	7	Benedictine (Richmond)	UVA, VT, MD, DUKE, Others	
28	Travis Johnson	QB	6'2"	185	16	Annandale	AUB, ILL., UVA, VT, Others	
29	Terrel Golden	ATH	6'3"	200		Lake Taylor (Norfolk)	UT, MD, NCSU, Mich, VT, UVA	
30	Fontel Mines	WR	6'4"	211		Hermitage (Richmond)	MD, NCSU, PSU, UVA, VT	
31	John Hamlett	TE	6'5"	260		Jefferson Forest (Forest)	UNC Commit	
32	Jason Mullins	OL	6'4"	280	23	Graham (Bluefield)	UVA, FI, UGA, Mich, VT	
33	Nic Oakley	LB-FB	6'3"	236		Ocean Lakes	Mich, Clem, UVA, VT, Others	
34	Jonathan Allen	ATH	6'4"	220		Tallwood	UVA, VT, Marsh, ECU, Others	
35	Brandon Brown	ATH	6'1"	190	6	Galax	Mich, OK, UVA, VT, WVU, MD	
36	Kalani Heppe	OL	6'4"	270		Liberty (Bealton)	NCSU Commit	
37	Lonnie Starks	CB	5'10"	175	19	Warwick (Newport News)	VT, UVA, Mich, AUB, MD	
38	Charlie Porterfield	OL/DL	6'5"	283		Robert E Lee (Springfield)	ECU, GA, UVA, VT, Others	
39	Emanuel Turner	LB	6'3"	230		Amherst County	VT, FSU, PUR, UVA	
T40	DJ Parker	ATH	6'0"	180		Phoebus (Hampton)	VT, UVA	
T40	Greg Jacobs	DL	6'3"	255		Fork Union	VT, UVA	
T40	Travis Miller	ATH	6'3"	205		Lakeland	UVA, VT, ECU, NCS, MD, WFU	
T40	Akeem Jordan	ATH	6'2"	205	24	Harrisonburg	UNC, FSU, UT, UVA, VT	
T40	Phillip Holloman	CB	5'11"	185		Lake Taylor (Norfolk)	MD, NCSU, UNC	
T40	Alex King	LB-FB	6'2"	235		Western Branch (Ches.)	ECU, MD, UNC, VT, Others	

Note: RT Rank = Roanoke Times ranking of Top juniors in the state as of 12/25/01.

Rankings based on number and quality of offers, evaluation of prospects by college coaches, upside potential based on size/weight/speed, and results of Nike or regional combines.

The Tall and the Short of It

How wide receivers Michael Malone and Fred Lee made their way to Virginia Tech.

by Art Stevens

A favorite mystery novel begins with the sentence, "It was a dark and stormy night."

The author follows with, "I know, I know dadgummit! But it was."

In that vein, we present you with one of the all-time great cliché leads:

Christmas came early for Virginia Tech's football team.

We know, we know, dadgummit.

But it did.

The Hokies looked under their trees (must be artificial if they're still up this time of year) and found a couple of exciting, promising wide receivers.

April 20 was the date of Tech's spring football game. It was also Spring Christmas. What happened that day? For starters, two-time recruit Fred Lee was at the game, and his mother checked the mail at his Harrisburg, Pa., home. The news that Lee had received the necessary test score for freshman eligibility was waiting. After much hand wringing and anxiety, it was official. Lee was in.

That was half of the big payday.

The other came in the form of Michael Malone,

the youngest of the two sons of recent basketball Hall of Fame inductee Moses Malone. For a variety of reasons, Malone was still available at that late date. Though Tech was a long way from his suburban Houston home, it was also close in a way. Moses Malone grew up in Petersburg, Va., and there's plenty of family in the Old Dominion.

Malone decided immediately he wanted to attend Tech, and he'll do so as a walk-on next season. At that point, he was unsure of his eligibility status, but when he arrived home from his weekend at Tech the good news was waiting. Malone got the necessary number and a lot more. He, too, was in.

In one afternoon, a lot of worry about the receiving position was erased. The current crop of receivers had a pretty good day in the spring game, though there's still room for improvement. For the most part, they held on to the ball. That was not always the case during spring drills.

Then, two more were added to the mix.

So there. Christmas did come early. Let's take a look at the two new presents.

A Murky Decision by the Clearinghouse

Lee was not available for comment for this story. It seems that during the time TSLX was trying to reach him, Lee was already on his way to Tech. Eager to get started with his education and his football study, Lee enrolled in summer school. His phone hadn't yet been hooked up, and his parents hadn't yet secured a local cell phone for him.

That's OK. Lee made his feelings about the school clear by twice signing with Tech. Once he didn't qualify, Lee enrolled at Milford (Conn.) Academy. By then, he was a free agent in need of re-recruiting. He had other places to go. Michigan State came after him hard.

But he signed again with Tech. That says plenty.

Those who know Lee say his struggle to qualify is not a sign that he's an academic risk. It's an NCAA Clearinghouse thing.

Lee finished at Bishop McDevitt High with a 2.45 grade point average. He scored a 920 on his scholastic aptitude test. Those aren't knock down the wall academic numbers. They're still pretty good, and good enough for freshman eligibility.

So what happened?

Bishop McDevitt football coach Jeff Weachter explained: The school has three academic tracks – basic, academic and honors. Lee was enrolled in academic, which is a college preparatory track. Grades are weighted differently in each track. An "A" in basic algebra for instance doesn't count as much as an "A" in honors algebra.

That's not uncommon. Most school systems have a weighted grading scale. That's how some students end up with a grade point average of more than 4.0 on a 4.0 scale.

In reviewing Lee's transcript, Weachter said, the NCAA Clearinghouse determined that it would accept weighting for the school's honors courses. But not for the academic courses.

Lee's refigured grade point average was a 2.15. Now, he needed 40 more points on his SAT to qualify.

"The shame of it is," Weachter said, "is that Fred was probably more qualified than half the kids the clearinghouse said were qualified. He had already graduated from here, so he couldn't do anything about the GPA. He went to Milford basically to play football and take some test prep courses.

"He came back here after the semester and went to Sylvan Learning Center for SAT prep. He finally got his required score on the SAT. It

was quite an adventure."

On the field, Lee's two most-recent coaches see nothing but great things ahead.

As a senior at Bishop McDevitt, Lee caught 48 passes for 1,080 yards and 16 touchdowns. Milford doesn't compile season statistics, coach William Chaplick said.

"But one game definitely stands out, against the Bucknell JV," Chaplick said. "He scored four touchdowns. He had eight catches for 237 yards."

Lee played in the Pennsylvania-Ohio Big 33 All-Star game last summer along with Tech's Kevin Jones, who was named the game's MVP. Afterward, Jones said Lee should have won that honor for his five-catch, 135-yard effort. He had a 55-yard touchdown catch and another reception that covered 53 yards.

"Ohio didn't have anyone who could cover him," Weachter said. "He dominated that game. Obviously the two best players there were Fred and Kevin Jones, and there were a lot of good players in that game."

Weachter said Lee had 38 full scholarship offers.

"Going into his sophomore year, he went up to Rutgers for the Nike Combine and ran a 4.37 for 40 yards," Weachter said. "A lot of people have compared him to a Santana Moss. His best attributes are displayed after he catches the ball. We found some ways to get him in one-on-one situations. One-on-one, you'll take Fred most of the time."

Said Milford Academy's Chaplick, "He's one of the best I've seen. When he wanted to play, forget it. He was in his own class. He has some of the best hands I've seen and he's a legitimate 4.3 for the 40. He's the full package. I wouldn't want to be covering him."

Lee isn't big. He's listed at 5-10, 180 pounds. That, Weachter said, is generous.

"He's probably somewhere right around 5-9," Weachter said. "Fred can put on some more muscle. Santana Moss wasn't any taller than 5-9, either. I suppose a really big defender, if he got a very solid hit, could do some damage. You have to get your hands on him first. As fast as Fred is, he's even quicker. People look at size. I don't see it being a problem for him."

Tech is a bit more reserved. Call it the Richard Johnson factor. Johnson, who will be a redshirt sophomore, came to Tech from Baltimore with a reputation as an outstanding receiver and the hope remains that he will become one.

But he caught just four passes as a redshirt freshman, a season in which the diminutive Johnson was dogged by injuries.

Tech is excited about Lee.

"They ought to be," Chaplick said. "Everybody in the country wanted him."

The Hokies are also taking a wait-and-see approach.

"He's awfully good," said a source in the football office. "He has a lot of 'wiggle' and can really make people miss. We think he's going to be good. But it is tough to say if a guy can come in a play right away. He's not real big."

Weachter thinks Lee is further ahead than most incoming freshmen, not all because he spent a year in prep school. Lee's brother Shawn is a former Penn State defensive back, so Weachter said Lee knows what it takes to play on a high level.

"The way they talk, he has a shot to play this year if he learns the offense," Weachter said. "The other thing is, he's a great kick and punt returner."

"Fred is a little more sophisticated than most high school kids coming out. Our pass offense is a little more than most people see. We run a pro style passing offense. He's been working out with a personal trainer to help him get ready. If anybody can step right in and be able to play, it's Fred."

The Tall Guy Flies in Low

Michael Malone definitely flew below the recruiting radar in the east.

"You can probably say the same thing down here," said Steve Van Meter, Malone's coach at Friendswood High.

Several factors contributed to Malone being a relative unknown:

- Malone broke his right leg midway through his junior season, so he missed a huge chunk of time when schools are evaluating.
- Malone also plays basketball – what did you expect with Moses Malone for a father? – and has yet to devote himself fully to football.
- Malone never got around to taking the standardized tests until this calendar year, which turned a lot of schools away. It wasn't that he wasn't able. Just one of those things that didn't get done, Malone said. Once he took the ACT, he qualified with ease.

"He started for us at defensive back as a sophomore," Van Meter said. "He was our leading receiver [as a junior] when he got hurt. Then he came on and had a great year for us as a senior. He never attended a camp because he was in the rehabilitation process. He didn't feel like he was in shape to do a good time for those coaches."

“His stock was not that great here, though he did make some ‘Top 100’ lists in Texas. I think if Michael had his test scores at the appropriate time, he would have had a lot of offers. That’s about the only negative thing I can say about him, and that’s not really a negative.

“If he’d taken it in May [of 2001], he might have had a lot more options. But, you know, this is probably where he would have gone, anyway. He’s pretty excited.”

Malone said Tech was always in the back of his mind.

“I became a pretty big fan of theirs when Michael Vick was playing,” he said. “I knew my dad was from that part of the country. I wasn’t sure I’d get a chance to play there.”

The recruitment of Malone didn’t start until December, late by anyone’s standards. Receivers coach Tony Ball got in touch with Van Meter and the ball started rolling.

“Coach Ball talked to me about that – he said Tech made a living off guys like this, guys who are a little below the radar,” Van Meter said.

Van Meter said Malone caught 46 passes for 805 yards during the regular season. Friendswood played three playoff games, and Malone added another 13 catches for another 237 yards. He had 15 touchdowns total and a long reception of 72 yards.

“He was first team all district and all county, which is a pretty substantial honor, because this county is pretty well loaded with athletes,” Van Meter said.

Malone is 6-5, 205 pounds. He said he’s considering trying to play basketball at Tech, too, but knows he can improve at football with increased concentration on the sport. He’s most eager to attack Tech’s weight program.

“That,” he said, “can really help me.”

Said Van Meter, “In my opinion, Michael is a kid who is going to get faster. You’re looking at a kid who can be a 6-5, 230-pound receiver. Or he can even get up to 250 and play tight end. Just in the work he’s done since the season ended, I’ve seen a difference. When Michael starts spending some serious time in the weight room, it could be unreal.”

Moses Malone got by as much with his tremendous work ethic as he did with skill. Michael Malone is also a worker.

“He was instilled in him,” Van Meter said. “This is a very good kid. His mom is also a very solid individual. You’re talking about a kid who grew up in a celebrity family, yet he’s very grounded. He was a spark for our team. Everybody likes Michael. I think he’s the type of kid who can go off anywhere and be successful.”

Michael’s older brother Moses Jr. has a year of eligibility left as a basketball player at South Carolina State, so Dad will spend a lot of time next year on the east coast. Watching his sons compete has been one of Malone’s joys in his post-retirement years and he’s resisted offers to get into coaching until they were done.

The elder Malone has made preliminary inquiries into purchasing one of the new suites at Lane Stadium. Whether he does that or not, the Hokies have one very tall new fan.

And two very promising new receivers.

Merry Christmas.

Xavier Adibi: Silent but Deadly

A profile of Nathaniel's smooth, hard-hitting brother.

by Kenny Lucas

Xavier Adibi is polite to a fault. He's got a smooth voice and a thoughtful demeanor that allows for a laugh now and then. He talks about a future packed with potential, but fraught with decisions like he's discussing yesterday's rain storm. Smooth and easy is the course. After talking with Adibi, you can't help but feel that everything will be all right.

Unfortunately for opponents of Phoebus High School, Adibi doesn't do much talking on the football field. And getting hit by the 6-3, 215-pounder is a quick ticket to the other side of all right. It's not just that Adibi can propel himself off the line like a sprinter leaving the blocks. Not that he can bench press two normal-sized humans the way Joe Officeworker takes out the garbage. It's more that Adibi has a thirst, a stifling need to get to the quarterback. And once he's there, the meeting is usually quick and one-sided.

"I'm pretty much a defensive guy," Adibi, who also plays fullback for Phoebus, said. "I love defense. I love the thrill of hitting somebody and seeing it in their eyes. When you get that big stick and you see them hurting a bit, that's a big rush."

Adibi is quick to say he's not looking to really hurt anybody. But a message here and there, especially one that may particularly unsettle an opponent, is never a bad thing. Neither was the signal that Adibi sent to college coaches all over the country this past season when he racked up

18 sacks and more than 100 tackles as Phoebus roared to a 13-1 record and the Virginia Group AAA, Division 5 championship. The performance has brought him attention from nearly every big-name program in the country.

"We had goals, but we looked at them as one step at a time," Adibi says. "As for me. I just wanted to go out there and leave it all out there. I knew if I did that, my recruiting stock would go up."

Mission accomplished. Adibi was ranked the top junior prospect in the state of Virginia by Roanoke Times columnist Doug Doughty, and Phoebus coach Bill Dee says that "a bunch of" offers have already been made to rising star. Apparently right now, however, only two have caught Adibi's eye.

"Maryland and Virginia Tech," he says when asked who has offered him a scholarship. "I've been to Tech a lot, but I wouldn't say that they're a leader. They're probably at the top with Maryland. They're tied."

The only other school that Adibi mentions among his favorites is the University of Virginia. He would seem a perfect fit with fellow defensive studs and in-state stars Ahmad Brooks and Kai Parham, except for one thing – UVa has yet to offer a scholarship, as of mid-May.

"I'm looking at UVa, but they haven't offered," he says. "I don't know why, and I'm keeping them up there. I wouldn't really say it bothers me, but it's just something that sticks in the back of my mind, that they didn't offer as early as the other schools did."

Coach Dee says that he's spoken to the UVa coaching staff and a scholarship offer is imminent. "Virginia would look pretty silly not to offer," he says.

Regardless, Adibi doesn't seem too concerned. His confidence is not born of cockiness, but of the knowledge that his hard work on the field

and in the classroom is now paying off. This summer, rather than trying to increase the sizzle in his recruiting Q factor, Adibi is planning to become a fixture in the Phoebus weight room and track.

“I probably won’t do any camps,” Adibi says. “I’m just going to stay here and work on my strength and speed. My brother said camps were more about recognition. If I want to learn more techniques, I’ll just ask my brother.”

His brother is Nathaniel Adibi, a junior defensive end at Virginia Tech, and one of the people whom Xavier says he most looks up to. Xavier says he turns to his brother for advice about issues on and off the football field. That doesn’t mean, however, that Xavier is prioritizing playing with Nathaniel at Tech. “I don’t really care about that (the chance to play with Nathaniel.),” he said. “I just want the chance to play. And the advice Nathaniel gave me is just be nice to everyone and let them know right then and there if you’re interested or not. He says that I should pick my top five as early as possible, so I’m trying to have my five by early summer.”

Those lucky five schools will be seeking a player with a rare mix of strength, speed and athleticism. Adibi benches 350 pounds and says he recently was clocked at 4.4 in the 40. He runs track and has played basketball and used that agility to run for more than 900 yards and 21 touchdowns out of the fullback position last season. Such a unique set of skills have led some observers to list Adibi as anything from a defensive end to a bulked up safety on the college level. Adibi says he would consider any chance to play.

When asked what his favorite position is, Adibi says, “I’m not sure/ And I’ve talked to some coaches who say that’s a good answer. So I’ll just keep it open. I’d say personally though that my strength is my explosiveness. It’s hard for any tackles to stay with me out of my stance.”

It’s that explosiveness, that unquantifiable but

undeniable athleticism, that Dee also mentions. “Nathaniel was a great player and he was probably bigger,” Dee says. “But Xavier is a better athlete. He could play offense in college if he wanted, but he’s a true defensive player.”

Adibi the younger shies from comparing his skills with his brother’s. But he does take a little pride in discussing their accomplishments. This season when Xavier broke Nathaniel’s single-season sack record at Phoebus, the first person he called afterward was his brother. “I called him on the bus and he said he couldn’t believe it,” Xavier Adibi said. “Then he started laughing. You know I’ve won a championship and he never got that, so I tease him about that, too.”

Beneath the teasing however, Adibi appreciates the standard Nathaniel has set. And whether he ends up at his brother’s alma mater or on the campus of one of its arch-enemies, rest assured Xavier will always know where to turn for advice.

“It feels good to know that you have somebody to look to and talk to,” he says.

PrepStar's 1997 Top 100

The lowdown on what happened to the stars of PrepStar's recruiting universe from five years ago.

by Steve Hallock

Anthony Gimino of CBS Sportsline wrote an excellent article earlier this year that updated Prepstar's 1997 Top 100 high school recruits through the 2001 football season, or five years of college eligibility. The article detailed every single Top 100 player's college career, whether or not they were drafted by the NFL, and if so, where.

I took Mr. Gimino's article and updated the data through this year's 2002 NFL Draft. With the exception of one player who gained a sixth year of college eligibility (and another who might), this wraps up every player's college career and shot at the NFL Draft. I then placed the players in six categories:

Drafted by the NFL: 38 players
 ESPN Board/Free Agent/Training Camp: 22 players
 Disappointment/Bust: 23 players
 Health/Grade problems: 12 players
 Baseball: 4 players
 Sixth year of eligibility: 1 player

Since these are the Top 100 recruits as named by PrepStar, the bar is set relatively high for these players as far as defining whether or not they were successful. If they weren't drafted by 2002, made the ESPN board, signed as a free agent, or invited to a training camp in 2001, they were moved to the "disappointment/bust" category. Needless to say, in the NFL Draft, as with high school football players and D-1 schol-

arships, they are drafting/recruiting potential, not past production. Similar to the NCAA basketball tournament, ya gotta draw the line somewhere.

Assuming 10,975 scholarships/year (127 D-1 programs, 85 scholarships per program), and all players using 5 years of eligibility (which doesn't happen, but for purposes of discussion...), that works out to be 2,159 scholarships/year, so the PrepStar Top 100 would be 4.6% of the scholarships offered in a given year.

Looking just at BCS schools (63 schools and 85 scholarships per school), that would be 5,355 scholarship players, or 1,071 annually (5 year assumption), or for the PrepStar 100, 9.3% of the scholarships available.

With respect to recruiting rankings, the results are striking. For D-1 players eligible for the draft, 38% of the PrepStar players were drafted by 2002, versus 12.5% of the eligible players overall (assuming they stay 5 years). This means that the PrepStar Top 100 players were three times more likely to be drafted than non-Top 100 players.

Interestingly, 9 of the 23, or 38%, in the "disappointment/bust" category transferred schools, confirming their status in that category. However, 6 players (Stansbury, Clelland, Danoff, Mast, Barnes, Graham) in this category looked to have had solid college careers, even with the transfer. Conceivably, the % invited to training camp or signed as a free agent could move higher as summer and fall go on.

Here's how the players fell into the six categories — take a look and see how many names you recognize (and keep your eye out for former VT commit Tyrone Robertson. Yes, folks, he did get drafted):

Drafted in either 2001 or 2002 (38 players):

1. Randy Fasani, QB, Stanford
2. Jesse Palmer, QB, Florida
3. Eric Crouch, QB, Nebraska
4. Jamal Lewis, RB, Tennessee

5. Travis Minor, RB, FSU
6. Antoine Womack, RB, UVa
7. Derek Combs, RB, Ohio State
8. Tony Driver, RB, Notre Dame
9. Travis Henry, RB, Tennessee
10. Ken-Yon Rambo, WR, Ohio State
11. Chris Chambers, WR, Wisconsin
12. Reggie Germany, WR, Ohio State
13. Kahil Hill, WR, Iowa,
14. Daryl Jones, WR, Miami
15. Napoleon Harris, TE, Northwestern
16. Kareem McKenzie, OL, PSU
17. Terrence Metcalf, OL, Ole Miss
18. Cosey Coleman, OL, Tennessee
19. Leonard Davis, OL, Texas
20. Victor Rogers, OL, Colorado
21. Maurice Williams, OL, Michigan
22. Andre Gurode, OL, Colorado
23. Andre Carter, DL, California
24. Tyrone Robertson, DL, Georgia, Hinds CC
25. Kenny Smith, DL, Alabama
26. Gerard Warren, DL, Florida
27. Kyle Vanden Bosch, DL, Nebraska
28. Jamal Reynolds, DL, FSU
29. Alex Brown, LB, Florida
30. Andre Lott, DB, Tennessee
31. Renaldo Hill, DB, Michigan State
32. Deon Grant, DB, Tennessee
33. Derrick Gibson, DB, Florida State
34. Marques Tuiasosopo, DB, Washington
35. LaVarr Arrington, Athlete, PSU
36. Bobby Newcombe, Athlete, Nebraska
37. Antwaan Randle El, Athlete, Indiana
38. Darnell Sanders, Athlete, Ohio State

ESPN Board/Free Agent/Training Camp (22 players):

1. Romaro Miller, QB, Ole Miss
2. Levron Williams, RB, Indiana
3. Demontray Carter, RB, Auburn, Troy State
4. Jasper Sanks, RB, Georgia
5. Dominic Rhodes, RB, Texas Tech, Tyler (TX) JC, Mid. TX St.
6. Bruce Branch, WR, PSU
7. Brian Scott, WR, South Carolina
8. Bruce Branch, WR, PSU
9. Kurt Vollers, OL, ND
10. David Warren, DL, FSU

11. Corey Callens, DL, Oklahoma
12. Roylin Bradley, LB, aTm
13. Travis Carroll, LB, Alabama, Florida
14. Kurt Anderson, LB, Michigan
15. DeAngelo Lloyd, LB, Tennessee
16. Billy-Dee Greenwood, DB, UNC
17. Antuan Simmons, DB, USC
18. Joe Walker, DB, Nebraska
19. John Norman, DB, Texas Tech
20. Ifeanyi Ohalete, DB, USC
21. James Whitley, Athlete, Michigan
22. Bobby Jackson, Athlete, Illinois

Disappointments/Busts (23 players):

1. Tim Olmstead, QB, Florida, Vanderbilt
2. Ed Stansbury, QB, UCLA-Ended up at FB, earning honorable mention all-conference in 2001.
3. Cooper Rego, RB, Notre Dame, West Virginia
4. Ravon Anderson, RB, North Carolina, Nassua CC, Rutgers
5. Patrick McCall, RB, Michigan, Oregon State
6. Eric Gooden, RB, Kansas State, Central Oklahoma
7. Steve Shipp, WR, Florida, N. Carolina A&T
8. David Aaron, WR, Texas
9. Julius McMillan, WR, Kansas State, Fort Scott CC, Oklahoma
10. Robert Williams, WR, Miami-2nd string behind TE Jeremy Shockey
11. Jason Brooks, OL, Michigan, West Virginia
12. Carver Donaldson, TE, FSU
13. Michael Barfield, OL, Alabama
14. Lance Clelland, OL, Northwestern-Started the final 23 games of his career. Twenty career starts overall, mostly at guard.
15. Josh Jakubowski, OL, Wisconsin
16. Troy Danoff, OL, UCLA-Three year starter at center. Honorable mention All-Pac 10 in 2001.
17. Ben Mast-OL, Michigan-Started 13 games in career.
18. Derrick Jones, DL, Maryland
19. Muskingham Barnes, DL, LSU-Started 22 games in his career. Had 2 sacks last season.
20. Marco Hutchinson, DL, South Carolina
21. Ron Graham, DL, PSU-Career totals of 122

tackles, five sacks

22. Rod Perry, Jr., Athlete, USC

23. Domonique Williams, Athlete, UNC, North Carolina A&T

Health/Grades (12 players):

1. Anthony Saunders, RB, North Carolina

2. Herman Banks, WR, Auburn, Jackson State- Played in four games as DB as true freshman. Transferred to Jacksonville State, but did not qualify academically. Signed in Jan. 2000 to the Tennessee Valley Vipers of Arenafootball2.

3. Neely Page, OL, Clemson

4. Guenter Kryszon, OL, Georgia Tech-Started 16 games as defensive lineman in first 2 seasons, but neck injury ended his career before the 2000 season.

5. Luke Nichols, OL, Baylor

6. Jack Bloom, DL, Rutgers

7. Daryl Bright, DL, Oklahoma

8. Jason Ott, LB, Ohio State

9. Ty Gregorak, LB, Colorado-Promising career ended by knee and should injuries after 1999 season.

10. Austin Kemp, LB, Tennessee

11. Nate Wright, Jr., ATH, Colorado

12. Maleafou MacKenzie, RB, USC - Will petition for a sixth year of eligibility (missed last season due to injuries and death of his father)

Baseball (4 players):

1. Kenny Kelly, QB, Miami

2. Darnell McDonald, RB, Texas

3. Alvin Morrow, TE, FSU

4. Thomas Pittman, DL, Auburn, Florida

Sixth Year of Eligibility (1 player):

1. Daniel Cobb, QB, Georgia, Butler County CC, Auburn-Starter for most of 2001 at Auburn and will battle Jason Campbell for playing time in '02. Was awarded a sixth year of eligibility because he missed two season because of injuries.

Spring Football In a Nutshell, the Sequel

Following up on our pre-spring look at some players.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Two issues ago, just before spring football practice started, we gave you a quick rundown on what players were poised to step into the limelight, which ones were in danger of getting stuck at the bottom of the depth chart, which ones might be changing positions, etc.

Now that spring football is over (*well* over, as a matter of fact), we're going to take the rare journalistic step of following up an article to bring you up to date on how close to reality our feelings and prognostications were.

We'll do it by re-presenting the same material we ran in issue #17, followed by a "Spring Post-Mortem" that brings you up to date. All information about where a player resides on the depth chart is taken from BeamerBall.com depth charts.

Pre-Spring: 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, and LB Vegas Robinson.

Spring Post-Mortem: The wide receiver position came under a lot of heat this spring, due to widespread reports of dropped passes across the board, even a few from the usually sure-handed Witten. As a result, it is unclear whether Wilford, Witten, or Johnson is ready to "step into the limelight."

Johnson had the roughest spring of all. He was expected to win the starting flanker spot, but instead, the coaches kicked off spring practice by moving Witten from split end to flanker, naming him as a co-starter along with Johnson, and then later bumping Johnson down to the #2 spot, where he currently resides behind Witten.

None of the trio acquitted themselves well throughout spring football, and the fact Chris Clifton and Justin Hamilton, newcomers to the position, have been named as co-starters with Wilford and Witten, two guys who have been at their positions for years, speaks volumes. Not to knock Clifton and Hamilton, but the older, more experienced players should have been able to submerge the newbies on the depth chart.

Keith Willis was also served notice early on, as the first spring depth chart had him listed behind both Jared Mazetta and Jeff King. As the spring wore on, the three tight ends jockeyed for position, with Willis finally being named the co-starter with Mazetta. The table is set for Willis, and now he just has to take advantage of his opportunity.

Meanwhile, the spring went well for the quartet of Easlick, Lewis, Baaqee, and Robinson, particularly Baaqee. The coaches thought enough of him to move him from second-string Backer (where he was listed behind Robinson) to first-string Mike, and he locked down the first-string Mike slot and held it through the spring. He was barely mentioned in spring practice reports, although he was praised once for being "all over the field" making tackles.

Like Baaqee, Robinson and Lewis locked down

their positions and are listed as first-stringers heading into the fall. Easlick maintained the top fullback spot all spring, although it remains to be seen what the late-spring move of Cedric Humes to fullback will mean to Easlick.

Pre-Spring: 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

Spring Post-Mortem: The news is not good for any of these guys.

Joe Wilson, a good student and well-liked person who was permanently mired on the fullback (and sometimes DT) depth chart, is transferring away from VT to be closer to his fiancée at Old Dominion.

Rumors of Marvin Urquhart transferring continue to swirl and were even mentioned by Jimmy Robertson of hokiesports.com the newspaper. Adding fuel to the fire is the fact that Urquhart has disappeared from the BeamerBall.com depth chart as of 5/15/02. Look for news about him soon, I would guess.

Nelson, a rising redshirt junior, appears to be a lost cause. He is a mountain of a man who can decimate a defender, but only if he can get locked into him. The problem is that Nelson's feet simply aren't quick enough to truly be effective as an offensive lineman, and it doesn't appear they ever will be.

Buie, another rising redshirt junior, also seems to be a lost cause. He was listed as co-#2 at the Mike spot when spring practice opened, but he slid down the depth chart until he was #4, behind Baaqee, Alex Markogiannakis, and redshirt freshman Jordan Trott. Like Urquhart, Buie is not listed in the May 15th depth chart on

BeamerBall.com, although nothing has been mentioned publicly about him leaving the program. And he has enrolled for summer school, so he is still at Tech.

Sam Fatherly may be a different story. Yes, he is still listed as the #3 Rover behind Billy Hardee and Michael Crawford, but Fatherly was active in scrimmages and even returned one interception 16 yards for a TD. The fact that no other players were moved to the Rover position (Will Hunt, DJ Walton, Keith Burnell, and even Bryan Randall were all candidates) indicates that the coaches, at the very least, are comfortable at this point with Fatherly backing up Hardee and Crawford.

Pre-Spring: 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.

Spring Post-Mortem: Jackson was unable to recover from his multiple knee surgeries, and he has left the program. Provitt, once seen as the next great Whip linebacker, has not come back successfully from last year's knee injury and is currently #3 on the depth chart behind Mike Daniels and Brandon Manning.

Pre-Spring: 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

Spring Post-Mortem: Willis appears to have gotten the message, as he is listed again as the #1 tight end, albeit co-#1 with Mazetta. Richard Johnson did not get the message and is #2 behind Shawn Witten and Justin Hamilton at the flanker spot.

Pre-Spring: 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)

Spring Post-Mortem: Noel successfully held off the three-headed monster of Randall, Clifton, and Hunt, but he was not successful in holding off a knee injury, which may do him in and elevate Randall to the #1 QB spot.

Willis, as mentioned previously, is now a co-#1 with Mazetta. This isn't necessarily an indictment of Willis, because VT has fallen into the habit of playing two tight ends, and perhaps the coaches simply deemed Mazetta worthy over King as being co-#1.

Richard Johnson was overtaken by Witten (and Hamilton). Easlick easily stayed ahead of Josh Spence, but now Cedric Humes presents a new threat to Easlick's job as the top fullback. Humes and Easlick are currently listed as co-starters, despite the fact that Humes' move to fullback was very recent, and he has zero experience at the position.

Meanwhile, at the Stud end position, the race isn't over. Cols Colas and Nathaniel Adibi are listed as co-#1's, so that battle won't be settled until the fall.

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

Spring Post-Mortem: Clifton and Hamilton both moved to WR. Randall fought off Clifton and Hunt at QB, so he stayed put, and Hunt is the coaches' choice for #3 QB, so he wasn't moved, either.

Billy Hardee, Michael Crawford, and Sam Fatherly held down the Rover position well enough that D.J. Walton stayed at cornerback (and Hunt stayed at QB).

What we didn't foresee was the move of Humes to fullback. It appeared that Easlick and Josh Spence had the position shored up, but the coaches appear to be disappointed with Spence (who has done a great job in the weight room, but apparently isn't taking shape on the field) and wanted to get Humes on the field, so they moved Humes to FB ahead of Spence.

We also didn't foresee the eventual move of backup DE Jason Lallis over to the Tackle position. I don't think *anyone* saw that coming before it was announced recently.

Where is Division 1-A Football Headed? Part 2

The restructuring of Division 1-A football continues to take shape.

by Wayne Crump

For those who have read my article in the last TSLX, things have changed drastically in the last several weeks.

- 1) The previous article discussed various NCAA committee recommendations. Those recommendations have been acted on, and passed by Division 1A committees.
- 2) Those same recommendations were changed by the membership prior to passing them.

These major changes will have a significant impact on D1A over the course of the next several years. Changes to the original proposals are:

- 1) Originally there were substantial restrictions on bowl games. There was a minimum attendance requirement, and an increase of the minimum paid to a million a team. Virtually none of this materialized. The bowl situation remains as is. As a matter of fact, the situation just probably got worse. The division recognized yet another 3 bowl games, bringing the total to 28 bowl games. As it stands now, there is the potential in the near future for about 60% of the division to go bowling. I am sure the fans are excited about 4-7 TCU playing a 4-7 Southern Cal team.
- 2) There was to be a requirement for D1A schools to allocate a MINIMUM of 200 full

grants in aide. The smaller private schools petitioned for that to become 200 grants or \$4 million in scholarship money, whichever was lower. That was initially turned down, but then at the last minute was reinstated.

So what are the rules now?

- 1) All D1A schools must demonstrate an average home attendance of 15,000 per game. This will be an audited figure, and must represent actual fannies in the seats, not ticket sales. More on this topic below.
- 2) All D1A schools must schedule a minimum of 5 D1A home games a year, every year. I little tough to do if you are Marshall and are scheduling Virginia Tech at 3 away and no home games. More on this topic below.
- 3) All D1A schools must give a minimum of 78 football grants in aide averaged over a two-year period. A distinct change for schools like Duke and Wake who give somewhere between 52 and 63 per annum.
- 4) All D1A schools must give a minimum of 200 scholarships or \$4 Million in grants in aide in every calendar year. More on this below too.
- 5) All D1A schools must field a minimum of 16 division one sports, at least 8 of which must be women's sports.

Are the new rules cast in stone? Definitely not! If a minimum of 30 schools petition the NCAA, it can now come to a full D1A membership vote. However, to overturn the committee, they will need 73 votes. To make matters worse, both Kent University and the MAC both had representatives on the committee, and they both voted for the change. Without across the board MAC support, I see virtually no way that this can even be brought to a vote, much less overturned.

So what will be the net effect of this change?

Let's look at attendance alone.

I have seen numbers all over the place, especially for the smaller schools. I have actually seen two drastically different attendance figures

on the NCAA site at one time. Why? Well, smaller schools cook/inflate their numbers. I think we all can remember a recent Tech/Temple game in Philly where the attendance was something like 18,000, yet everyone fit between the 40-yard lines, about 10 rows deep.

Look at Virginia's numbers for last year. Are you going to imply that Virginia had almost zero no-shows for their home games? Many schools report ticket sales, not true attendance. This will be the case no more. It will become an audited head count now. This is going to have a drastic effect on schools like Duke, Temple, and Wake Forest whose attendance is rumored to be something like 55-60% of reported numbers.

We can definitely assume that if your current head count is less than 15,000 (cooked or non-cooked), that you certainly can not make the cut. (By the way, if you are checking out the NCAA site, watch their PDF file, there's a LOT of errors in it). We can probably stick a fork in Northern Illinois, Akron, La-Lafayette, La-Monroe, Eastern Michigan, North Texas, Buffalo, Arkansas State, San Jose State, Miami(Ohio), and Kent University (note that they voted for the change). We can stick a fork in them because they are done.

Other schools on the bubble include Idaho, Rice, SMU, Wyoming, Ball State, Nevada, San Diego State, Middle Tennessee, Bowling Green, Duke, Houston and Temple, among others. Some of the schools on the bubble will definitely not make the cut.

Now what about the minimum of 5 Division 1-A home games?

Almost all of the schools above were only able to schedule a total of 5 home games at the most. Many of these matches were against D1AA schools. The following schools definitely fail under that criteria: New Mexico State, San Jose State, Akron, Louisiana Tech, TCU, UCF, and UNLV, among others.

Granted, schools will do what they need to do to stay in, but this isn't going to get any easier, especially for the independents. Michigan just announced that they will no longer play ANY away games, except for Notre Dame and the Big 10 schools. I look for more of this in the future. When the current bottom feeders of the division disappear, how are Navy, Memphis, Houston, and UAB going to get 5 home games a year?

What about 200 grants in aide or \$4,000,000, whichever comes first?

This gets interesting. The private schools can probably get by with 100+ scholarships now, especially if they are going bare bones on football with between 50 and 65 scholarships. The new rules change a lot of things. With 78 football scholarships, a scholarship total in the 100 to 110 range would indicate that you are funding Football, and Men's and Women's Basketball, and little else. Fielding Division 1 sports without scholarships will be like throwing your minor sports to the dogs.

Currently a lot of private schools play a cash flow game where the athletic department gets massive discounts. This does work well at hiding true athletic losses. Now there is an incentive to place that full monetary amount into the athletic column to wipe out that \$4,000,000 obligation, but it will also reveal a LOT of red ink heretofore not obvious to athletic supporters.

Additionally, Title IX is going to have a major effect of the schools in the Duke tuition range. They will be getting by with funding 93 men's scholarships in football and men's basketball, and handing out 13-15 scholarships for women's basketball alone. Other women's sports are going to have to be legally funded. In other words, for schools like Wake, Duke, and Stanford, the \$4 million limit may be a waste of good ink. Their minimum numbers might easily run in the \$6 million plus range. Expenses for some of these smaller D1A schools are going to be taking a rather large leap.

So what comes next?

Life will become problematic for the new bottom feeders. I personally cannot see how small independents could survive. The new bottom feeders of the division, (like Rutgers, Army and ECU), will experience substantial problems in filling the 5 home games. Few, if any, of the remaining division 1A schools are going to want to travel to such places as Memphis, East Carolina, and UAB. In the past they've been able to bribe the bigger schools with several away games and one home game. They then fill their home schedule with the likes of JMU and Citadel. This will no longer be a viable option. A school can handle one, and only one, two-for-one deal at a time.

In closing:

The PAC10, Big10, Big12 and SEC can go about their merry way. For the most part, the Mountain West looks OK. To make sure they have 5 D1A home games, the Mt. West might have to expand, probably taking in the survivors of the WAC. CUSA looks like it will take casualties, as will the MAC. Actually the MAC might just survive, albeit a much smaller conference of perhaps 8 to 10 schools instead of the current 12. The WAC looks done, and CUSA looks to be in trouble. The Big East has one probable casualty in Temple, but they have already confronted that problem. The ACC looks like the lone BCS conference with problems to address in the form of Wake and Duke.

The ACC will have to react. They either have to remove Duke and Wake and add reinforcements, or add reinforcements to shore up Wake and Duke. If the ACC were to expand now, they could come up with a formula that would create a 5 home and 5 away game schedule annually. This would remove the home game problems for their smaller schools. Their primary source of this expansion would probably be the Big East. The probable contenders in this expansion deal would be Miami, Notre Dame, Syracuse, Virginia

Tech and Boston College, (I personally favor Pitt over BC any day). WVU is currently experiencing major athletic problems, which are coming at a most inopportune time.

If the Big East schools stand firm, I think the conference can easily survive as is. However, expansion may be necessary to protect Rutgers and UCONN and get them their 5 D1A home games a year. How that would work out is anyone's guess.

Lastly, let us return to those bowl bids. The new criteria will cut the division from 116 schools down into the 90-105 range. We now have 56 bowl slots to fill. Anyone doing quick math will realize the fact that this broken wheel will need to be fixed in the very near future.

While this move does not reduce D1A to the 84 schools desired by some forces within the division, it is certainly a move in that direction.

The Next Level

One man's definition of the ever-elusive 'next level.'

by Jim Alderson

A favorite phrase of football coaches, especially newly hired ones, is the 'next level.' A school's Athletic Director barely has time to introduce the new guy and explain that things are going to be a lot different than they were under that dud of a predecessor before the coach bounds to the podium and declares that he is just the guy to take Hometown U. to the football nirvana of the 'next level.' I occasionally wonder just exactly what comprises the 'next level.'

The 'next level' can mean different things to different programs. At perpetual conference doormats such as Rutgers, Baylor and Duke, it could be construed to mean actually winning a conference game, or, in Duke's case, winning a game, period. But, since Greg Schiano did not proclaim his goal at Rutgers to "win a Big East game," I assume he had another 'next level' in mind. Probably closer to the real 'next level' were the comments of some area schools that have recently changed coaches, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and NC State, where John Bunting, Chuck Amato, Ralph Friedgen and algroh were quick to define their concepts of the 'next level' as winning championships, both conference and national. Now we're getting somewhere.

I'm not sure winning a conference championship or MNC should be the sole criteria for 'next level' status, however, especially the MNC, won by only seven teams in the last decade: Alabama, Florida State [2], Nebraska [3], Florida, Tennessee, Oklahoma and Miami. That makes for a

pretty narrow definition of 'next level'-ness, and includes one team, Alabama, where the 'next level' currently means one that does not include the Death Penalty.

Possessing a conference championship trophy certainly expands the field, as 28 schools have won them, but that is not a true measure, either, as that list includes Northwestern, which as-tounded the college football universe by winning the Big Ten in 1995 but has usually struggled to post a winning record since, and can hardly be considered to be occupy the highest of the 'next level' levels, and does not include Kansas State, which generally fields pretty good teams, but hasn't managed to yet win the Big XII.

One Measure of Next-Levelness

A 'next level' gauge exists, a rather simple one that can be identified through the BCS and its recent predecessors. Starting in 1993, an arbitrary year, to be sure, but one chosen because that was the year the current configuration began to take shape with the beginning of round-robin play in the Big East and Penn State's entry into the Big Ten, and it's my article.

1993 is also the same year there were four major bowls established, the Sugar, Orange, Fiesta and Rose. I will include the Cotton for the first two years, since the SWC still existed and had not yet had its cream [along with Baylor for political reasons] siphoned off by the Big 8 to form the Big XII. To even be considered for the top 'next level,' it seems reasonable to require that all 'next level' aspirants to have played in one of these games. The participants in those bowls since 1993 are as follows:

Major Bowl Participants, 1993-2000			
Year	Sugar Bowl	Orange Bowl	Fiesta Bowl
1993	West Virginia vs. Florida	Florida State vs. Nebraska	Miami vs. Arizona
1994	Florida State vs. Florida	Nebraska vs. Miami	Colorado vs. Notre Dame
1995	Virginia Tech vs. Texas	Florida State vs. Notre Dame	Florida vs. Nebraska
1996	Florida vs. Florida State	Virginia Tech vs. Nebraska	Penn State vs. Texas
1997	Florida State vs. Ohio State	Tennessee vs. Nebraska	K. State vs. Syracuse
1998	Ohio State vs. Texas A&M	Florida vs. Syracuse	Florida State vs. Tennessee
1999	Virginia Tech vs. Florida State	Alabama vs. Michigan	Tennessee vs. Nebraska
2000	Florida vs. Miami	Florida State vs. Oklahoma	Or. State vs. Notre Dame
Year	Rose Bowl	Cotton Bowl	
1993	Wisconsin vs. UCLA	Texas A&M vs. Notre Dame	
1994	Penn State vs. Oregon	Texas Tech vs. Southern Cal	
1995	Northwestern vs. Southern Cal		
1996	Ohio State vs. Arizona State		
1997	Michigan vs. Washington St.		
1998	Wisconsin vs. UCLA		
1999	Wisconsin vs. Stanford		
2000	Purdue vs. Washington		

That is 38 games over nine years involving 34 different teams. Distributed by number of appearances, they are:

Big Bowls	Team
8	Florida State
7	Florida, Nebraska
4	Miami, Notre Dame
3	Virginia Tech, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Ohio State
2	Syracuse, Penn State, Michigan, Texas A&M, Colorado, Texas, UCLA, Texas, UCLA, Oregon, Southern Cal
1	West Virginia, Maryland, Alabama, LSU, Northwestern, Purdue, Illinois, Texas Tech, Kansas State, Oklahoma, Arizona, Arizona State, Washington, Washington State, Stanford, Oregon State

These 34 teams can be quickly whittled down. First off the list is Texas Tech, which gained a Cotton Bowl invitation in 1994 by virtue of meeting the two SWC requisites that season, having a winning record and not being on NCAA

probation and bowl ineligible.

Other one-hit wonders that can be crossed off on the first cut are teams that got to a major bowl early on and never got close again, a group that includes West Virginia, Arizona, Arizona State, Washington State and the aforementioned Northwestern.

On the flip side are teams that have recently been to the BCS but have yet to demonstrate they have staying power, a group that includes Maryland, LSU, Purdue, Illinois, Stanford, Washington and Oregon State. Alabama has made one BCS bowl between probations, but the NCAA seems determined that it will be quite a while before they are good enough to make another. That leaves Oklahoma and Kansas State among the one-and-done teams, so I will award them 'next level' status.

Looking at the teams that have twice graced the BCS, Southern Cal and Penn State fall under the 'What have you done for me lately?' category, making a top-shelf bowl years ago and finding the going tough since, UCLA yo-yos up

and down the PAC 10 standings, Syracuse has yet to prove it can sustain excellence past one quarterback, and Colorado and Oregon fall under the necessity of proving staying power, as their second appearance was a not-so-recent 1994. The remaining group of double majors are Michigan, Texas and Texas A&M, all teams that are usually pretty good.

Four teams have made three trips to the BCS promised land. Ohio State, once a stalwart, has slipped a bit recently, and while new coach Jim Tressel looks promising, he hasn't gotten them there yet, so they are off the list. Wisconsin slipped last year, but Barry Alvarez has spread his three BCS bowls out over seven years and is usually pretty good, so I will anoint the Badgers 'next level' status, at least for another year. Tennessee's three BCS bowls all came in a row from 1997-99, but the Vols are always very good and Phil Fulmer seems to finally have his Visor problem licked. Virginia Tech slipped slightly last year, but Frank Beamer has taken two separate groups of players to the BCS and the Hokies have become regular fixtures in the national rankings, and, as I mentioned earlier, it's my article, so the Hokies are in.

Two teams have made four BCS trips, good friends Miami and Notre Dame. The Canes have been there, gotten smacked down by the NCAA and come back, have made their four trips under three different coaches and are currently at the top of any 'next level,' close to forming their own 'next level' of one. The Irish are a different story. They played in the Cotton, Fiesta and Sugar from 1993-95, but their only appearance since was the 2000 Fiesta, a bowl in which they did not belong. Teams that have posted losing records two of the last three seasons and fire their coach a year after making a BCS bowl can hardly be considered to occupy a spot on the 'next level.'

There are three teams remaining, Florida State with eight BCS appearances and Florida and Nebraska, each with seven. While new Gators coach Ron Zook has the unenviable task of

keeping Florida at the top, all three of these programs have track records of sustained excellence that classifies them as the cream of the 'next level' crop. They win, and win a lot. The Noles slipped last year, but a safe bet is that they will be back at the throat of the ACC and everybody else with a vengeance. Nebraska is Nebraska, always very good.

The Next Level

The original 34 teams have been pared down to eleven: Florida State, Florida, Nebraska, Miami, Virginia Tech, Tennessee, Michigan, Texas, Texas A&M, Oklahoma and Kansas State.

One notices that there are five teams included from the Big XII, but a case can be made for all. Texas A&M has gone 78-31-1 over the past nine years, won the Big XII in 98, the old SWC in 93 and were undefeated in 94 but bowl-ineligible due to the standard SWC probation. They seem to be enduring a Mack-induced decline of late, going 8-4, 7-5 and 8-4 over the last three years, but they are usually ranked, for the most part lose to other Big XII teams and, as Tech is going to discover, very tough to deal with.

Kansas State has yet to win a conference championship and slipped to 6-6 in 2001, but the Wildcats are 87-23-1 since 93, won eleven games an astounding four times in a row from 97-00 and have long been fixtures of the Top Ten. One .500 season does not yet merit their slippage to also-ran status.

Oklahoma spent much of the Nineties recovering from Barry Switzer's probation, but exploded back onto the national scene by winning the MNC in 2000 and staying in the hunt in '01.

Texas has yet to win anything big under Mack Brown, but did capture the last SWC title in 95 and the first Big XII one in 96 under John Mackovic. While Brown continues to demonstrate that recruiting top talent isn't everything, the Longhorns are very good and a threat to finally win something under Mack.

This list is highly subjective and subject to change, especially if 2001 upstarts Maryland, Illinois and LSU keep winning big and Texas A&M and Kansas State do not. But, for now, when a coach claims that he is going to take his program to the 'next level,' it seems to me that these are the guys at which he is shooting.

Inside the Numbers: Defensive Player of the Year

We take our TSLX defensive points system and name the best defensive player from last season.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Last year, for the first time ever, we did a defensive performance calculation and awarded points to defensive players based on their defensive stats. This year, we're back to do it again, and this time, the player with the most points wins the coveted first annual TSL Extra Defensive Player of the Year Award.

The idea of a defensive performance index is simple: award points for certain defensive plays (tackles, sacks, interceptions, etc.), multiply a player's stats by those point awards, and total them up. You can then rank the defensive players by total points, and for a different twist, you can divide their total points by the number of plays they were on the field to get a "points per play" statistic that truly measures a player's productivity.

Last year, it was just a statistical exercise, but this year, we're going to use our formula to name a 2001 TSL Extra Defensive Player of the Year. We're also going to compare this year's stats to last year's.

The Data

We need two sets of data: defensive statistics and plays from scrimmage.

1.) Defensive statistics were taken from hokiesportsinfo.com at the following address:

<http://www.hokiesportsinfo.com/football/stats/teamcume.html>

2.) Number of plays from scrimmage and special teams plays were taken from the season-ending depth chart found on page 7 of the December 14, 2001 edition of "hokiesports.com the newspaper" (Vol, 19, No. 15).

Note that statistics are for the regular season only and do not include the Gator Bowl.

Players Included in the Calculation

The defensive statistics posted on the hokiesportsinfo.com web site also include special teams plays and tackles, and that complicates things. I took the list of 50 players that are included in the "defensive stats" and eliminated all of the players who are not on the defensive two-deep roster. This got rid of the special-teamers like Wayne Ward who appear in the defensive statistics because they have made plays on special teams. I also deleted defensive players who did not play more than 100 plays on defense.

I wound up with the following 23 players, all of whom played more than 100 plays on defense in the 2000 season:

DT: David Pugh, Chad Beasley, Derrius Monroe, Channing Reed, Dan Wilkinson

DE: Nathaniel Adibi, Jim Davis, Cols Colas, Lamar Cobb

LB: Jake Houseright, Ben Taylor, Brian Welch, T.J. Jackson, Mike Daniels, Deon Provitt

CB: Eric Green, Larry Austin, Ronyell Whitaker, DeAngelo Hall, Garnell Wilds

S: Willie Pile, Kevin McCadam, Vincent Fuller

Defensive Plays and the Points Awarded

Here are the points awarded for the defensive plays included in the statistics:

Play	Points Awarded
UT (unassisted tackle)	2
AT (assisted tackle)	1
TFL (tackle for loss)	2 (in addition to UT or AT points)
TFL yards lost	0.2 pts per yard lost
Sacks	2 (in addition to UT/AT and TFL pts)
INT (interceptions)	10
INT return yards	0.1 pts per yard
PD (pass defended)	3
QBH (QB hurry)	2
FmRec (fumble recovery)	5
Fumble return yards	0.2 pts per yard
FF (forced fumble)	10
TD (defensive TD)	20

Notes:

1.) Tackles are complicated, and are calculated like this: when a player makes a tackle, he gets 1 point (assisted tackle) or 2 points (unassisted tackle). If it's a tackle for loss (TFL), he gets an additional 2 points, plus 0.2 points for every yard lost on the play. If the tackle for loss is a quarter-back sack, it is calculated just like a TFL, but the player also gets 2 bonus points for the sack.

2.) Points for fumble return yardage are double what is awarded for interception return yardage because fumble recovery statistics typically include less return yardage than interceptions. Most fumbles are recovered on the ground, whereas most interceptions are made standing up with a chance to run. Fumble return yards should therefore be awarded points at a premium over INT return yards.

How Special Teams Skew the Numbers

The fact that special teams plays are included in the defensive statistics provided on hokiesportsinfo.com complicates things and skews the results in many ways. For example:

1.) There are not as many defensive "plays" available to a special teamer as there are to a

scrimmage defender — sacks, QB hurries, interceptions, etc. are not available in a special teams play, except for the rare instances where the opponent runs a trick play.

2.) Sometimes the special team plays are plays like kickoff returns or field goals, where making any type of defensive play is impossible.

This means that a defender who plays a lot of plays on special teams is going to have his point totals dragged down by those special teams plays. On special teams, he can't make a sack or an interception, so on average, he gets fewer points from his special teams plays, no matter how good a special teams player he is.

But on the other hand, the tackles he makes on special teams go into his point totals and help him out, versus a player like defensive end Jim Davis, who only had two plays on special teams all year.

You can sum up the effect of playing on special teams thus:

1.) It increases a player's point totals by giving him more opportunities to make plays, most notably tackles.

2.) It decreases a player's "points per play" figure, because special teams plays don't provide as many opportunities to score points.

I tried to compensate for item number two by dividing the number of special teams plays in half when calculating the "points per play" statistic. So $\text{points per play} = \frac{\text{total points}}{(\text{scrimmage plays} + \frac{\text{special teams plays}}{2})}$. You can argue that I should have divided by a larger number or even thrown the special teams plays out completely, but it was hard to figure out exactly what to do, and that's the step I took.

And Now, the Results

Given all that, let's throw those 23 players and their stats into a spreadsheet and see what

Players Ranked by Total Points (TSLX Defensive Player of the Year)				
Rank	Player	Pos.	Points	Highlights
1	40 TAYLOR, Ben	LB	306.2	Team-leading 121 tackles and 18 tackles for loss
2	5 McCADAM, Kevin	S	282.7	83 tackles, 3 interceptions, 2 TD's scored
3	35 PILE, Willie	S	231.1	94 tackles, 4 interceptions
4	34 WELCH, Brian	LB	163.1	68 tackles
5	71 PUGH, David	DT	160.2	50 tackles, 3.5 sacks, 1 fumble recovery
6	95 DAVIS, Jim	DE	156.5	Team-leading 4.5 sacks, and INT for a TD
7	99 COLAS, Cols	DE	144.6	3.5 sacks, team-leading 17 QB hurries
8	2 WHITAKER, Ronyell	CB	129.8	53 tackles, team-leading 10 passes-defensed
9	94 BEASLEY, Chad	DT	124.8	57 tackles, fumble recovery
10	41 HOUSERIGHT, Jake	LB	121.6	54 tackles, 1 INT, 6 passes-defensed

comes up. The table that shows each player's statistics and their resulting point totals is too lengthy and cumbersome to print here, but it can be viewed as a web page or a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (see the end of this article to find out how to download the data).

Players Ranked by Total Points (TSLX Defensive Player of the Year)

Ben Taylor leads total points for the second year in a row, which makes him a repeat winner (even though we technically didn't hand out the award last year). Last year, he only had 251.2 points, which means that he upped his store by 55 points, even though his overall plays only increased by 18, from 743 last year to 761 this year.

It's not a surprise that the top four spots are held by linebackers and safeties. Both positions can make all of the plays on the field, because they provide run support and pass defense, as well as blitzing to sack the QB.

Linemen and cornerbacks don't have the opportunity to make every defensive play available, because linemen typically don't fall into pass defense (it happens, but it's rare), and cornerbacks rarely blitz and get the opportunity to rack up TFL's, sacks, and QB hurries.

So the top slots are usually garnered by the guys

whose responsibilities run the defensive spectrum: linebackers and safeties (including both free safety and Rover).

Players Ranked by Points-Per-Play

And in the all-important points-per-play category, which is another measure of a defender's effectiveness on the field, the table on the next page shows how it shakes out (note that a score of 0.40 or higher indicates a very productive defensive player):

Things to note:

- Last year, only two players logged a 0.40 or higher: Willie Pile (0.42) and David Pugh (0.40). This year, 8 players topped 0.40, including Jim Davis and Channing Reed's impressive averages.
- Speaking of Channing Reed, his points-per-play average is a bit of an anomaly. He only played 105 plays, barely making the 100-play minimum cut. His 63.6 total points includes one play that netted him 26.6 points: an 8-yard fumble return for a TD against Rutgers. Take that play away, and Reed averaged a more normal 0.35 points per play.
- Davis' average of 0.54 points per play, which blows away anyone's average

Players Ranked by Defensive Points Per Play							
Rank	Player	Pos.	Scr. Plays	Sp. Tm. Plays	Total Plays	Points	Pts./ Play
1	53 REED, Channing	DT	105	0	105	63.6	0.61
2	95 DAVIS, Jim	DE	287	2	289	156.5	0.54
3	71 PUGH, David	DT	361	13	374	160.2	0.44
4	40 TAYLOR, Ben	LB	659	102	761	306.2	0.43
5	5 McCADAM, Kevin	S	642	33	675	282.7	0.43
6	34 WELCH, Brian	LB	351	69	420	163.1	0.42
7	4 HALL, DeAngelo	CB	222	71	293	108.7	0.42
8	99 COLAS, Cols	DE	318	63	381	144.6	0.41
9	98 MONROE, Derrius	DT	241	0	241	93.6	0.39
10	35 PILE, Willie	S	617	46	663	231.1	0.36

from this year or last (with the exception of Reed), sets a standard. He played 287 plays from scrimmage, and it's hard to score a high points-per-play average when you're on the field that much.

Davis' most impressive play was a 27-yard interception return for a TD against WVU; take that 32.7-point play away, and he still averaged a very-good 0.43 points per play.

- A sobering thought: of the 13 players represented in the top ten for total points and points per play, only five are returning next year: Willie Pile, Jim Davis, Cols Colas, Ronyell Whitaker, and DeAngelo Hall.

Comparison to Last Year

As noted, Taylor upped his production from last year by almost 22%, despite only logging 2.4% more plays. Here are some other notable comparisons to last year (see TSL Extra Issue #5 for last year's point totals):

- Willie Pile increased his point total from 223.0 to 231.1, but fell from second place last year to third place this year. Pile's point production increase is notable because last year, he benefited from 6 interceptions, including one for a TD; this year, he only had 4 picks, with

no TD's. The reason his point total went up this year is that he had more plays from scrimmage (617 to 512) and upped his tackles from 56 last year to 94 this year.

- Kevin McCadam, who played Rover this year, outscored Rover Cory Bird from last year, 282.7 to 217.7. Bird was a productive player, but McCadam was much more productive this year from the Rover spot, outscoring Bird by a wide margin despite logging roughly the same number of plays (642 for McCadam, 645 for Bird).
- Speaking of McCadam and Bird, McCadam's 69-yard INT for a TD against UCF and his 9-yard fumble return for a TD against BC were the difference over Bird's point totals from last year. McCadam's two TD's added 63.7 points to his score. Take those two plays away, and the 2001 Kevin McCadam only outscores the 2000 Cory Bird by a narrow margin, 219.0 to 217.7.
- Ronyell Whitaker finished fourth last year with 187.2 points, but fell to eighth this year with 129.8 points. His plays from scrimmage fell from 670 last year to 523 this year, accounting for some of the fall in production. His points-per-play produc-

tion was comparable, falling just slightly to 0.23 from 0.26 last year.

- The team as a whole averaged 0.319 points per play in 2000; in 2001, it went up to 0.331.

The Data

To download the data in HTML (web page) format, go here:

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue019/defensivestats2001.htm>

The page at the above address lists the players from first to last in terms of total number of defensive “points” scored.

To download an MS Excel 97 spreadsheet containing all of the data and formulas that I have used here, go here:

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue019/defensivestats2001.xls>

I hope the spreadsheet has no significant errors, and I hope you enjoyed yet another brain-bruising installment of “Inside the Numbers”!

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