

TSL Extra

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Dear Readers:

We're really on a roll here with the TSL Extra. This is yet another issue that I like a lot, a collection of eight articles on various topics, just the tonic needed for Alderson's famous Dead Zone of sports, the summer months.

Back in issue #12, a great cover photo of KJ shaking hands with the crowd after last year's WVU game inspired me to write an article called "The Future," that analyzed Tech's football team in the coming years. In much the same vein, this year's cover photo led me to write a couple of articles with Lane Stadium expansion as the theme.

"The Corners Are Full" is an introspective piece that recalls what it was like when Lane Stadium wasn't jammed full for every game, as it has been for three years straight now. This month's "Inside the Numbers" feature examines football ticket revenue since Tech's bowl run started in 1993, and you'll be amazed at how much more money the Hokies make off of a typical home game than they did back in 1993.

I had planned to write a third Lane Stadium-related article, a humorous look back at the predictions I made for stadium expansion when I wrote an article back in 1997. But then the Chronicle of Higher Education released their yearly gender equity study, including oodles of financial data, and that led me to bump the last Lane Stadium article for an article called "The Boom in Tech Athletics" that details the rapid rise of athletic revenue (and expenses) at Virginia Tech.

And then there's my favorite article from this month, "The Ten Most Influential Players in the Beamer Bowl Era." If you read just one article from this issue, this is the one. In ranking the players from #10 to #1, I include little known facts and interesting perspectives on some of your favorite Hokie players from the nine-year bowl run. It's a must-read that may change the way you view some of Frank Beamer's best players. Read it, and give me your opinion.

To round out the issue, we've got an interesting article from Jim Alderson that breaks down Frank Beamer's record against every Big East coach he has clashed with, plus a quirky little "Inside TSL" that tells you the stories behind every one of the TSLX's 20 covers. And as part of our new initiative to include more recruiting profiles, we have articles from new writer Chris Horne about TSL's #1- and #3-ranked players in the state, linebacker Vince Hall (Western Branch, Chesapeake) and cornerback Phillip Brown (Phoebus, Hampton).

I think you'll like this issue as much as I do. Kick back and shed the June doldrums with some great Hokie reading.

Enjoy issue #20.



Vince Hall: Controlled Aggression

Western Branch's Vince Hall hones his mental and physical approach to the game.

by Chris Horne

Following in the footsteps of two of the highest recruited linebackers ever in the state of Virginia may be tough, but by no means does Western Branch's (Chesapeake, VA) Vince Hall fall short in comparison.

Last year, Ahmad Brooks and Kai Parham brought the best of the best in college football to the state of Virginia. This year, Vince Hall promises to do the same. So far, Hall has been rated in ESPN's Tom Lemming's Top 100 rising seniors list. In addition, he was rated #2 in the Roanoke Times Top 25 juniors list. As the local and national praise suggests, Vince Hall has the game to make a strong impact at the Division I level.

At 6'1", 235 pounds, Hall has an imposing and intimidating physical frame. He runs about a 4.5 or 4.6 in the forty that, according to Western Branch Head Coach Lewis Johnston, does not decrease with pads. Hall displays quick feet, giving him the ability to make sharp cuts and close in fast on any ball carrier.

According to Hall, his physical attributes are only part of what makes him extremely attractive to the swarms of college coaches.

"I try to be both methodical and aggressive," said Hall of his playing style. "I try to recognize what is going on and react to it. I like using my mind."

Coach Johnston agreed with his All-American's assessment. While he knows Hall has the complete package, he also can point out what his star needs to work on for next season.

"He has a wonderful instinctive nature," said Johnston. "He has a knack for reading the play and is truly a student of the game. He makes adjustments on the run, during the play. Plus he is one of the fastest players on the field with a great quick start. Vince is an outstanding closer as well.

"I would say, if anything, he needs to work a little on his pass coverage technique."

While one can learn better technique, instincts and game intelligence are those natural characteristics that cannot be taught in any football camp or learned from any coach. For an example of Hall's excellent football intelligence, one needs to look no further than last season's game versus Indian River. Coach Johnston still vividly remembers what happened in that game, when Hall single-handedly scored two defensive touchdowns.

"Early in the game, the Indian River quarterback went back to pass," said Johnston. "Vince was sort of caught in no-man's land, and they floated a swing pass right over his head. We still made the play, but safe to say, he was frustrated with what happened. Later in the game, they tried the same play. Vince recognized the play, made an interception and returned it for a touchdown. They tried it again after that, this time on the other sideline, and Vince read it and returned it again for his second touchdown.

"It was a great example of his recognition and intelligence on the field."

Like most defensive players, Hall loves to make hits. It is his great tackling technique, however, that separates him from the average defender. When the team needs a clutch tackle, Hall likes to step up and make that tackle. Unfortunately

for Western Branch opponents, Hall rarely misses a tackle in these or any other situation. This is an asset his coach appreciates more than witnessing the occasional bone-jarring hit.

“He enjoys the contact but is not necessarily the biggest hitter,” said Johnston. “Vince makes the sure tackle, not necessarily the spectacular one. He is a great tackler. He almost never misses a tackle.”

While Hall wants to be consistent, he also appreciates any opportunity to lay the lumber to any offensive player. Although people may not see him make brutal hits very frequently, Hall stresses that he can make a pretty good hit every now and then.

“I may not be consistently one of the biggest hitters, but I can hit people...no question about it,” said Hall of his tackling ability. “I like making the big tackles.”

Equally as impressive as a clutch tackle or football award is Hall’s personality off the field. Well respected by coaches, teachers, and teammates alike, Hall is an exemplary person for his school. According to coach Johnston, Hall has an outstanding character, much of which he credits to a solid family background.

“He is a charismatic personality,” said Johnston. “Everybody loves Vince. He is well liked by his teammates. His parents did a wonderful job teaching him respect and friendliness. He is just a solid, good kid who is enthusiastic and passionate about what he does.”

“And he plays the game of football the way it should be played...with class.”

Hall’s relationship with his teammates is one of friendship and respect. A leader on the team, his teammates recognize Hall as a class individual. A few teammates expressed their respect for Hall during a last year’s post-season meeting.

At the end of last season, Coach Johnston called a private team meeting. The meeting included the coaches and all of his rising senior players including Hall, and they were there to discuss the expectations and goals of the rising senior class for next year’s team. Number one on the agenda was not the summer workout program or discussing what happened the previous year. The number one issue coach Johnston wanted to address was jealousy.

“I told the players that, while many of them had the opportunity and potential to play college football, one player would be the center of attention throughout [all of next year],” said Johnston. “I posed the question, ‘Is everyone in this room going to be OK with that?’ And, almost immediately, one of our players stood up. He said, ‘Coach, that is not going to be an issue. If the player was cocky and a jerk, we might care...but the player is Vince.’ To me, that is a great example of how people feel about him.”

Hall is careful not to get arrogant over all of his publicity. Crediting his success to others, Hall realizes he has needed some help to reach this level. He is grateful for the position he is in and for everything he has accomplished.

“Some guys [in my position] can be cocky,” said Hall of his status. “I attribute much of my success to my teammates, to my linemen. Off the field, we are all friends.”

In the classroom, Hall focuses greatly on his academics. He has already easily qualified for freshmen eligibility, and has taken honors classes throughout his high school career. Realizing the importance of education, Hall has put great energy into academics since his freshman year at Western Branch.

“He is a good student – a very serious student,” said coach Johnston. “He has been real serious about his academics since his first year here.”

Education is a major factor in Hall’s choice of schools. When the recruiting process is over,

what each school has to offer academically may ultimately sway his decision on where to play football.

“Education is very important,” said Hall of his decision making process. “What the school has to offer education-wise is definitely a plus. I don’t have a preference for a major just yet or anything, but the school must offer a good education.”

Even with so many schools recruiting him (over 50 colleges have expressed interest), Hall has been able to narrow down the field a bit. Recently, he visited the Penn State football camp. Penn State, along with Virginia Tech and Maryland, have been consistently mentioned with Hall. Early on, it appears Hall may have a preference to stay closer to home.

When asked for a top five, he had a slightly changed, more regional-friendly list. Unlike predecessors Brooks and Parham, however, it appears Hall will not be continuing his football career at the University of Virginia. Recently, the Cavaliers were eliminated from the recruiting process.

“My top five right now are [in no particular order] Virginia Tech, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee,” said Hall. “Those are my top five at the moment.”

For Hokie fans, thoughts have persisted that the relationship between coach Johnston and the Virginia Tech coaching staff may have been affected recently with the transfer of former Western Branch star Keith Burnell to Delaware. Many fans were concerned that ill-will from the Burnell situation may translate negatively with the recruitment of Vince Hall. Hokie fans need not worry about that situation having any effect on Hall’s decision. According to coach Johnston, the relationship will not be a factor.

“My relationship with Virginia Tech is not an issue,” said Johnston. “Coach Stinespring and I are good friends, and I have tremendous re-

spect for coach Beamer. My role with Vince’s recruitment is that of a counselor. If he has a question, I will answer. Past situations are not an issue.

“Tech has always been high on his list,” Johnston continued. “They have always been mentioned in his top 3. He knows the coaches and he knows and likes the campus.”

Hall currently has no timeline on when he will make a decision. He had expressed earlier a desire to wait until the February signing date to make a decision. Recently, his thought process has changed slightly.

“I wanted to wait it out [until February] at first,” said Hall. “But I may commit early. If I am sure of where I want to go with no doubts, I don’t see any reason why I wouldn’t commit early.”

Hall plans to take visits during the fall and possibly early summer. Nothing has been officially scheduled at this point. He projects as an outside linebacker at the collegiate level.

Phillip Brown: Mr. Everything

Phoebus' Phillip Brown wants to be the man, so he does it all.

by Chris Horne

Every great football team needs players who want to step up in the big situations and make the big play. At the center of every game-saving tackle or game-winning touchdown, there is the player who wants to be in the center of it all, making things happen for his team.

For the Phoebus Phantoms, they needed an abundance of these types of players to help them capture the 2001 Division 5 championship. Lucky for Head Coach Bill Dee, he had these players...Xavier Adibi comes to mind. Another is a young man who craves each opportunity to make the big play. He thrives on these situations. The player in question is Phoebus' version of Mr. Versatility, Phillip Brown.

"In crunch time, I like to have the ball," said Brown. "I want to be the man that constantly makes the plays. The man that steps it up in clutch situations."

Brown plays a plethora of positions for Phoebus. He has been shifted around from wide receiver to running back, and from running back to his favorite position, defensive back. According to Brown, his versatility is his best attribute, allowing him to contribute to his team in many different ways.

"I am best known for my versatility," explained Brown. "I can play many positions for my team...running back, wide receiver, and kick returner. I like having the ball in my hands. But my favorite position is cornerback."

Brown's blazing speed allows him to be effective at each position he plays. Recently, he was timed at 4.3 in the 40. Coach Dee emphasizes that his speed gives him many advantages on the field in any capacity.

"He has great speed," said Dee. "Last season, he returned nine kicks for touchdowns. And he is our top cover guy on defense, a top cover corner. What makes him effective is that his speed doesn't diminish in pads. Plus, he has a toughness and real understanding for the game."

Last season, against Heritage in a conference battle, Brown demonstrated his blazing field speed. According to Dee, Heritage threw a pass on the opposite side of the field from Brown. Heritage's best and fastest receiver caught the pass, and he streaked down the line. Before the player could score, however, Brown raced from the other side of the field and caught the receiver around the five-yard line. In Dee's mind, this play was a great example of what Brown could do physically, and further, how immensely it helped the team.

"Catching the guy from behind was an excellent play," said Dee. "But after that, Heritage didn't score. Those were the types of plays we could expect out of Phillip last season."

For Brown, the postseason honors came rolling in after his standout junior year. At year's end, he had tallied 71 tackles and four interceptions. He earned all-state honors at the kick returner position and all-region at cornerback and kick returner. He is rated #12 in the Roanoke Times Top 25 junior list and #3 in TSL's ranking of the Top 40 rising seniors in the state (see TSL Extra #19).

While Brown is an excellent talent deserving of his recognition, Coach Dee still believes he can work on some things to make him even better for next season.

“Phillip is a great player,” said Dee. “But he is a little too aggressive at times. But that is a minor thing. He goes for the flashy plays most times, and perhaps he could be a little more cautious.”

“But, of course, that is not a bad thing by any means.”

When football season ends, track season begins for Brown. He loves indoor track and participates in many events, including the long jump and 100 and 200 meter sprints. The long jump, however, prevails as Brown’s favorite track activity. His crowning moment on the track took place in this event.

“I like all the track events, but the long jump is my favorite,” said Brown. “In fact, a couple of years ago, I beat [current VT cornerback] DeAngelo Hall for the state championship. That was awesome.”

Brown’s flashy personality certainly aids him in the sports he plays. He uses his energy and excitement to make the big play or step up in clutch time. According to coach Dee, he has the personality needed to face any challenge on or off the field.

“He is very outgoing,” said Dee of Brown’s personality. “He is one of the most charismatic players on the team. He just has a charismatic personality.”

Brown’s outgoing nature also gives him the confidence to do what is best for him in the recruiting process as well. While some recruits choose to follow each other to a particular school or let the decisions of others affect where they want to go, Brown is exactly the opposite.

“Will other players decision have any effect on me? Absolutely not,” said Brown adamantly. “The other players can go where ever they want ... I don’t really care what they do. I am going to do what I want to do.”

Currently, Brown has received about 10 solid

scholarship offers from prospective schools. His top five consists fully of Atlantic Coast and Big East Conference teams. Right now, he has no timetable on a decision.

“Right now, my top five is Virginia Tech, NC State, West Virginia, Maryland and Virginia.”

The list of schools are in no particular order, according to Brown. While both state schools have been consistently in the top five, the situation with Virginia may be a little dicey, according to coach Dee. The recent fiasco between the Virginia staff and Xavier Adibi, in which Coach Al Groh informed Adibi that Virginia would not offer him a scholarship, could potentially play a role in Brown’s recruitment.

“Well, I don’t really get into that stuff with the kids, at least right now,” said Dee of the Adibi situation. “But Phillip and Xavier are really close. It could possibly affect UVA and Brown.”

Over the summer, Brown does not plan to visit any camps, although he does have offers. Instead, he will rest and get ready for the upcoming season. He has nothing against camps; he just has confidence in himself and his technique.

“I’m not going to any camps,” said Brown. “Each camp teaches you a different technique and different ways to do things. I just want to work on my technique and get that better.”

Brown has yet to reach NCAA freshman eligibility. In spite of this, Coach Dee is confident that Brown can make up the ground he needs to and qualify during his senior season.

“It is very early [right now],” said Dee of Brown’s academic status. “He hasn’t qualified yet, but he still has time. He has all of next year.”

Tech fans can expect to hear more from Phillip Brown in the coming season. Brown, who has the mental toughness and outgoing personality to match incredible physical skill, should be the

top cornerback available in the state of Virginia. He hopes to bring his skill and versatility to the next level and, eventually, play on both sides of the ball on the collegiate level. The next Charles Woodson? Well, certainly not yet. But if anyone believes Mr. Brown can attain such a level, it is Mr. Brown. So don't put it past him.

The Ten Most Influential Players of the Beamer Bowl Era

We count them down, from #10 to Michael Vick.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Everybody loves lists. They love to make 'em, they love to read 'em, and they love to argue about 'em. And the best and most interesting lists are those that are based on opinion — not statistics.

Consider that paragraph the shortest lead-in ever to an article I had a lot of fun researching and writing: a list of the ten most influential players in the Beamer Bowl Era of Tech football (1993-2001).

First of all, I'm sure many of you older readers are getting annoyed with this Beamer Bowl Era stuff, and you'd like to know where I rate guys like Don Strock, Bruce Smith, Frank Loria, and Bob Schweikert. Why in the world do I always cart out that "Beamer Bowl Era" restriction?

The reason is simple: it's what I know. I'm not qualified to comment on guys like Strock, Loria, and Schweikert, because I didn't see them play, and I wasn't around to quantify their "influence" on Virginia Tech football. I'm dialed into the Beamer era more strongly than any other era in Tech football.

Plus, media exposure of the Hokies has been strong since 1993, and that makes it easier to get a good picture of the evolution of Tech

football over that time period.

How do you define "influential"? That's where this list gets interesting, because a player's influence is not as easily measured as his rushing totals, passing stats, or sack totals. Influence is more ethereal and hard to pin down, and more complex than on-field performance.

Right off the top of my head, I can tell you that you can measure a player's influence by his effect on the won-loss record of the team, in the enthusiasm he generates among the fan base, and in the effect he has on ticket sales, publicity, and TV appearances, just to name a few factors.

I think you see where I'm headed with this. Number one is a no-brainer. It's picking out — and ranking — the other nine guys that will generate the most discussion.

Let's start with #10 and work our way up to Michael Vick ... er, I mean, #1. I found that ranking #1 through #5 wasn't that hard, but picking out those second five guys put a strain on my cranium.

I'll admit it right off the bat: #10 is a throw-away pick intended to provoke thought and discussion, and perhaps even laughter or scorn.

10. Ricky Hall (WR, 1998-1999)

Um ... Ricky Hall? We're talking about a guy who only played two years at Tech and who ranks #20 on Tech's all-time receiving list, with just 1,048 yards and 11 TD's. He had a nice career, but um ... Ricky Hall?

To answer that question, I'll say this: Ricky Hall is the only player who made this list not for something he did, but for something he *didn't* do: he didn't catch the game-winning pass from Nick Sorensen in the 1998 Temple game.

You know the story: the lowly Temple Owls, doormat of the Big East, beat the #10-ranked

Hokies on an October 1998 day that came straight from Hell to Blacksburg, gift-wrapped by the devil himself. Temple was a 30-something point underdog, and the game still stands as one of the biggest upsets in the history of college football, if not the biggest.

The Owls led 28-24 late in the game, when the Hokies embarked on a drive that led them down inside the Temple 10-yard line, where on a third and goal, third-string QB Nick Sorensen threw a very catchable pass into the end zone, to a waiting Ricky Hall. It wasn't a perfect pass. Hall had to twist around and reach behind himself a little, but it hit him square in both hands, and he should have had it. But he didn't. He dropped it, and the Hokies collapsed, running a weak and ineffective sweep on fourth down and goal that was easily buried by the Temple defense.

By dropping that ball, Ricky Hall became the poster child for not taking opponents lightly. The nasty memory is seared into the minds of Hokie fans, players, and coaches, and continues to serve as inspiration for the Hokie football team. For some reason, the lesson that should have been learned in losses to Cincinnati in 1995 and Miami of Ohio in 1997 didn't sink in until Tech lost to Temple — *Temple!* — in 1998.

To this day, the Hokies break their practice huddles with cries of "Win number one!" and "Win number seven!" instead of "Beat Rutgers!" or "Beat Miami!" because Ricky Hall dropped that pass against Temple. Frank Beamer now teaches his team to win the next game on the schedule, not to prepare for whatever team it might be, because preparing for a team, instead of a game, affects the preparation.

What if Ricky Hall had caught that pass? Would it have affected the future of Virginia Tech football in a different way? Or would everything have gone pretty much the same after that, including the 1999 championship run? We'll never know, but you can argue that the loss to Temple, embodied in Hall's drop of a catchable pass, altered Tech football significantly.

9. (Tie) Shayne Graham (PK, 1996-1999) and Andre Davis (WR, 1998-2001)

I put these two guys in a tie at #9 because I couldn't eliminate either of them. I made the list up without Shayne Graham, and it was just wrong; I made it up without Andre Davis, and that was just wrong, too.

Both men are on the list because of the influence they had on the field, not anywhere else. Shayne Graham is on this list for one reason, and one reason only: his 44-yard game-winning field goal against WVU in 1999. Michael Vick made it possible with his memorable 31-yard scamper (it's *always* called a "scamper") up the sideline to set the field goal up, but if Graham doesn't make that kick, Vick's run, while remarkable, loses a lot of its luster.

And likewise, that 1999 season goes right into the toilet. The Hokies don't go to New Orleans, and Vick never gets a chance to put on that 60-minute highlight-reel show in the national championship game.

Graham did a lot of other good things while at Tech. He is easily Tech's career scoring leader and the Big East's career scoring leader, but to be honest, he was rarely if ever truly influential to the outcome of a game. But the one game that he "won" for the Hokies was a whopper. Like Corey Moore and Michael Vick, Shayne Graham had his opportunity to make that 1999 season into the dream season it was, and when called upon, he didn't blow it.

Andre Davis is on this list because he, too, facilitated the 1999 season and the Michael Vick phenomenon. In 1999, Davis tied Antonio Freeman's record of 9 TD catches in a season, and he absolutely destroyed the records for yards in a season (his 962 topped the previous high of 826 set by Ricky Scales in 1972) and yards per catch (an astounding 27.5 ypc).

Davis also excelled as a punt returner, tying or

beating records held by the great Frank Loria. Davis was a great player and a class act, but his only real lasting “influence,” I think, was in aiding Vick’s rise to stardom and being a big part of the 1999 season. He has not led to a slew of talented receiver recruits suddenly picking Virginia Tech, and he hasn’t had a profound effect on the future of Virginia Tech football, but he did enough to land at #9 on this list, tied with Graham.

8. (Tie) John Engelberger (DE, 1996-1999) and J.C. Price (DT, 1992-1995)

An odd choice, but hear me out. Cornell Brown and Corey Moore were two of the most influential players in VT history (yep, they’re both on this list), but you can argue that they wouldn’t have been as influential without the presence of their respective partners in crime, John Engelberger and J.C. Price. Those two guys were good enough to draw attention to themselves, giving Moore and Brown the freedom to wreak havoc against one-on-one blocking.

Brown’s and Moore’s best seasons were 1995 and 1999, and sure, the 1995 and 1999 defensive lines were deep and talented. They had a lot more going for them than Brown, Price, Moore, and Engelberger. But I’m going to stick to my guns here and say that Engelberger and Price helped make Moore and Brown the megastars they were.

To back up that argument, you can look at the falloff in production that Cornell Brown suffered from 1995 to 1996. In 1995, with J.C. Price tearing up the middle of the line from his defensive tackle position (104 tackles and 8 sacks), Brown dominated from his end spot with 103 tackles and 14 sacks.

But in 1996, with Price (and admittedly others) gone, offensive lines could focus on Brown, and his statistics plummeted: 58 tackles and 8 sacks. In 1996, he only played 8 regular-season games (versus all 11 in 1995), but still, if you extrapolate his stats out to 11 games, it adds up

to “just” 80 tackles and 11 sacks, versus 103 and 14 the year before.

Corey Moore suffered no such fate. After a junior year comparable to Brown’s junior year (just 67 tackles, but 13.5 sacks), he had a better senior year than Brown: 60 tackles and 17 sacks, propelling him to unanimous All-American and National Defensive Player of the Year status that Brown was not able to achieve as a senior.

And you’ve got to figure that a big reason for Moore’s success as a senior is that he was surrounded by a deep supporting cast led by Engelberger, a luxury Brown did not have as a senior.

That’s a nice argument, but why single out Engelberger and Price like that? After all, Ricky Hall’s presence as a possession receiver in 1999 helped unleash Andre Davis as a deep threat, Jarrett Ferguson cleared holes for Lee Suggs, and Caleb Hurd held the ball on every one of Shayne Graham’s kicks. Why not name them to the list?

Primarily because, unlike them and many other supporting players, Engelberger and Price were themselves All-Americans. As second-fiddlers go, they were among the very best.

7. Jim Pyne (C, 1990-1993)

Tech’s 1990 recruiting class was headlined by a top recruit by the name of Maurice DeShazo, but the other player that everyone raved about was a 6-2, 235-pound center from Milford, Massachusetts named Jim Pyne. “He’s a five-play player,” Frank Beamer said at the time, “All it takes is to see five plays on film and I turn off the projector. That’s all I need to see to know the kid can play.”

Pyne started the 1990 season at center as a 250-pound true freshman. The thought of Frank Beamer starting a 250-pound true freshman on his offensive line these days is laughable, but

Pyne was that good. He started 41 of the 42 games he played in, and in 2700 career snaps, gave up just one sack (ironically, it was against Temple, a fact that chafed the proud Pyne greatly).

He was a unanimous All-American for the Hokies in 1993, one of just two unanimous AA's in the history of Tech football (Corey Moore is the other). And he even generated some press for the Hokies when Sports Illustrated ran an article about him called "Born to Block."

So what makes Jim Pyne "influential"? Like Engelberger and Price, it was what he did for others. Namely, he opened holes in the middle of the offensive line all by himself, allowing Maurice DeShazo and his running mates to go wild in 1993, Pyne's senior year and the first year of the Beamer Bowl Era.

If you have a tape of Tech's 1993 victory over Syracuse, a 45-24 whack job that earned the Hokies their Independence Bowl bid, take it out and watch the third and fourth quarters. You'll see one of the most dominating performances ever put on by an offensive lineman.

Time and again, Pyne blows a massive hole in the middle of the tiring Syracuse defensive line like a one-man wrecking crew, first flattening his man and then hunting down a linebacker, sticking his hands up the guy's jersey, and driving him 10-15 yards downfield, completely off-camera. If you like offensive line play, Pyne's 1993 Syracuse performance is the gold standard by which all other games should be measured. He was as responsible for the success of the 1993 team as Maurice DeShazo, Antonio Freeman, Cornell Brown, and anyone else you can name.

6. Lee Suggs (RB, 1999-2002)

You all know Lee Suggs' credentials, so I won't bore you with the details, other than to remind you that in 2000, he scored 28 regular-season touchdowns, including a Tech and Big East-

record 27 rushing touchdowns. And in 2001, after he suffered a knee injury against UConn in the season opener, he was sorely missed.

Sure, he's a great player. You'd have to be an idiot not to agree with that statement. But what makes him "influential"?

Lee Suggs is influential because he is the pinnacle of achievement in Hokie running backs. You may not know it yet, but in the coming years, you will compare every Hokie running back who comes down the pike to Lee Suggs. You're already doing it, as a matter of fact. You're already wishing that Kevin Jones would hit the hole and run between the tackles like Lee Suggs does. And you'll keep comparing Hokie running backs to Lee Suggs until you're wearing adult diapers and drooling onto a bib in your favorite Blacksburg nursing home decades from now.

Hokie fans have always wanted the next great Tech running back to hit the field (it started with fans calling for Beamer to put Ken Oxendine in instead of Dwayne Thomas), but after Lee Suggs' career is over, you'll find yourself looking backwards, not forward.

Tech has had great running backs in the Beamer Bowl Era, but Suggs is the total package, more than any of the others. He is perfect for Frank Beamer's offensive philosophy, because he is a power runner who can punish the opposition between the tackles, he holds on to the football, and he's a speed-burner who can score from anywhere on the field. He is the running back Frank Beamer envisioned when he and Rickey Bustle designed the offense that was used for most of the 1993-2001 time period.

Suggs is bigger, more powerful, and more explosive than Dwayne Thomas (1992-95) was; he's faster and much less fumble-prone than Ken Oxendine (1994-97); and he is bigger, stronger, and faster than Shyrone Stith (1996-99) and Lamont Pegues (1997-98). Thomas was a better pass receiver than Suggs is, but other

than that, no one can top him in any one area.

That's why Lee Suggs is influential: because you'll never stop talking about him after he's gone.

5. Maurice DeShazo (QB, 1991-1994)

An option quarterback from Bassett High School in Bassett, Virginia, DeShazo was the flagship player of the 1990 recruiting class and was one of the most highly-regarded players to sign with VT in years. He was expected to lead the Hokies out of their probation years of the late 1980's and into respectability, and he did not disappoint.

The memories of DeShazo's career are tainted by a sour senior season in 1994, a year in which he struggled with his confidence and his game, throwing key interceptions, including a terrible outing against UVa in which he heaved five. But the truth is, DeShazo was an outstanding QB in 1993, the first year of the Beamer Bowl Era. He threw for 2,080 yards and an incredible 22 TD's (still a Tech record for passing TD's in a season) versus just 7 interceptions.

Beyond what he did on the field, leading the Hokies to their first bowl victory of Beamer's tenure and establishing Tech as a winner, DeShazo is influential for changing the way Frank Beamer and Hokie fans view the quarterback position at Tech. DeShazo made Beamer fall in love with the mobile QB who could improvise when the play broke down, and Beamer hasn't gotten over it since then. Sure, Druckenmiller was not mobile, but he also reportedly wasn't Beamer's favorite QB in the spring of 1995 — the mobile Al Clark was, until Clark hurt himself and Druckenmiller stepped up.

While they continue to recruit drop-back passers at all three Florida schools, for example, Frank Beamer has long been enamored of that which Michael Vick made so popular elsewhere: the mobile QB. Since the DeShazo era, Clark, Vick,

Bryan Randall, and others are examples of what will be an endless string of Tech QB's who can make something out of nothing with their feet.

4. Jim Druckenmiller (QB, 1993-1996)

Put aside for a moment his failed NFL career and off-the-field personal problems, including a publicly played-out rape trial that damaged his image beyond repair, and remember when Jim Druckenmiller was a Hokie hero.

There was a time when "Druck" was the top Hokie football player in fans' minds, not Michael Vick. His coolness under pressure, his linebacker's mentality, and his ready grin made him universally adored by Hokie fans, and his performance in big games was the stuff of legends.

Druckenmiller stepped up and delivered against Miami, Virginia, and Texas in 1995, then followed that up in 1996 with an awesome road performance against the Canes and a heroic outing in the Orange Bowl in which he was a man among boys.

The 1995 team was rightfully perceived as a team carried by its defense, but the 1996 season showed that it was Druckenmiller who was the star who tied it all together. He remains the only Hokie QB to take Tech to two straight BCS bowls (called Alliance Bowls back then), and anyone who can top that feat will earn their place in Hokie football history.

Druckenmiller was influential on the field through his performance, and off the field for the (positive) publicity he generated in his senior season. But his primary and lasting influence was in changing the way Hokie fans thought about their football team. Druck taught Hokie fans to demand more of their football team and of their quarterback, and he gave Hokie fans a sense of confidence as he stood tall in the pocket and took on linebackers without flinching.

The matter-of-fact way in which Jim

Druckenmiller won football games, as if he had never doubted he would, was a big change from the frenetic, often frustrating, and downright insecure approach that Hokie fans brought to the game prior to his arrival. Before Druckenmiller, Hokie fans wanted for years to belong in college football's elite; by the time his career was over, they felt as if they had finally arrived.

Druckenmiller and his teammates followed up a disastrous 1994 season with the 1995 Sugar Bowl win, the most successful Tech football season in history at the time, and that reassured Hokie fans that their 1993-94 bowl teams were not a flash in the pan created by Maurice DeShazo and Antonio Freeman. It taught Hokie fans that Virginia Tech could continue to achieve at the highest levels, even as entire teams of players matured and graduated.

And for that reason, Druck is the fourth most influential player in the history of Tech football.

3. Corey Moore (DE, 1997-1999)

Corey Moore's influence on Virginia Tech football is multi-faceted. Like all great players, he could control a football game, which is no mean feat from the defensive end position. His tour de force performance against Clemson in the 1999 game in Lane Stadium is one of the best games, if not *the* best game, ever played by a defensive end at Tech. Moore had two sacks, two other tackles for loss, five QB hurries (one of which led to an Ike Charlton pickoff for a TD), and a forced fumble that he picked up himself and returned for a touchdown. On a night when Vick struggled with three interceptions, Corey Moore won the game for Tech.

In 1999, Corey Moore managed to do what would later be impossible: capture some of the spotlight from Michael Vick. He was articulate, ferocious, wild-eyed, and the TV cameras loved him. He was a unanimous All-American, one of just two in the history of Tech football (as mentioned above, Jim Pyne was the other). He was

a national defensive player of the year in some publications. There is no doubt that he was very influential on the field.

But Moore's biggest influence on Tech football, I think, is more subtle but important. During the 1998 season, pre-Vick, Moore spearheaded a ferocious defense and special teams that led Tech to a 9-3 record, including a 38-7 Music City Bowl victory over Alabama that sparked the Hokie fan base into eagerly anticipating the 1999 season.

Virginia Tech sold out the 1999 season opener against JMU ... repeat, *James Madison*. And they didn't do it because Michael Vick was going to be playing. Tech fans were interested in Vick, sure, but the real reason Hokie fans gobbled up nearly 24,000 season tickets in 1999 — 5,000 more than in 1998 — was what Moore and his teammates had done the year before.

Corey Moore got the party started. Michael Vick just crashed it and made sure it went on all night long.

Moore also greatly influenced the perception of the "Stud" defensive end spot at Tech. He played the same position Cornell Brown played, but he played it even better, not an easy thing to do. And you'll note that these days, Hokie fans and coaches aren't looking for "the next Cornell Brown" to man that spot; they're looking for the next Corey Moore. Like Lee Suggs at the tailback position, Corey Moore has defined the Stud end position and has set the bar of expectations.

Nearly three years after his last game was played for Tech, Hokie fans talk about Corey Moore all the time, and he is legendary, making him the third most influential player of the Beamer Bowl Era.

2. Cornell Brown (DE, 1993-1996)

I just finished saying that Corey Moore played the Stud end position better than Cornell Brown

(though not by much, I'll freely admit), so why rate Cornell as a more influential player than Moore?

Simple. I think Cornell had a big impact in an area that has been a key reason the Hokie football program was on the rise throughout the 90's: in-state recruiting.

In the 1980's and early 1990's, Virginia Tech could barely get a sniff from the top players in the state (as ranked by Doug Doughty, who began ranking them in 1983). The best talent in Virginia either went to UVa or out of state schools like Michigan, Penn State, and Notre Dame.

In 1990, the Hokies pulled off a recruiting coup by signing Maurice DeShazo, who was ranked #3 on Doughty's list, but in 1991 and 1992, things went back to normal for the Hokies, as they signed just one player from the state's top 10 each year (#8 Jared Hamlin in 1991 and #10 Tim Wade in 1992).

Cornell Brown changed all that in 1993. Brown was the #2-ranked player in the state and a national-level recruit being courted by the likes of Michigan, Georgia Tech, and Virginia. Whereas DeShazo favored the Hokies throughout the recruiting process, Brown was a mystery right up until the end, when he stood at the podium at his press conference and announced that he was going to attend "The University of Virginia ... Tech." An hour before he said those words, he had actually decided to attend UVa, and he changed his mind at the last minute ... and changed Tech football forever.

Brown's dramatic commitment to Tech, which came on signing day and was immediately followed by him signing an LOI to the Hokies, made it cool for highly-ranked in-state prospects to go to Blacksburg. It wasn't just that Brown committed to Tech; it was the playful way he thumbed his nose at the Virginia Cavaliers during his press conference, and the fact that he did it in the wake of a disastrous 1992 campaign

(2-8-1) for the Hokies, a nightmare season that led to Beamer clearing out his assistant coaching staff.

Back when the Hokies signed five players from Doughty's top 25 in 1990, Bill Roth wrote in the Hokie Huddler that it was "the most [from the top 25 list] since the early 1980's." That statement is unfathomable these days, and one major reason why is Cornell Brown. He paved the way for state recruits to start coming to Blacksburg, lifting up the Hokie program in the process.

In 1994, top 5 players Ken Oxendine (#2) and Tony Morrison (#4) followed Brown, and after a horrendous dip that saw Tech sign just two of the top 25 players in 1995, the Hokies have made a living off of the best players in the state ever since.

Brown came through on the field for the Hokies in a big way, playing his way to All-America status in 1995 and 1996 and anchoring a 1995 defense that struck fear in the hearts of opponents. But his biggest influence is how he helped turn the corner in in-state recruiting. Without Cornell Brown, there might not have been Ken Oxendine, Michael Vick, Lee Suggs, and a host of others.

1. Michael Vick (QB, 1999-2000)

Yeah, like I even need to explain this one to you. Michael Vick's influence on Virginia Tech football rivals that of Frank Beamer himself. He took a very, very solid program over the top with his athleticism and media-friendly highlight-reel ability, and he almost took them to a national championship.

Vick didn't have his Tech jersey retired, and he only played two seasons in Blacksburg. But the effect of his time there is profound, far-reaching, and long-lasting. Vick brought new fans, new revenue, and a new awareness to Virginia Tech, and none of that is going away any time soon.

Let's just put it this way: in February of 2008, a

highly-regarded recruit from a far-away state will commit to Virginia Tech, and he'll say, "I've liked Virginia Tech ever since I saw Michael Vick play in the national championship game when I was ten years old."

That's influence.

The Dean of Big East Coaches

Virginia Tech's Frank Beamer has had his way with almost every coach in the Big East.

by Jim Alderson

The Big East has played round-robin football schedules for nine years. During that period of time seventeen head coaches have plied their trade, sixteen at the seven other schools, and Frank Beamer at Tech. I thought it would be interesting to examine how Frank has done against his Big East peers.

For starters, Frank's conference record at Tech is 48-15, the most BE wins by any coach, leading Syracuse's Paul Pasqualoni, the only other coach to spend the entirety of BE life at the same school, whose record in conference games is 43-20.

Here's a rundown of the history of Frank Beamer against the other seven BE schools, including his record against each coach at each school:

Boston College 7-2

Tom Coughlin (1993) 0-1

Dan Henning (1994-96) 2-1

Tom O'Brien (1997-2001) 5-0

Frank lost his only encounter with Tom Coughlin at Boston College, 48-34 in 1993. That year was the last in a successful three-year run for Coughlin at BC; he left after topping the Hoos in the 1993 Carquest Bowl to take over the Jacksonville Jaguars NFL expansion team.

Coughlin was replaced by former Tech assistant (under Charley Coffey) Dan Henning. This was not the brightest move ever made by the brass

at BC, as Henning's penchant for slipshod program management would cause his stay on Chestnut Hill to be a brief one, but not before he and Beamer had engaged in a couple of epic struggles, a 12-7 defensive struggle won by Tech at BC in 1994, and a 20-14 Eagles win in Lane Stadium in 1995.

In their third meeting, in 1996 at Boston College, Henning was battling a gambling scandal and hanging on to his job by his fingernails; his position was not helped when his Eagles were taken apart by Beamer's Hokies 45-7 in Alumni Stadium on ESPN.

Henning was fired after the 1996 season and replaced by former Hoo assistant Tom O'Brien. Frank has had some good games with O'Brien, so far winning all five from 1997-2001 by scores of 17-7, 17-0, 38-14 in the magical 1999 season, 48-34 and 34-20. O'Brien is one of seven Big East coaches who have never beaten Frank Beamer, and the only one who has lost to Beamer more than once and is still on the job.

Miami 5-4

Dennis Erickson (1993-94) 0-2

Butch Davis (1995-2000) 5-1

Larry Coker (2001) 0-1

Dennis Erickson coached the Miami Hurricanes for the first two years of BE play, and Erickson handled Beamer by scores of 21-2 and 24-3, the only two games those first two years in which the Hokies did not score a touchdown. Erickson scooted out of Coral Gables just before his NCAA probation landed on the Canes and was replaced by Butch Davis. Things got a lot better for Tech and Beamer.

1995's 13-7 Tech win over Davis' Canes set the tone for Tech to breeze to its first Big East football championship and a Sugar Bowl win over Texas. Frank was to win four more over Davis, 21-7 the next year in the Orange Bowl, then by scores of 27-25, 27-20 and 43-10 before Butch finally broke through in 2000, a 41-21 Miami win in the Orange Bowl.

Like Erickson before him, Davis left for the NFL, but left a much better program behind. Davis assistant Larry Coker was elevated to the top job and last year won his meeting with Beamer and Tech 26-24, Miami's toughest challenge on their way to the MNC.

Rutgers 9-0

Doug Graber (1993-95) 3-0

Terry Shea (1996-2000) 5-0

Greg Schiano (2001) 1-0

Doug Graber was the coach at Rutgers when Big East play began, and he holds the distinction of being the only Scarlet Knights coach to beat Frank, 50-49 in 1992 on a last-gasp Hail Mary the year before round-robin play began. Things haven't gone so well for Rutgers since, as neither Graber nor any other RU coach has been able to beat Tech and Beamer, and since Graber, none has come particularly close.

1993 saw a replay of the previous year's nail biter, this time with Tech holding on for a 49-42 win in Lane Stadium. Tech won another close one the next year 41-34, also at home. Rutgers then decided they wanted something different than Graber's usual 4-7 records and fired him, and the 4-7 records became a distant memory when they hired Terry Shea.

Shea's record against Frank Beamer mirrored his trashing of the Scarlet Knights' program, losing all five by a combined score of 243-60. The only time Shea came remotely close was his first crack at Frank in 1996, when he lost by 'only' sixteen, 30-14. The next four years saw Tech victories of 59-19, 47-7, 58-20 and 49-0 in 2000, the year Shea was mercifully fired.

Considering the way his Tech teams hammered the hapless Shea's Rutgers teams, Frank Beamer was no doubt sorry to see him go. At least until he got a load of Greg Schiano, whose first crack at Tech and Beamer saw the Hokies breeze to a 50-0 laugh.

Pittsburgh 7-2

Johnny Majors (1993-96) 4-0

Walt Harris (1997-2000) 3-2

The opening of Big East conference play in football saw Johnny Majors return to a Pittsburgh program where he had achieved great success in the '70's. Pitt fans expected more of the same, at least until Majors tangled with Frank Beamer for the first time. The 1993 game at Pittsburgh was Virginia Tech's first conference game since the Hokies left the Southern Conference, and Tech surprised many, including most Tech fans, as they smashed the Panthers by a score of 63-21. It was the turnaround for a Tech team that had gone a miserable 2-8-1 in 1992, and sparked Tech on to an unprecedented wave of football success they are still riding.

Majors never quite got it done at Pittsburgh, and he never beat Frank Beamer, following up the first loss with three more, 45-7 in '94, 26-16 in '95 and 34-17 in '96. Majors gave up trying to rebuild Pitt after that season and retired.

Walt Harris, whose first Panther team shocked Tech 23-30 in 1997, a loss that cost Tech a share of the Big East championship and a berth in the Fiesta Bowl, replaced him. Harris has continued to give Frank Beamer fits; Tech won 27-7 in '98, 30-17 in '99 and a taut 37-34 decision in 2000, before Pitt and Harris caught a 2001 Tech team dispirited following a loss to Syracuse the previous week and the Panthers pounded Tech 38-7, the thirty-one point margin tying a 52-21 loss at Syracuse for the worst BE loss suffered by a Frank Beamer Tech team.

Syracuse 5-4

Paul Pasqualoni (1993-2001) 5-4

Since Big East round-robin play began, Tech's series with Syracuse has produced the conference's closest rivalry. The teams of Frank Beamer and Paul Pasqualoni have gone at each other nine times in conference play, and Beamer holds a 5-4 lead, which drops to a dead-even 5-5 with Pasqualoni's win in 1992. The series saw

the home team win the first eight, and the visitors the last two.

Tech wrapped up a bid to the Independence Bowl in 1993 with a 45-24 win over the Orange, then lost the next year at the Carrier Dome when Syracuse rallied for a 28-20 victory. Donovan McNabb came on the scene in 1995 and while he never came close to winning at Tech, losing 31-7 in '95 and 31-3 in '97, he held serve at home, leading SU to a 52-21 win in '96 and a thrilling, last-second, come-from-behind 28-26 victory in '98 in the game for the BE championship.

In 1999, it was exit Donovan McNabb and enter Michael Vick, and the Hokies won big, 62-0 in a prime time ESPN extravaganza that vaulted the Hokies into the national consciousness on their way to the Sugar Bowl.

Frank Beamer had never won in five tries at the Carrier Dome until his Tech team won there in 2000 by the score of 22-14. Paul Pasqualoni had never won in four trips to Lane Stadium until his Syracuse team returned the favor in 01 by the same 22-14 score.

Temple 8-1

Ron Dickerson (1993-1997) 5-0
Bobby Wallace (1998-2001) 3-1

Ron Dickerson took over the Temple football program in 1993 just in time for the opening of BE play. Dickerson, whom history is likely to record as the man most responsible for the Owls being booted out of the conference, ran up one of the worst head-coaching records in the history of football, going 8-47 in his five-year tenure. He had no success against Frank Beamer, losing 55-7 in 1993, 41-12 in '94, 38-16 in '95, 38-0 in '96 and 23-13 in '97.

Dickerson was hastily fired following the '97 season and replaced by big Division II winner Bobby Wallace. His Owls came to Lane Stadium in 1998 and pulled off what remains the biggest upset in BE history, shocking the heavily favored

Hokies 28-24. Wallace has had no success since, with the Hokies traveling to Veterans Stadium the next year and pummeling Wallace's Owls 62-7, then easily winning 35-13 in 2000 and 35-0 in '01. Wallace's chances of gaining another win over Tech and Beamer will soon be drawing to a close.

West Virginia 7-2

Don Nehlen (1993-2000) 6-2
Rich Rodriguez (2001) 1-0

The Tech-West Virginia series is a true border war, the only such rivalry in the Big East. It is a spirited clash every year, and had been going on long before the two schools both set up shop in the same conference. Frank Beamer and Don Nehlen had already battled six times before conference play began, and each had won three times, Nehlen in Beamer's first two years at Tech in 1987 and '88, Tech the next three, and WVU in '92.

The 1993 game at Morgantown was the first of two between the teams that would come down to a field goal; that year a missed Tech attempt allowed the Mountaineers to escape with a 14-13 victory on their way to an undefeated season. The next year Tech began its current domination of the series with a rousing 34-6 Thursday night win at Lane, then won the next two 27-0 and 31-14.

The three-game Tech winning streak was broken at Mountaineer Field in 1997 as Nehlen's team won 30-17. That was the last time Nehlen and WVU would beat Tech, as the Hokies won 27-13 in 1998, saw a late field goal win this time at WVU in 1999, 22-20, and won 48-20 at Tech in 2000, again on a Thursday night.

Don Nehlen had had enough and announced his retirement late in the 2000 season. Frank Beamer's record against the venerable WVU coach ended at 9-5, 6-2 in the Big East, including six of the last seven.

Rich Rodriguez took over for Nehlen in 2001,

and Frank Beamer promptly made it 1-0 against Rich and seven of eight against WVU, winning 35-0 in Morgantown.

and with the current state of the Tech program, is likely to keep winning. The Big East is still a very young conference, but Frank Beamer has established himself as the best coach the BE has yet seen.

Some Other Big East Coaching Tidbits

- Virginia Tech under Frank Beamer is the only Big East team never to experience a losing record in conference play.
- Of the Big East coaches who coached more than once against Beamer and never beat him — Tom O'Brien, Doug Graber, Terry Shea, Johnny Majors and Ron Dickerson — only BC's O'Brien is still a head coach in Division I-A.
- The only BE coach Frank coached against more than once and never beat, Dennis Erickson, is now the coach at Oregon State. Of the two other coaches Frank hasn't beaten after only one try, Tom Coughlin is in the NFL, while Beamer should get many more cracks at Miami's Larry Coker.
- The retired Don Nehlen was the only BE coach Frank beat six times; Beamer beat O'Brien, Shea, Dickerson, Butch Davis and Paul Pasqualoni five times, while Pasqualoni was the only coach to beat Beamer more than twice; he's at four and counting.
- Frank Beamer leads Big East coaches in conference wins with 48, and the only other in the ballpark is Paul Pasqualoni with 43. Conference victories for the other six are O'Brien with 17, Harris with 14, Coker with 7, Wallace with 6, Rodriguez with 1 and Schiano with 0. As Tech continues to field winning teams, it is going to take anybody else, even Pasqualoni, a while to catch up.

The hallmark of a successful coach is consistent winning, and that is exactly what Frank Beamer has done at Virginia Tech. He wins, wins often,

The Corners Are Full

Some thoughts on the ever-expanding Lane Stadium, and how different things used to be just a few short years ago.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Recently, I paid a visit to Lane Stadium and went inside to admire the new South end zone expansion. I entered via an always-open gate at the North end of the stadium, and I went up to the top row of the North end zone bleachers to stare across at the South end zone.

A trip into Lane Stadium these days is a surreal experience. To borrow a phrase from the Marketing group at now-defunct Oldsmobile, this is not your father's Lane Stadium. In the span of just a few years, those gaping holes that used to exist at the North and South ends of the stadium have been replaced with approximately 16,000 new seats.

About 5500 of those new seats are in the North end zone, in the form of all-business metal bleachers that exist for one purpose only: to pack as many rowdy Hokie fans into a small area as possible. No luxury suites here, no concession stands, and no wooden seating surfaces; just raw, cold, loud-if-you-stomp-your-feet sheet metal.

The North end zone gets a bad rap for being ugly, short-sighted, and an ill-fitting tack-on to Tech's beloved Lane Stadium. To heck with that — I like it. It looks small when compared to the rest of the stadium, but if you visit Lane Stadium and go into the North end zone section, you quickly realize that it's not small. *A lot of people* sit there. Pretty? No. Functional? Yes. I vote we keep it, although I would like to see Tech one day dress up its bare metal underside a little. It

is a bit of an eyesore right now from its backside.

And then there's that South end zone structure.

Anyone who has seen it in person will tell you that pictures do not do it justice, and that is correct. To drive or walk right up to it and peer from the ground all the way up to the top is to understand that it is a massive structure. It has to be. It seats more people than Cassell Coliseum. Not only that, but it's got a bunch of other stuff in it: restrooms, an indoor stadium club, concession stands, elevators, locker rooms, media rooms, and an assortment of other functional areas.

A moment's thought brings up an obvious point: the North and South end zone structures are as different in character as Stalin and Ghandi. On one hand, the North end zone is almost a stop-gap measure designed to put fans in the stadium and do nothing else. It cost about \$2 million, and the video scoreboard that rises up behind and above it costs about \$1 million more.

The South end zone, on the other hand, represents everything that's right and wrong with college football. It's a monolithic monster that not only puts fans in the stadium but caters to a select few with enough money to enjoy its luxury suites. It generates revenue not just from ticket sales, but from those luxury suites and annual gifts required to sit in some of its seats and enjoy its stadium club privileges. It cost \$34 million to build.

But together, those two disparate constructs make Lane Stadium what it has never been before: a four-sided noise factory. Sure, in the past, there have been North and South end zone bleachers at the same time, but never have Hokie fans so *surrounded* the opposition. There's nowhere left for the sound to go now, and everywhere you look, there will be thousands of Hokie fans bearing down on the field, cheering Tech on. It's going to be a sight to behold, and the other day, when I visited the

stadium, it gave me a sense of awe, even while completely empty.

I'm excited to see what the LSU game will be like. I'm pleased that after all these years, Virginia Tech can offer its fans a stadium that is truly grand and all-encompassing, not just a couple of big concrete bleachers staring across the field at each other.

But still, I find myself looking back, back in the day....

An Ever-Changing World

I have an interesting capacity for nostalgia and for remembering the past in a positive fashion, no matter what the reality was. It's a personality trait. I don't necessarily pooh-pooh everything new, but I do fondly recall "the old stuff."

When I was a student, for example, you could stand at the entrance to Virginia Tech's "Mall" and gaze down its two long lanes of pavement, all the way to the War Memorial. These days, the huge expanse of Torgersen Hall spans the Mall, arching over it from what used to be a grassy hillside over to Newman Library.

I think Torgersen Hall is a beautiful, impressive structure, one to be proud of. But still, I miss the days when you could see clearly from one end of VT's Mall all the way to the other. Today's students have no idea what that's like.

I'm always struck by man's capacity to shape the world around him into something different, something permanent. Something exists a certain way for years, perhaps decades or even centuries, until someone with influence comes along and gathers money, an architect, and a construction company and changes the landscape ... forever.

So it is with Lane Stadium. Pretty soon, we'll become used to seeing that huge South end zone structure, and it will be difficult to remember what it was like back when that space was

occupied by bleachers, trees, grass, and open air. At this point, I can still see in my mind's eye how that South end zone used to look, in much the same way that I can picture the Mall before Torgersen Hall swallowed it. In my mind's eye, I can see 1600 fans in those tiny bleachers down there, as I saw them for years from my seats in section 13.

I can also remember what it was like to be able to watch the game from the North end zone, pre-bleachers, as I walked from Lane Stadium's northwest gate over to the East stands. Many was the time I arrived late for a game and managed to see a couple of plays as I walked across the large, grassy expanse behind the North end zone, on my way from the West side over to the East side. Try that now, and your view will be blocked by those new bleachers, and you're likely to walk into a steel girder.

But the advancements have their advantages. During the 2000 WVU game, I went over to the West side during half time and was late getting back to my East stand seats. As I walked behind the North end zone bleachers, Michael Vick hit Bob Slowikowski for a 72-yard catch-and-run TD pass.

I didn't see the play live, but as I walked under the Jumbotron video scoreboard, I stopped, craned my neck, and managed to watch a replay of it, albeit from a difficult angle. You couldn't do *that* "back in the day," folks. It saved me from having ask that silly, "What happened?" question when I got back to my seat.

Empty Corners

As Virginia Tech football gets bigger and bigger and more and more prominent, becoming more business-like all the time, I am reminded of a time when the atmosphere in Lane Stadium was a bit more casual, and elbow room was plentiful.

I have a couple of pictures I took from the North end zone grass in 1991, just before the Cincinnati game that year (a game that Tech won 56-

9). I leaned out over the railing above the tunnel the players run out of, pointed my camera straight down, and snapped a picture of Coach Beamer waiting at the entrance of the tunnel with his players. You can see Damien Russell, Jon Jeffries, Eugene Chung and others in the picture.

The second picture is taken as the players are running out of the tunnel onto the field. The thing that strikes me about this picture is that you can see the East stands in the background, and the corners are completely devoid of fans, all the way down to the front row. Empty seats.

I looked it up, and there were just 36,312 fans at that game. And here's the killer: that game was Tech's first home game after being away from Lane Stadium for five straight games. Tech hadn't played at home for *49 straight days*, and just 36,312 fans came to see them.

I have a third picture from that game of a few ... shall we say ... *weary* students sleeping in the stands during that game. They're laid out flat on Tech's bench seats, taking up as much room as they please, trying to sleep off the night before. And they've got plenty of leg and elbow room, with empty seats all around.

Just five years before that, in the 1986 season, the Hokies ended the year with a home game against Vanderbilt. At that point in time, Tech was in the final stages of driving towards a Peach Bowl birth, and they were the owners of surprising 7-2-1 record. Tech kicker Chris Kinzer was having an All-American caliber year, at one point having made 17 straight field goals, and in Tech's prior home game two weeks earlier, he had hit a 49-yarder in the rain with one second to go to give Tech a 17-15 win.

It was one of Tech's most exciting football seasons ever, and a win in the season home finale against Vandy would put the Hokies into a bowl game. And a mere 27,300 people came to that game.

That's not a misprint.

Oh, and that Kentucky game I spoke of, two weeks before? 30,300 fans.

Times are changing, folks. The days when a bowl-bound Tech team could barely draw flies (27,300? Give me a break!) are long gone. To give you some perspective, the Hokies' season-opening affair with Arkansas State this year will probably draw more fans than 1986's Kentucky and Vanderbilt games *combined*.

One more note about that Kentucky game: it's not like I have room to talk. I heard Kinzer's game-winning kick on my car radio. I was on my way to Williamsburg to attend a dance with a girlfriend of mine who went to William and Mary. What was I thinking? I've straightened out since then; ten years later, in October of 1996, I took a 6-day honeymoon, instead of a full week, so I could get back early and see the Pittsburgh game.

Like I said, times are changing.

Close Your Eyes

This article is rapidly becoming a writer's downfall: it's a story without a point. And you may be asking yourself what I'm driving at here.

To be honest, I'm not sure. But as Virginia Tech football grows, and Lane Stadium is expanded with more seats, and more fans pack themselves in, there's a tiny little part of me that, believe it or not, wouldn't mind going back to that sunny October day in 1991 when the Hokies smashed Cincinnati 56-9.

Just to see what a crowd of 36,312 looks like. To move through the stands unencumbered. To stand in short concession lines, and even shorter bathroom lines. But mostly, to look around myself and realize that it wasn't always going to be like that, playing uninteresting games in front of small crowds.

I remember when I was younger, in the 1980's and through the early 1990's, I used to always try to gauge the size of a Tech football crowd by looking up to the corners of the East stands to see how empty they were. When they were barren of fans, and I knew the crowd was only 40,000 people, tops, it used to frustrate me. I used to wonder why more people didn't come to the games. If only more people would show up, maybe Tech would win more, and the games would be more exciting.

So why would I want to go back and see one of those games, one of those Cincinnati-type games with only about 35,000 people in the stands? Because this time, I would be able to look at those empty corners and smile, knowing that a brighter future for Tech football was, well, just around the corner. It's no big deal, I'd tell myself, just enjoy the leg room and the fact that when the kid with the sodas reaches your row, he'll still have some drinks left in his tray, not like these days, when he barely makes it out of the tunnel before he's sold out.

These thoughts have helped me deal with the struggles the men's basketball team is facing right now. I go to games, and sometimes there are only about 3,000 people there, but instead of letting it bother me, I remind myself to enjoy it, because there are plenty of great seats, and everyone who is there with me is there because they love Tech basketball, not because they have hitched their wagon to a winner.

I can prop my feet up on the seat in front of me without kicking someone in the head, and I can stuff my coat into the empty seat next to me. When I go to get a hot dog and a drink, I don't have to wait very long in line. And in the last few years, I'll bet I've sat in the front row at least ten times, a feat I could never pull off back in the 80's, when the Hokies were a nationally-ranked team.

Tech's not very good in basketball right now, but they will be again some day, and then Cassell will be crowded again, and I'll find myself miss-

ing, in an odd way, the "old days" when it wasn't so hard to leave my seat to go to the bathroom, and I had a place to put my coat.

But I digress. If you're looking for a point to this article, I guess that's it: don't forget to enjoy the ride. I know there's a lot you want to happen for Tech football. You want the big games against teams like LSU in Lane Stadium, you want a win over a top-ranked team, you want another undefeated season, you want a national championship. That's all fine and good. It's the striving for achievement that has pushed the Hokies to the heights they have reached, though they can certainly go higher.

But while you're looking at that target in the distance, don't forget to see what's going on around you. Because it's always good, and it's always fun, even if it isn't exactly what you want.

And before you make your next trip to Blacksburg and that 64,000-seat stadium, close your eyes and remember what it looked like before, without the South end zone expansion, and the luxury boxes, and the chair-backed bleacher seats. Because once you get used to the new-look Lane Stadium, you'll forget what the old one looked like.

And that would be too bad, because some great things happened in the old Lane Stadium, too. Don't forget that, now that the corners are full.

Inside the Numbers 1: Football Ticket Revenue

You'll never believe this, but higher ticket prices plus larger crowds equals more money. Lots more.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

We talk a lot about stadium expansion, increased ticket sales, and the growth in season ticket sales for Virginia Tech football, but no one has ever asked the question, "How does that translate into real dollars in Virginia Tech's pocket?"

Since 1993, when the Hokies started their bowl run, the average cost of a Tech football ticket has increased from roughly \$20 to \$31 (in 2002). Attendance is up dramatically, with sellouts becoming the norm instead of the WVU-UVa exception, and stadium capacity has ebbed and flowed.

With South end zone expansion nearly complete, Lane Stadium's capacity will increase to 63,459 seats, up from a previous high of 56,272 in 2000. As the Hokies get ready to open their expanded stadium and make more money from ticket sales than ever before, it bears taking a look back at ticket revenue during the Beamer Bowl era (1993-2001).

Using ticket costs, season ticket sales figures, and game attendance figures (plus a few wild guesses), we'll take a stab at trying to figure out what VT's football ticket revenue has been since 1993.

As usual, if you're an "executive summary" type of person, you can skip over the next few sections and go straight to the "Revenue Calculations" section. If you like to know how the results were reached, in mind-numbing detail, then slog your way through the next few sections for explanations.

Required Data

To figure out ticket revenue, all we need is attendance figures for each game from 1993-2001, and the cost of a ticket for each game. You then multiply the attendance figure by the ticket cost to get revenue.

Of course, comp tickets (which are free tickets given out to friends of the university, recruits, players' families, high school coaches, etc.) reduce ticket revenue. So we'll need to estimate how many comp tickets are given out for each game, and subtract that out of the revenue total.

And what about student tickets? Students don't pay for tickets per se, but they do pay an athletics fee, and that athletic fee money goes to the athletic department, to help compensate for student tickets and other items and expenses.

But wait, sometimes students pay for tickets, because a couple of years ago, VT introduced student season tickets, so students could pay a nominal fee and get reserved seats. And students buy guest tickets for friends and family.

And in some years, season tickets were discounted over single-game tickets, and in other years, they weren't.

So calculating ticket revenue sounds easy at first, but quickly gets muddied up. We'll have to make some assumptions and shortcuts so we don't get bogged down in the details.

Assumptions, Caveats, and Lazy Shortcuts

Given all the mitigating factors, we'll make the following assumptions, in order to simplify our

calculations:

- The number of “comp,” or free tickets, distributed for each game will be estimated at 4,000. During the 2000 season, VT released information that indicated 4,450 comp tickets were reserved. That gives us an idea of the magnitude of comp tickets, and numbers for individual seasons could be higher or lower (Tech has dropped the number of comp. tickets it distributes significantly in recent years, we’re told). We’ll set the figure to 4,000 for every season from 1993-2001.
- We won’t attempt to calculate the revenue from student tickets versus general public game tickets. We’ll assume that the athletic department gets compensated for the full value of a student ticket, meaning that if a game ticket costs \$28 for the general public, the athletic department gets \$28 for each free student ticket picked up. We realize this assumption is fundamentally flawed, but it simplifies our calculations drastically. We can now say that ticket revenue = (attendance - comp tickets) multiplied by ticket cost, without worrying about how student tickets affect revenue.
- Revenue from student season ticket sales, which were introduced within the last couple of years, will not be estimated and will be ignored. Instead, we’ll assume that the extra revenue helps out with making the previous bullet item more accurate.
- Decreased revenue from kids’ tickets will not be factored in. In some years, VT offers kids’ tickets at reduced prices for some games, in order to increase attendance (for example, selling kids’ tickets to a Temple game for just \$10). This will be ignored, as the number of kids’ tickets sold and how they affected revenue would complicate the calculations.
- Season ticket buyers did not receive a discount over the cost of single-game tickets from 1993-1996, but they did in 1997 (\$1 per game), 1998 and 1999 (\$3 per game). These discounts will be

Single-Game and Season Ticket Prices, 1993-2001

Season	Single-Game Ticket Prices	Season Ticket Prices
1993	\$16 Bowling Green \$20 MD, Temp., Rut., ECU, Syr.	Same Same
1994	\$20 Arkansas State \$22 WVU, Temp., Pitt, Rut., UVa	Same Same
1995	\$20 Cincinnati, Akron \$22 BC, Miami, Syracuse	Same Same
1996	\$22 All games (7 home games)	Same
1997	\$22 Ark. State, Mia (OH), BC, UAB \$25 Syracuse, Miami	\$21 each (\$1 off) \$24 each (\$1 off)
1998	\$25 Pitt, Temple, Rutgers \$27 ECU, WVU, UVa	\$22 each (\$3 off) \$24 each (\$3 off)
1999	\$25 JMU, UAB, BC \$27 Clemson, Syracuse, Miami	\$22 each (\$3 off) \$24 each (\$3 off)
2000	\$28 all games (season ticket price)	Same
2001	\$28 all games (season ticket price)	Same

factored into the revenue figures by multiplying the discount by the number of season tickets sold, and subtracting that from revenue for each game.

Season tickets sold out in 2000 and 2001, so single-game ticket prices used in calculations will be the same as season ticket prices. In 2000 and 2001, any unused opponent tickets were made available to the public at prices higher than VT season ticket prices, but these tickets will be ignored, and it will be assumed that all tickets sold were sold at VT season ticket prices.

Ticket Prices

The table on the previous page shows single-game and season ticket prices for Hokie home games from 1993-2001.

Season Tickets Sold

The number of season tickets sold enters into the calculations, and plus, it's fun to see the numbers. Here they are:

Season	Season Tickets Sold
1993	10,506
1994	12,280
1995	14,124
1996	16,087
1997	16,675
1998	18,433
1999	23,816
2000	29,440
2001	30,254

Attendance Figures

Of course, when calculating revenue, attendance for each game must be factored in, because ticket prices vary for different games. The detailed attendance data for each game is contained in the web page and spreadsheet linked at the end of this article, but we thought you might like to look at total attendance and

average attendance for each season:

Season	Total Attendance	Home Games	Per-Game Attendance
1993	236,434	6	39,406
1994	278,299	6	46,383
1995	223,887	5	44,777
1996	320,022	7	45,717
1997	273,462	6	45,577
1998	294,267	6	49,045
1999	315,111	6	52,519
2000	337,632	6	56,272
2001	321,972	6	53,662

Notable attendance items:

- VT sold out every home game from 1999-2001. The last home game the Hokies didn't sell out was Rutgers on 11/21/98, the next-to-last home game that year. 42,452 fans saw Tech beat the Scarlet Knights 47-7. That is also, not coincidentally, the last time VT had fewer than 50,000 fans for a home game.
- The last time Tech had a crowd of less than 40,000 for a game was in 1997, when 37,411 fans saw Tech trounce UAB 37-0 (11/1/97).
- In the last game of the 1993 season, 44,722 fans saw the Hokies defeat Syracuse 45-24, and that was the largest home crowd that season. Two games that season (Temple and Rutgers) drew barely over 40,000 fans, and the other three (Bowling Green, Maryland, and ECU) drew between 34,000 and 39,000 fans.
- In 1993, season tickets represented just 26.7% of tickets (10,506 out of 39,406 average attendance). In 2001, that number was up to 56.4% of tickets (30,254 out of 53,662 average attendance).

Revenue Calculations

Now, let's dig into some revenue figures. Calculating revenue is simple, thanks to our "Assumptions, Caveats, and Lazy Shortcuts" above. You simply subtract 4,000 assumed comp. tickets from the game attendance and multiply that figure by the single-game ticket price. If it's a season in which season ticket holders received a discount, you have to subtract out the season ticket holders discount.

The formula is:

$$\text{Game Revenue} = [(\text{Attendance} - 4,000 \text{ comp. tickets}) \times (\text{Ticket price})] - [(\text{Season Tickets sold}) \times (\text{Season ticket discount})]$$

So, for example, 47,681 fans attended the 1997 game against Boston College, paying \$22 per ticket. That year, 16,675 season tickets were sold at a discount of \$1 per game per ticket.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{1997 BC Game Revenue} &= [(47,681 - 4,000) \times (\$22)] - (16,675 \times \$1) \\ &= (43,681 \times \$22) - \$16,675 = \mathbf{\$944,307} \end{aligned}$$

Season Highs and Lows

Before we do total attendance and average per-game revenue, let's show the high and low revenue games for each season in the Beamer Bowl era.

Ticket Revenue High and Low Games Per Season					
High/Low	Opponent	Ticket Price	Attendance	Season Tix Discount	Ticket Revenue
1993 Low	BGSU	\$16	37,732	\$0	\$539,712
1993 High	Syracuse	\$20	44,722	\$0	\$814,440
1994 Low	Ark. State	\$20	38,626	\$0	\$692,520
1994 High	WVU	\$22	49,679	\$0	\$1,004,938
1995 Low	Cincinnati	\$20	36,328	\$0	\$646,560
1995 High	Syracuse	\$22	51,239	\$0	\$1,039,258
1996 Low	SW Lou.	\$22	35,643	\$0	\$696,146
1996 High	UVa	\$22	50,128	\$0	\$1,014,816
1997 Low	UAB	\$22	37,411	\$16,675	\$718,367
1997 High	Miami	\$25	53,177	\$16,675	\$1,212,750
1998 Low	Rutgers	\$25	42,452	\$55,299	\$906,001
1998 High	UVa	\$27	53,207	\$55,299	\$1,273,290
1999 Low	JMU, UAB	\$25	51,907	\$71,448	\$1,126,227
1999 High	Syr., Miami	\$27	53,130	\$71,448	\$1,255,062
2000 Low	All Games	\$28	56,272	\$0	\$1,463,616
2000 High	All Games	\$28	56,272	\$0	\$1,463,616
2001 Low	All Games	\$28	53,662	\$0	\$1,390,536
2001 High	All Games	\$28	53,662	\$0	\$1,390,536

Season and Per-Game Revenue

And now, the numbers you've all been waiting for, the total season revenue and per-game revenue.

Season	Home Games	Total Revenue	Per-Game Revenue
1993	6	\$4,113,752	\$685,625
1994	6	\$5,525,326	\$920,888
1995	5	\$4,347,482	\$869,496
1996	7	\$6,424,484	\$917,783
1997	6	\$5,674,056	\$945,676
1998	6	\$6,709,177	\$1,118,196
1999	6	\$7,141,421	\$1,190,237
2000	6	\$8,781,696	\$1,463,616
2001	6	\$8,343,216	\$1,390,536
2002 (est.)	7	\$12,902,603	\$1,843,229

Note: 2002 estimate excludes Ark. State preseason game and is based on stadium selling out for all home games, with capacity of 63,459, minus 4,000 comp. tickets, with tickets priced at \$31 each.

Note that in this table, the Arkansas State preseason game is not included, because VT doesn't receive ticket revenue for that game. Ticket revenue is collected and forwarded to the game sponsor, who then distributes money to the two participating schools from ticket and TV revenue.

The impact of expanding the stadium to over 63,000 seats is shown clearly on that last line. With the extra seats and increased ticket prices, per-game revenue jumps by over \$450,000, or 32.5 percent. Total revenue, thanks to an unusual seven home games (which the Hokies will also have in 2003), jumps by nearly \$4.6 million, or *54.6 percent*.

That extra dough will come in handy for funding other sports, not just football. Remember, Bonnie Henrickson recently talked Jim Weaver into increasing women's hoops funding by \$78,000 per year, a mere 1.7 percent of that \$4.6 million. (But please note that some of that extra ticket revenue will go towards servicing the debt incurred in building the South end zone expansion, so it's not as if VT will have that entire \$4.6 million to throw around).

And compare 2002 to 1993, the beginning of the Beamer bowl era. Ticket revenue in 2002, thanks to more home games (7 versus 6), higher ticket prices (\$31 versus \$16-\$20), and increased attendance (63,459 versus 39,406) will probably be at least triple what it was in 1993.

An extra \$8-\$9 million per year in ticket revenue will do amazing things for an athletic department and its programs. But as good as \$12.9 million sounds, imagine if VT were a Big Ten or SEC school, selling out a 100,000+ seat stadium, at \$35-\$40 per ticket, raking in \$3.5-\$4.0 million per game, for 6-7 home games. That's anywhere from \$21 million to \$28 million per year in ticket revenue, which puts \$12.9 million to shame.

This analysis doesn't take into account the "Annual seat gifts" required to purchase seats in the Zone Club (\$750 per seat for 880 seats), Touchdown Terrace (\$500 for 321 seats), and Goal Line Stands (\$200 for 1,160 seats) sections of the South end zone. At the time this article was written, only the Touchdown Terrace

seats were sold out, but if VT is able to sell out all of those seats, then that brings in an extra \$1.05 million per year.

The Data

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

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue020/vtfootballticketrevenue.htm>

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/issue020/vtfootballticketrevenue.xls>

Inside the Numbers 2: The Boom in Tech Athletics

VT athletic department revenue is booming, and the numbers get better every year for the Hokies.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Perhaps you've noticed a slew of Title IX-related articles lately. That's for two reasons: (1) Title IX is 30 years old this year, which means that it's celebrating three decades of driving up the cost of intercollegiate athletics and causing men's sports programs to be cut; and (2) The Chronicle of Higher Education recently released its NCAA Title IX compliance data, data which is distributed to sports writers and columnists around the country.

The Chronicle's database is a vast collection of information about Division 1 college athletics, not just in the area of gender equity (vis-à-vis number of scholarships granted to men and women), but also in the area of revenue and expenses for athletic programs, with separate breakouts for football and men's and women's basketball.

Most sportswriters who have examined the data are using it to report on gender equity: which schools comply, which ones don't, etc. But me personally, I'm most intrigued by the financial data that shows how much each school's football program and basketball programs make and spend, not to mention what the overall athletic department makes and spends.

The Chronicle's latest set of figures is for the 2000-2001 academic year, which means they're running one year behind (which makes sense; that's a lot of data to compile). Their database goes all the way back to 1995-96, which means that if you examine their Virginia Tech data, you can get a good picture of what's been going on financially in Tech athletics.

As regular TSLX readers know, I love the financial numbers. So strap it on and take a look. The Chronicle's figures paint a picture of a Tech athletic department that is booming, nearly doubling its revenue — and, unfortunately, its expenses — in the last five years alone.

Athletic Department Revenue, 1997-2001

The Chronicle has revenue data going back to the 1995-96 academic year, and the data includes football revenue, men's and women's basketball revenue, and total athletic department revenue.

Prior to the 1997-98 academic year, the Chronicle's data is incomplete. Their web site contains some data for the 1995-96 and 1996-97 academic years, but it doesn't include basketball revenue in either one of those years, and it doesn't include total revenue for 1995-96.

Hence, the blank cells in the table on the following page.

(continued next page)

VT Athletic Department Revenue				
Year	Football	Men's Basketball	Women's Basketball	Total Revenue
1995-96	\$11,616,000	Not available	Not available	Not available
1996-97	\$12,127,000	Not available	Not available	\$16,239,000
1997-98	\$9,798,127	\$1,340,047	\$328,111	\$19,107,417
1998-99	\$11,466,861	\$1,055,588	\$512,777	\$20,845,889
1999-2000	\$15,595,814	\$1,016,113	\$634,371	\$26,235,450
2000-2001	\$14,611,618	\$1,085,594	\$589,822	\$28,542,305

Source: The Chronicle for Higher Education. Note that Total Revenue in this table does not equal the sum of football and basketball revenues; athletic departments have other sources of revenue, as well.

The Chronicle's data show that athletic department revenue at Virginia Tech is rising fast, having increased 75.8% in just four years, from 96-97 to 00-01, approximately 15% per year. That's a healthy growth rate, to say the least. I wish my paycheck was growing like that.

What's Included in the Data

Before you start asking where all that revenue comes from, a word of warning: it's almost impossible to tell. Even the Chronicle of Higher Education itself doesn't really know, on a school-by-school basis.

I emailed Welch Suggs, the Athletic Editor at the Chronicle (and no relation to Lee Suggs), and asked him if he could tell me what the term "revenue" included. All he could really do, and rightfully so, was point me towards the form that each school had to fill out, a form called the "Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act report."

"The revenue and expense items can vary from institution to institution," he warned me. "Some athletics departments may count scholarship dollars as revenue received from their college's general fund, while others will count them as expenses paid to the college. So be wary."

Indeed. The EADA report that each school fills out has 16 different revenue categories (for *each* sport, with 20 men's sports and 21 women's sports listed, plus an "Other sports" category for each) and 12 different expense

categories, but there's still a lot of wiggle room for schools to put dollars in one category versus another. Here are the revenue and expense items schools are asked to fill out for each sport reported on:

Revenue sources: public ticket sales, student ticket sales, student activity fees, guarantees and options, cash contributions from alumni and others, direct state or other govt. support, institutional support, bowl games, tournament money, NCAA/conference distributions, concessions, radio and television, program sales and advertising, signage/sponsorships/royalties, sports camp revenues, and all other revenues.

Expense objects: athletic student aid, guarantees and options paid, salaries, salary benefits, recruiting, team travel (including lodging and meals), equipment/uniforms/supplies, officials, fund raising, contract services, sports camp expenses, and all other expenses.

Note that "debt service" and "capital expense" are two categories that the EADA report asks for, but which are not included in "total expenses." Interpret that as you will. It could mean that, for example, construction projects like the football team's new \$1 million practice field are not included in the expense report for football ... or maybe they are. It's all in how the individual school decides to fill out the form, as Welch Suggs noted.

Hokie Club Donations

Your first thought is that football revenue is the driver in the big increase in overall revenue, but it's not the sole factor. There is a "base" football revenue figure (not including bowl money) that has been gradually rising from about \$7.5 million per year in 1995-96 to just over \$13 million in 2000-01, but that doesn't explain the \$12 million increase in overall athletic department revenue from 1996-97 to 2000-2001.

So where does the extra money come from? From another rapidly growing source, one that's growing as fast as football revenue: Hokie Club donations.

We know in a general sense that Hokie Club donations have been growing over the last few years, but exactly how much? By doing some research in the TechSideline.com archives, I was able to piece together some figures that are probably pretty accurate.

First of all, here's a table that shows Hokie Club revenue from 1997-98 to the present:

Hokie Club Donations	
Year	Revenue
1997-98	\$6,300,000
1998-99	\$8,900,000
1999-2000	\$10,000,000
2000-2001	\$10,300,000
2001-2002	\$11,500,000

It's important to name the sources for this information.

1997-98 and 1998-99: A HokieCentral.com News and Notes article from August 13, 1999 stated that "... fund-raising year from June of 1998 [sic] to June of 1999, the Hokie Club raised \$8.9 million, which is a new record and beat the previous year's record by a whopping 41 percent." Doing the math leads to a figure of \$6.8 million from July 1997-June 1998.

1999-2000: A HokieCentral.com News and Notes article from August 7, 2000, stated, "Lu Merritt reported that in the most recent year [1999-2000], the Hokie Club topped \$10 million in donations, easily smashing last year's record of \$8.9 million."

2000-01 and 2001-02: A TSL "Voice of the Fan" column from May 15, 2002, reported that Lu Merritt, at an O&M tour stop, had said, "This year's [2001-02] athletic budget will reach \$25 million dollars. Of that amount, \$11-12 million will be gifts through the Hokie club that the volunteers spearhead. That compares to \$10.3 million last year [2000-01]." For purposes of this article, I averaged the "\$11-\$12 million" figure to \$11.5 million.

Looking at the previous tables, you can see that in the three-year span from 1997-98 to 2000-01, athletic department revenue increased by \$9.4 million, and \$4 million of that came from increased Hokie Club donations. Football revenue increased by nearly \$5 million over that same time period. Basketball revenue (men's plus women's) held steady over that same time period.

Athletic Department Profit/Loss, 1997-2001

The dramatic increase in revenue, fueled by the football program and Hokie Club donations, immediately leads to the question of whether the department is making a profit, and if so, how much.

Let's reprint the revenue figures, but this time we'll add in the expenses and calculate profit/loss.

(continued next page)

VT Athletic Department Profit/Loss			
Year	Revenue	Expenses	Profit/Loss
1996-97	\$16,239,000	\$13,741,000	\$2,498,000
1997-98	\$19,107,417	\$19,819,804	(\$712,387)
1998-99	\$20,845,889	\$20,319,546	\$526,343
1999-2000	\$26,235,450	\$22,581,112	\$3,654,338
2000-2001	\$28,542,305	\$25,423,175	\$3,119,130

You can see that while revenue has been exploding, so have expenses. That's Will's Law #5 of finance: the more you have, the more you spend. But that's what it's all about: when your business is making more, then you spend more and build the business up, so the business can keep making more.

But the \$3.1 million profit from 2000-2001 does not include BCS bowl money. The implication is that BCS bowls are no longer required for the VT Athletic Department to turn a tidy profit in any given year, not now that football ticket revenue and football TV appearance revenue are climbing.

The source of the profit from 1996-97 and 1999-2000 is obvious: those are years that the football team went to BCS bowls, which bring in an extra \$3-\$4 million or more than non-BCS bowl games, under the Big East revenue sharing agreement (BCS bowl participants make \$4-\$6 million, while Gator bowl participants and others make about \$1.5 million or less).

Individual Sport Profit/Loss

Here are some tables showing how football, men's basketball, and women's basketball fared in recent years. You can see what a profit center football is, and you can also see that while women's basketball is a money sink, as expected, men's basketball at VT is a painful situation, as well.

Football Profit/Loss			
Year	Revenue	Expense	Profit/Loss
1995-96	\$11,616,000	\$3,413,000	\$8,203,000
1996-97	\$12,127,000	\$7,498,000	\$4,629,000
1997-98	\$9,798,127	\$7,323,136	\$2,474,991
1998-99	\$11,466,861	\$7,601,331	\$3,865,530
1999-2000	\$15,595,814	\$9,143,874	\$6,451,940
2000-2001	\$14,611,618	\$9,736,960	\$4,874,658

Men's Basketball Profit/Loss			
Year	Revenue	Expense	Profit/Loss
1997-98	\$1,340,047	\$1,600,259	(\$260,212)
1998-99	\$1,055,588	\$1,469,593	(\$414,005)
1999-2000	\$1,016,113	\$1,667,335	(\$651,222)
2000-2001	\$1,085,594	\$1,976,909	(\$891,315)

Women's Basketball Profit/Loss			
Year	Revenue	Expense	Profit/Loss
1997-98	\$328,111	\$945,728	(\$617,617)
1998-99	\$512,777	\$1,144,182	(\$631,405)
1999-2000	\$634,371	\$1,269,909	(\$635,538)
2000-2001	\$589,822	\$2,067,324	(\$1,477,502)

In 1999-2000, the VT men's basketball program was ranked 136th out of 137 teams studied by The Detroit News in terms of profit/loss. That year, the Hokies lost \$651,222 on men's basketball, and only Colorado (with a staggering loss of \$1,199,867) lost more.

The Future

It's interesting to note that in 2000-2001, the year VT entered the Big East for all sports, basketball went from losing \$1.29 million the prior year to getting hammered for a \$2.37 million loss. All-sports membership in the Big East, from a financial standpoint, has been brutal for the Hokies.

Don't forget that for the first five years of BE membership (2000-01 to 2004-05) the Hokies are (a) not sharing in Big East basketball revenue, and (b) paying \$200,000 per year to join the conference. From year #6 onward, the Hokies get to share Big East revenue, estimated at over \$1 million a year, but they have to pay \$300,000 a year during years 6-10 of Big East membership.

In 2000-2001, the Hokies (a) lost \$100,000 in revenue sharing by leaving the A-10; (b) paid \$200,000 to the Big East for the year; and (c) paid \$200,000 to exit the A-10. There's no telling if the Hokies reported all those changes under basketball revenue/expenses or elsewhere, but that \$500,000 hit was pretty painful to absorb that year.

Looking down the road, Virginia Tech will soon top \$30 million in revenue, if not for the 2001-2002 academic year, then for the 2002-2003 year. Seven home football games with an expanded stadium and an eighth game, a preseason contest that will pay about \$600,000, guarantees that the Hokies will top \$30 million in overall revenue for 2002-2003. That's with or without a BCS bowl.

The popular theory is that conference realign-

ment looms on the horizon, perhaps around 2005. In terms of athletic revenue and overall athletic budget, and everything that entails, the Hokies are doing everything they can to position themselves for the big shakedown. Business is booming at Virginia Tech.

Inside TSL: The Covers

So what goes into producing a TSL Extra cover? Sometimes a little, sometimes a lot.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

(Editor's Note: This article is best read by looking at the online web site version, not the PDF version. The online version includes a thumbnail of each TSL Extra cover discussed, plus a link to a never-before-seen alternate Kevin Jones photo for issue #5. The online version also includes a poll where you can vote for your favorite TSL Extra cover!)

I recently got into a message board conversation about one of the TSL Extra covers (I don't remember which one), and there turned out to be an interesting story behind it, depending upon how you define "interesting."

"Crimson Hokie," a regular on the boards, said, "That's neat stuff. You should write a behind-the-scenes TSLX article sometime with little tidbits like that. I love that kind of stuff."

Crimson freely admitted shortly thereafter to being "kind of weird," but if he is, then so am I, because I thought it might be a good idea to list all 20 TSL Extra covers and tell the story behind each one.

(Pause.)

Okay, for those of you who are still here and have an interest in this topic, first let me tell you a little bit about how the covers are done.

The TSLX covers are done in Adobe Photoshop. For those of you who are unfamiliar with Photoshop, it's a graphics editing program that

allows you to combine pictures, graphics, and text to create a single image. You can stack items in the picture (in other words, put your text on top of your pictures and vice versa), resize items, and do all sorts of things.

I've got a master template that I use that contains the TSL Extra logo, the issue number, date, and a few orange lines, plus the cover caption. Each month, all I really have to do is drop a new cover photo into the template, change the issue number, date, and caption, and I'm ready to go. Sometimes I have to resize text or change the color of the logo to make it blend in with the picture better, but at the core, it's a pretty simple process.

TSLX Cover Trivia

Here are some miscellaneous facts about the 20 TSLX covers produced so far:

- Cover photos shot by Mike Ingalls of TheSabre.com: 9 (Michael Vick on cover #1, Michael Vick and Tony Dobbins on cover #8, Kevin Jones on cover #13, Frank Beamer on cover #14, Mike Daniels on cover #15, Marcus Vick on cover #16, Marcus Vick on cover #17, Keith Willis on cover #18, and Ben Taylor on cover #19).
- Cover photos shot by Will Stewart of TechSideline.com: 1 (cover #12, picture of Kevin Jones shaking hands with the crowd after the 2001 WVU game).
- Covers featuring football players: 17.
- Covers featuring football coaches: 1 (Frank Beamer, cover #14).
- Covers featuring football stadiums: 1 (Lane Stadium, cover #20).
- Covers featuring dollar signs: 1 (cover #6).

- Covers featuring basketball players: 1 (cover #8, Tony Dobbins).
- Covers utilizing free photographs: 17.
- Covers utilizing photos we had to pay for: 3 (cover #7, Bryan Randall; cover #9, Montavis Pitts; cover #11, Noland Burchette).
- Most frequent cover subject: Kevin Jones (4 times — cover #4, #5, #12, and #13).

Stories Behind the Covers

Each cover has a story behind it. Some stories are more interesting than others. Judge for yourself.

Cover #1 (Michael Vick setting up to pass): This photograph was shot by Mike Ingalls prior to the 1999 Tech/UVa game in Charlottesville. It was taken during pre-game warmups, during which Virginia fans serenaded Vick with taunts of being the second-best quarterback in the state in high school (behind Ronald Curry). Vick promptly went out and torched Virginia for 222 yards passing and 1 TD, completing 7-9 passes. This cover was the template for all other TSLX covers to follow, created by Ingalls in Photoshop.

Cover #2 (Justin Hamilton flying in the air in front of Clintwood High School cheerleaders): This photo was taken by Ron Skeber of *Coalfield Progress*. Skeber took the photo of Hamilton as Hamilton was jumping up and down on a trampoline. No slouch with Photoshop himself, Skeber later superimposed Hamilton over a photo he took of the Clintwood cheerleaders spelling “CHS” with their pom-poms. That’s right — the cheerleaders weren’t actually in the original picture.

Cover #3 (Will Hunt scrambling): This photo was taken by J.T. Wampler of the Morning News of Northwest Arkansas. The original photo was

closely cropped to the top of Hunt’s head, so I had to use Photoshop to “clone” sections of the stands behind him so I would have a place to put the TSL Extra logo.

Cover #4 (collage of 2001 recruits): This was the TSLX’s first recruiting issue, and I was a little confounded as to what recruit should be featured on the cover. Kevin Jones seemed like a natural fit, but then one day, message board poster RUHokie posted a killer jigsaw-puzzle collage of 2001 recruits, and I immediately asked him if I could use it as a TSLX cover. I love it when TSLX covers fall into my lap.

RUHokie’s collage featured 19 recruits and a shot of the Sears national championship trophy. Tech had 22 recruits in 2001, and the ones not included in the cover are Reggie Butler, Chris Pannell, and of course Jordan Trott (who signed with VT after the issue came out).

RUHokie’s original collage was titled “Pieces of a Championship,” but I scratched that and added the caption, “Hokies Piece Together Best-Ever Class.” Reeaaaaaalll clever, I know.

Cover 5 (Kevin Jones): This was the issue that sold an amazing 223 copies, doubling the TSLX’s “circulation” at the time. The cover shot of KJ is by George Zurick of *pasportsfever.com*, a web site that I believe was part of the Rivals.com network at the time.

Pasportsfever.com covers high school sports in Pennsylvania, and one of their writers, Gorden Blain, was the writer who “broke” the story that KJ was leaning to Tech because the Hokies’ strength and conditioning program was superior, in the opinion of KJ and his father Thomas, to Penn State’s.

Jeff Ouellet, an attorney who would later write an article called “Agents and Athletes” for issue #6, had written some stuff for *pasportsfever* and hooked me up with Gorden and the photographer, George Zurick. George sent me two photos, and in retrospect, given another chance, I would use the other one for the cover.

The only interesting nugget about this cover is that I “tilted” the original image slightly so the crowd in the background would be level, making a nice backdrop for the TSL Extra logo.

Cover 6 (A dollar sign for the “Money-Makers” series of articles): Without a doubt, the worst TSLX cover ever (just imagine the Comic Book Guy on the Simpsons saying “Worst cover ever”). Facing a deadline and short on photos, I copped out and created a big white dollar sign on a maroon background. Yeesh. This issue sold only 75 copies, beginning a six-month quagmire of sales that would see us average just 50 subscriptions a month. The three-month “Money-Makers” was just too detailed and too unwieldy a series of articles, and it impacted sales negatively for a long time. I see this dollar-sign cover, and I shudder.

Cover 7 (Bryan Randall): This is a very mediocre cover for a very mediocre issue. I bought the photograph from the Newport News Daily Press sight-unseen. After a painful email exchange in which I explained who I was and what I wanted the picture for, I was called by someone in their photography department who dug up a couple of photos of Bryan by doing a search on “Bryan Randall.”

The young lady I spoke with on the phone knew nothing about graphics images and had no idea how to send me a scan so I could take a look at the photo. She knew nothing about football and wasn’t even aware that Randall was wearing a practice jersey instead of a game jersey in the photo. I thought I was getting a cool shot of Randall jogging onto the field before a game, but instead, I got a picture taken from a Bruton practice ... with Bryan’s face mask nicely shielding his eyes. Argh. By the time I got the photo, which I had paid \$150 for, it was too late to try anything different, so I went with it.

One interesting factoid is that the original photo didn’t have the black background at the top — I added that for the TSLX logo. Hey, if it works

once and nobody notices it...

Cover 8 (Michael Vick and Tony Dobbins): Another copout cover. “Hey, this month’s installment of the Money-Makers series compares basketball revenue to football revenue — let’s put pictures of a basketball player and a football player on the cover!” I rummaged through my pile of Mike Ingalls photos and came up with those two.

In retrospect, the cover makes a subtle point: Football revenue is to basketball revenue what Michael Vick is to Tony Dobbins. Get it? Okay, the subtle point it *really* makes is that the TSL webmaster is hurting for TSLX cover material.

Cover 9 (Montavis Pitts): This is a great cover. I got the photo from the Birmingham (AL) Post-Herald, and it’s a winner. Clear, sharp, and intense. The photo was taken at the famous high school football combine where Pitts ran his 4.29 forty, turning him into a recruiting megastar and making it impossible for the Hokies to hold on to his soft commitment, which they had received only a week earlier.

The Post-Herald did a great job of covering the combine, and after Pitts ran his 4.29, they made sure to get some good pictures of him. This was the best one. We paid \$150 for the rights to use it, and it was easily worth it.

Oh, by the way, you’ll never believe this, but the picture was cropped too close to his head, and I cloned sections of the stands and copied them at the top of the picture to create enough space for the TSL Extra logo (are you sensing a pattern here?).

Cover 10 (Brandon Gore): This would have been a better cover if the photo was clearer, but I can’t complain. It was taken by Karl Pittelkau of the Fauquier Citizen, and Karl let me have the rights to the photo for free, telling me, “Just send us a copy of the article. We like to keep track of our boys here.” You got it, Karl.

Cover 11 (Noland Burchette): I bought this photo from the Richmond Times-Dispatch, for something like \$75. They were very helpful, and unlike the Newport News Daily Press and the Bryan Randall photo, the RT-D's photo department rep. was computer-savvy enough to send me a sample so I could preview it before I bought it!

It's not the greatest photo — Burchette looks a little awkward and skinny running the tire drill, and man, take a good look at that chunky dude behind him! — but I was able to give it a little “pop” by cloning Burchette's head and placing it over the TSL Extra logo to make him stand out. That was the first time I ever tried that in Photoshop, and I have used that technique several times since then.

Add a single word (“Transformed”) and you've got a decent cover. Not a hall-of-famer, but decent.

Cover 12 (Kevin Jones and VT fans): This is one of my favorite covers, because I took the photo myself, with my own lousy digital camera. The WVU Sports Information Department, God love 'em, grants media access to web sites, and I attended the 2001 WVU game as working media. The media leaves the press box halfway through the fourth quarter and goes down on the sidelines, where they can catch the last few minutes of the game and then follow the players into the media area for post-game interviews.

While on the field, I took several pictures with my rinky-dink digital camera, and for some reason, with the lighting conditions that day, they turned out pretty good. After the game, as the players were walking off the field, some VT fans clamored for Kevin Jones, and he trotted over to them, reached up, and shook hands with some of them. I was quick to recognize the photo-op, and I snapped what I think is an excellent picture. I actually wrote the cover article (an analysis of the future of Tech football) because of the cover photo, a rare instance of the tail wagging the dog.

Cover 13 (Kevin Jones vs. UVa): This photo of KJ scoring a TD against Virginia in the 2001 game in Charlottesville was taken by Mike Ingalls. Ingalls shot about five rolls of film for TSL that day, which is why many recent TSLX covers have featured Hokies in their white road uniforms.

Cover 14 (Frank Beamer and bowl paraphernalia): If I had to pick a favorite TSLX cover, this would probably be it. This was one of the TSLX's weakest issues ever, in my opinion, but the cover was kick-butt. The picture was taken by Mike Ingalls during warmups for the UVa game, and it's almost as if Beamer was posing and trying to look like a bad-ass.

The bowl memorabilia in the background of the cover — game tickets, buttons, and newspapers — all belong to me. I scanned them in and sent the images to Ingalls, who created the cover by meshing all the images together. He sent the cover concept back to me, and I modified it a little by fading the background and placing a subtle white glow around Beamer to make him stand out. All in all, a very cool cover.

Cover 15 (Mike Daniels): Another photo taken by Mike Ingalls during the 2001 Tech/UVa game.

Cover 16 (collage of 2002 recruits): Another great effort by RUHokie. Quite a few of the 2002 recruits are missing from the cover, and there's a story behind that. The original concept by RUHokie included a picture of Coach Beamer, plus pictures of a number of recruits that had been “borrowed” from BeamerBall.com.

I asked the BeamerBall folks if we could use the pictures, and their answer was kind of complicated. They were willing to let us use the pics, but they pointed out that they had asked each and every recruit if they could use their pictures on BeamerBall.com, and that we should do the same if we planned on using their pics on the TSLX cover. Not to mention that it was a good idea to ask Beamer if we could use his picture

as well.

It was too close to press time, and there was not enough time to contact all those recruits, plus Coach Beamer. So we scrapped the BeamerBall.com pictures, removed Beamer's likeness from the collage, and went with it.

Cover 17 (Marcus Vick): This is a good cover. We featured Vick in an article in this issue, and I borrowed a photo that Mike Ingalls had taken at a Warwick High School game the previous fall. Ingalls had a number of good shots of Marcus, and this was the best one.

Cover 18 (Keith Willis): This issue featured an "Inside the Numbers" article on tight end usage (or the lack thereof) by VT. I went through my stack of Mike Ingalls VT/UVa 2001 photos and came up with this very cool picture of tight end Keith Willis. This is another one of my favorite covers, because Willis looks bad to the bone with his game-face stare.

Cover 19 (Ben Taylor): Repeat after me: This is a photo taken by ... Mike Ingalls ... during the ... 2001 VT/UVa game.

Cover 20 (Lane Stadium under construction aerial view): Message board poster Hokie02 took to the skies over Blacksburg recently and got some outstanding shots of the campus, including two pics of Lane Stadium. I found myself thinking about writing some articles related to Lane Stadium and its expansion, and snagging his aerial photo of Lane seemed like a perfect fit. It's an unconventional and (I think) impressive cover.

There you go, folks. If you're still here, then it's a wrap. I hope you have enjoyed this little article that gives you waaaaay too much information about the TSL Extra's 20 covers.

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