

TSL Extra

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Managing Editor

Will Stewart

Production Manager

Will Stewart

Contributing Writers

Chris Horne

Jim Alderson

Wayne Crump

Will Stewart

On the Cover

Marcus Vick surveys the defense as he lines up under center in the VHSCA All-Star Game. Photo by Mike Ingalls.

On-line Extras

This month, an alternate cover showing Noland Burchette is available in the on-line (web) version of this issue, as is a 28-image photo gallery from the VHSCA All-Star Game.

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Dear Readers:

This issue kicks off a pet project of mine that I've wanted to do for a long time: rank the Virginia Tech recruiting classes.

People have suggested to me for months that I ought to do more features on past recruiting classes. Very often, readers will look over an old recruiting list, perhaps from the late 80's or early 90's, and will wonder who in the world all those guys are. Each old list of VT signees includes at least a handful of "Who the heck is that?" names that make you shake your head and wonder whatever became of that Top-25 player the Hokies signed 14 years ago that you've never even heard of.

Ranking the recruiting classes doesn't exactly answer those kinds of questions, but it does allow you to place recruiting classes — and players — in their proper historical perspective. In this issue, we rank the 1990 recruiting class, and the exercise of going through and evaluating the career of every player in the class pointed out to me, for example, what a great player Maurice DeShazo really was. The much-maligned DeShazo had an excellent career at Tech and still holds many Tech records, some of which will surprise you.

What the ranking doesn't tell you, though, is whatever happened to linebacker Mike Tennant, a 1990 recruit out of Philadelphia who was supposed to see playing time as a true freshman but never even lettered for the Hokies. All the ranking system does is assign zero points to Tennant, because he was a recruiting bust who never enrolled at Tech or played a down of football.

(For the record, Tennant was mentioned in a Hokie Huddler from 1991 that said he was denied admission to Tech in 1990, chose to remain at home in Philadelphia, and would probably never play college football.)

The 1990 class was a good one that included DeShazo and four future NFL draft choices: Jim Pyne, Antonio Freeman, Tyronne Drakeford, and Ken Brown. Just how good that class was is something we'll figure out in future months, as we rank classes from 1991 onward, and get a chance to put the 1990 class in its proper place.

Elsewhere in this issue, we've got some great articles about VT recruits playing in the recent VHSCA All-Star game (plus an interesting update on Ahmad Brooks, if you can stand more Brooks speculation). Jim Alderson tells us that the issue of a playoff versus the BCS comes down to, as one of my old bosses used to say, "Who pays how much and who gets paid how much."

Lastly, more stadium expansion thoughts and a fascinating little article about the origins of the word hokey/hokie.

Hang in there, folks. As I write this, it's July 24, and Virginia Tech's first game of the 2002 football season is only 32 days away.

Enjoy issue #21.



Present and Future All-Stars

Four Hokie recruits enjoy their last high school hurrah and look to the future.

by Chris Horne

Editor's Note: Subscribers, be sure to check out the TSL Extra VHSCA Photo Gallery, available in the on-line (web) version of this month's TSL Extra. We've got 28 great photos of the Tech recruits who played in the VHSCA All-Star game.

On July 12, 2002, the VHSCA held their annual All-Star football contest between the East All-Stars and the West All-Stars. Virginia Tech boasted ten recruits at the game, including Jonathan Lewis, Darryl Tapp, Cary Wade and Jimmy Williams. Lewis, Tapp, and Williams helped lead the East to a 21-7 victory. Wade played for the West squad. Techsideline.com takes a closer look at these four players, how they fared in the All-Star game and how they figure in Tech's future plans.

Jonathan Lewis (6-2, 290, 4.9), a standout defensive tackle from Varina HS in Richmond, VA, showed why he was so heavily sought after in the in-state recruiting battle between Virginia Tech and Virginia. Lewis combined with the rest of the East defense in stuffing the West offense, holding their opponents to only 7 points, forcing 3 turnovers, and limiting them to just 99 yards.

The West had a tough time passing the football but an even tougher time running it, gaining only 49 yards rushing. Almost none of those yards came up the middle, where Mr. Lewis was waiting, consistently clogging up running lanes and completely taking away the West inside running game. Lewis made around 5 tackles (unofficially) for the game, including contributing on one sack. He sent a message early on to the

West, helping to stuff RB Ahmad Brooks for a 2-yard loss on a designed run up the middle. The West quickly learned that they could not run up the middle, and instead had to find different ways to move the football.

Nothing worked, however, and Lewis and company would dominate the rest of the game. Following the game, Lewis was happy with the win and with the way he played.

"I think I did a pretty good job," said Lewis, who was celebrating his 18th birthday. "I held my ground on the defensive line, made a couple of tackles, got in on a sack. I think I just played well all the way around, especially technically."

Earlier this year, Lewis had expressed a need to work on his technique before the start of Tech's preseason practice. Over the summer, Lewis worked hard to get stronger and fitter, to improve his athleticism and help him with his technique.

"As much as anything, I have been working out and lifting weights," said Lewis of his summer regimen. "That's what I have been doing" to improve for Virginia Tech.

His hard work clearly paid dividends. Lewis looked in fantastic shape for the All-Star game. He consistently stayed low, moving would-be blockers back off the line of scrimmage. The bigger, stronger Lewis will now take his game to Blacksburg, where he figures to play early for the Hokies. Tech has little experience returning at the defensive tackle position. Sophomore Kevin Lewis, Jonathan's brother, returns after a redshirt year. Junior college recruit Jimmy Williams also figures to be in the mix, along with junior Mark Costen and redshirt freshman Tim Sandidge.

By season's end, Jonathan Lewis could find himself starting alongside his brother for the Hokie defense. If his performance at the All-Star game is any indication, his impact could be felt sooner than that.

Playing beside Lewis on the D-Line in the All-Star game was **Darryl Tapp (6-2, 225, 4.6)**, a defensive end/linebacker prospect from Deep Creek High School. Despite a senior season in which Tapp racked up 89 tackles and 15 sacks, many felt he was underrated in the state of Virginia. In fact, many felt he stacked up well with other Virginia linebacker prospects Ahmad Brooks, Kai Parham, and Justin London.

Playing defensive end throughout the game, Tapp made some noise early for the East. In the second quarter, he came up with a big 3rd down sack, ending a key West drive and pinning them deep in their own territory and providing the East with excellent field position. Despite his early sack and the fact that he and the rest of the East D-line controlled the game, Tapp felt he could have accomplished more.

"It wasn't a very good game for me," said Tapp. "There were more plays I could have made. I just didn't get to it."

Tapp, a linebacker in high school, will most likely play defensive end for the Hokies. He fits the mold of the athletic, undersized defensive end Tech likes to use. Eventually, the staff hopes he can become a Corey Moore or Cornell Brown type of player. And while he will have to adapt to a new position, Tapp accepts the challenge to play end for Virginia Tech.

"When I get there I will play end," said Tapp. "They said I might get a look at linebacker, but coming in I will play defensive end. I feel very confident about going into Tech."

Tech returns the top four players to the defensive end position. Senior Lamar Cobb, juniors Nathaniel Adibi, Jim Davis and Cols Colas provide depth at the position, but Tapp still expects to play and contribute early.

"Yes," said Tapp when asked if he will play early. "They already told me I would be playing so I need to come in focused...and in shape. I feel

confident."

Tapp's speed and athleticism should help the Hokies on the defensive line next year. A confident and driven person, don't be surprised if he makes some noise for the Hokies this season.

Perhaps one of the less heralded Hokie recruits played a big part for the West squad. **Cary Wade (5-11, 180, 4.5)**, a cornerback prospect from Robinson High School in Fairfax, VA, teamed with Stefan Orange to play virtually the entire game for the West squad. He is coming off a senior season in which he helped lead Robinson to a Group AAA Division 6 Championship.

Several times the East tried to throw at Wade on deep fade patterns. Wade came away the winner most times, boxing out the receiver and keeping great position in knocking the ball away. He knocked away one pass to Jimmy Williams in the end zone and forced an offensive pass interference penalty in the first half as well. Wade did give up a 30-yard fade pass from Anthony Martinez to Marcus Vick, but even then he exhibited good technique and position. Vick just made an outstanding play. Following the game, Wade was satisfied with his performance yet aware of the areas he needed to work on.

"I played decent," said Wade of his performance. "There are some things I need to work on. I had good coverage and all, but I think I need to learn how to read the ball a little bit better."

First and foremost, Cary Wade is a leader. He exhibited his leadership and toughness during the All-Star game, playing the majority of the game with an injured right wrist he suffered early on in the contest. Despite the injury, he kept battling, hanging in and playing tough throughout. Wade's injured wrist was better by game's end, so it will not affect his availability this fall.

"It's alright," said Wade of his wrist. "I had an

arm tackle out there. I sprained my wrist when I should have wrapped up. I should have squared up. But it's alright. I'll be alright."

With a wealth of talent and experience returning to the Hokie backfield, it appears Wade probably will redshirt this upcoming season. Despite the distinct possibility of a redshirt season, Wade keeps a positive attitude as he goes into college.

"It depends on how the coaching staff sees me," said Wade of his upcoming season. "If they want me to play, you know I will step up. I'll bring my A-game for the coaches. But if redshirting presents itself, I'd be willing to do it."

Wade is a classy character who will help the Hokies in the future, both inside the locker room and on the field. If there is one thing that is certain from the All-Star game, however, it is that he is happy to have Bethel High School's **Jimmy Williams (6-4, 205, 4.5)** on his team this coming season.

In what was perhaps one of the biggest surprises of the game, Williams made 4 receptions for 61 yards in helping the East score 21 points. The surprise was not in the way he played, as many in the Hampton area know how talented this young man is, it was more the way he excelled at the wide receiver position. In high school, he played quarterback and safety and seldom played receiver. In the All-Star game, Williams showed good speed and great hands in becoming East MVP Anthony Martinez's favorite target.

"I think Tech may want me as a receiver now," joked Williams following his outstanding performance. "I think they will try and steal me over on the offensive side now."

Williams, who recently qualified for freshman eligibility, was excited about his performance at the All-Star game. He is even more excited about the chance to play for Virginia Tech,

especially since his eligibility status was in question until recently.

"I am real excited," said Williams of his upcoming freshman year. "Very excited, very excited. I'm ready for it to be here."

Williams' performance helped the East capture victory, but admittedly he was not focused on personal statistics. The safety prospect exhibits a great team attitude Tech coaches are sure to welcome.

"I was worried about the team today, not about myself," said Williams. "I wanted the team to win today."

Williams projects as a safety for the Hokies, but his size makes him a candidate to switch to outside linebacker as well, in the same mold as current sophomore linebacker Mike Daniels. Williams certainly has the versatility to play many defensive positions, as he contributed at safety, defensive end and linebacker in high school. But with his newfound offensive talent, does Williams harbor any notions of playing both sides?

"Nah, I like defense," said Williams. "I like to hit."

Williams, Lewis, Tapp, and Wade are solid recruits, but more importantly, good guys as well. Tech fans can look forward to seeing the development of each player through the coming years.

The All-Stars: A Player's View

A fellow VHSCA All-Star talks about the VT recruits who played in the game.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

There are a number of people you can interview to find something out about a football recruit. You can talk to the recruit himself, you can talk to his coach, and you can talk to his family. But if you want to get truly unbiased commentary on a recruit, some of the best people to talk to are his opponents and the opponents' coaches. They have no allegiance to a player and will be likely to talk about a player's flaws, not just his positive traits.

With that in mind, we tapped into one of our favorite interview subjects, Alan Wheeling, a QB/safety formerly of Pulaski County High School. Alan was featured in TSL Extra issue #11 and was a straight shooter as an interview subject. Alan recently played for the West squad in the Virginia High School Coaches Association (VHSCA) All-Star game, a game that featured ten Virginia Tech recruits from the 2002 recruiting class.

The game was played Friday, July 12th at Darling Stadium in Hampton. Virginia Tech recruits who participated were Mike Imoh, Cary Wade, Chris Burnett, and Brian McPherson for the West squad, and Jimmy Williams (Bethel), Marcus Vick, Jonathan Lewis, Darryl Tapp, Noland Burchette, and Brandon Gore for the East squad.

The East beat the West 21-7, outgaining them 280-99 in total yardage (for a full report, see TSL's game recap by Chris Horne).

The two teams practiced at different venues during the week leading up to the game but often shared meals and bus rides. We called Alan Wheeling up and asked him for his opinions on the Hokies he practiced and played with for the West squad, and the ones he played against on the East squad.

What follows are Alan's comments from our interview, with an occasional clarifying note in brackets []. Wheeling got to know Cary Wade (CB) and Brian McPherson (CB) the best, because like them, Wheeling is a defensive back, and he practiced all week long with them at the defensive back spot.

Here are Wheeling's comments.

Cary Wade (West)
(CB, 5-11, 180, 4.5)

As a person, he's kind of shy and quiet. At times he's shy, and there's a time when he can do his thing and knows how to have fun. He's got his head on straight and knows what he's doing. He's a funny guy, and everybody liked him. He's a well-liked guy.

[On reports that Wade hung out with UVa recruit Ahmad Brooks during the week] Well, everybody was getting along all week. All the guys were giving each other a hard time about going to UVa and going to Tech. There was talk every day about that. So everybody was getting along with everybody else. Everybody was getting along with Ahmad. He's a pretty cool guy.

During practice, he [Cary Wade] seemed pretty quiet. He's the kind of guy that likes to go first in drills and likes to be a leader. For the most part, he was pretty quiet. There was a time to have fun in practice, and he had fun, but he was mostly all business.

He's pretty quick, but he's probably more quick than fast. Cary has good technique, more than speed. I think he's gotten a lot bigger since I last saw him at Tech's camp [in summer 2001]. His

quickness is good. It's not great, it's not excellent, but it's good, it's good enough to get done what he has to do. He's a pretty good football player. He's a better coverage corner than he is a run-support corner. He'll come up and make the tackle if he has to, but he's a better coverage corner.

Cary played a solid game and had some good coverage. He covered Marcus [Vick] most of the game and did a pretty good job. He got beat on a couple of plays, but Marcus is a great athlete, and Cary did pretty well against him.

Brian McPherson (West)

(CB, 6-0, 180, 4.5)

As a person, he's a real quiet guy, but also, when everybody's carrying on on the bus and having a good time, he's right in there with it. He and Cary are a lot alike as far as personality.

Athletically, he's a little step ahead of Cary, physically stronger and faster and bigger. I'm impressed with Brian, but I was more impressed with him in camp [in the summer of 2001]. I'm not sure why. I only got to see him one day at camp, and that's when they [VT] offered him. I saw him all week in All-Star practice, and I'm still impressed with him, just not as much. He's still a great athlete. He's one of those guys that I think will be a big-time player for Tech in a couple of years.

I think Coach set it up right. We had [UVa signee] Stefan [Orange] and Cary at coverage corner, and we needed two safeties. I was playing free safety, and Brian was playing strong safety. Really, we had four corners back there playing all four defensive back positions. We had to pick probably the two best run supporters at safety. Brian was the best at run support. Physically, he was able to bring down big running backs, which we needed to do. He's a strong guy, benches about 350. His coverage skills, I didn't really get to see them, because playing safety, you don't get to go one-on-one.

But I know he's capable of doing it. He's a good all-around athlete.

I've seen Brian more running track than I have on the football field. He's really quick, like running the 100 [meters]. The main thing I'm impressed with with Brian is his transition. He's able to break on the ball, and his closing speed is great. That's probably one of his strongest points.

The intensity was definitely up this game. I've played in a lot of high school games, and I've seen some hits, but this was one of the most physical games I've been involved in. There was a lot of hitting going on, and a lot of talking, too.

One thing that amazed me about Brian McPherson was that he got into a lot of extracurricular stuff after plays. I don't know if it was people coming after him, or if it was him running his mouth, but I know he did run his mouth after plays. That surprised me.

Chris Burnett (West)

(DL, 6-3, 255, 4.7)

He played at defensive tackle. I was around him more so on the bus than on the field and in hotels.

He's crazy. He was enjoying his time down there. He's got a weird sense of humor, but he's a pretty cool guy. He hung with [Liberty High teammate and UVa signee] Damien Spradlin most of the time.

What I saw of him in practice, I wasn't too impressed, but I can compare DB's better than I can compare linemen. I don't know good defensive line technique from bad. Just from what I saw in practice, he didn't really stand out. From what I've seen from other defensive tackles size-wise and speed-wise, he didn't stand out.

In the game, I think he went all-out, but in practice, he wasn't going all-out all the time.

Nobody did. We kind of took it easy a lot [in practice], because we knew it was an All-Star game.

Mike Imoh (West)
(RB, 5-7, 174, 4.4)

He's a well-liked guy. The thing I can say about him that sums it up is one day when we were practicing, and the offense wasn't doing very well. They were struggling, turning the ball over, and not doing very well, and not hitting the holes. I was looking for a leader on the offensive side to say something, and Mike did. He said, come on, get in gear, we're all-stars, let's do this. So he's a leader. He's going to be a good one.

They didn't want anybody getting hurt, so all week in practice, on the defensive side of the ball, we would run full speed to the ball but wouldn't hit the runner or tackle him. We would just touch him, or let him run by. So I didn't get a chance to hit him.

His strengths are definitely his speed and vision. He can hit the hole and find the hole. I wish we had had a better offensive line, because we didn't really have the offensive line to get him the holes in the game.

We were running C.D. Hylton's offense, and I wasn't impressed with it. I knew we were going to have trouble in the game, because we were running scout team defense against it and stopping it [the offense] every time. So I knew the offense was going to be hurting in the game.

I think one of the best plays we had was to hit him in the flat with a pass and just let him run with it, because he's got such great vision. He's very versatile, and he can make plays. We tried to get it to him [in the flat] in the game, but the second or third time we tried it, it got picked off, so we didn't try it again.

He's stocky, and he's real solid. His body's in proportion. His legs, neck, arms, and chest are

all built. He's done a good job in the weight room.

Jimmy Williams (East)
(ATH, 6-4, 205, 4.5)

Williams had a good game. I thought he played well, and he impressed me. I know he's a defensive back, but they played him a lot on offense, and I was impressed with his ability to do both. He made a couple big plays and missed the chance to make a couple others when he dropped balls. There was one third and 20 where A-Mart [UVA signee Anthony Martinez] threw him a pass, and I hit him and knocked it loose.

As an athlete, he's up there with the best of them, with his ability to play offense and defense, and he's got good speed and good height. He's got a good build on him.

He pretty much just played the game. He didn't do much trash-talking, from what I could tell.

Marcus Vick (East)
(QB, 6-0, 185, 4.4)

I covered him on two or three plays and defended him on the option when he was at quarterback. He played the whole first series at quarterback, and they scored on it. He did a good job, and they used his speed well by running the option and rolling him out.

He's a great athlete, more so than a great quarterback. He's just an outstanding athlete. If something were to come up, and he couldn't play quarterback at Tech, they could play him somewhere else. He's a good wideout, he could be a good defensive back, running back even.

One of our assistants here at Pulaski coached at Lake Taylor. He was Ronyell Whitaker's head coach, and I've seen a lot of highlight films with Ronyell, and Mike Vick, and Ron Curry, and all those guys in them. Right now, in high school, at that age, I think Marcus is ahead of Michael. As

an athlete, I think Michael was a good athlete then, but I think Marcus has got him beat. Size-wise, Michael was a little more gifted. I just think he's got the build, and Marcus isn't quite up to date on that.

If Marcus were to progress as well as Michael did, and learn the offense as well as Michael did, and take the time and the effort, I think he'll be nasty. I think Marcus will be a good quarterback.

I didn't get to see him throw the deep ball. They put Anthony Martinez in there for that. I wasn't too impressed with his [Marcus'] throwing skills — his first pass was about 6-7 feet over the guy's head, and he couldn't catch it. Of course, I didn't get to see him throw much, because they really spotlighted Anthony Martinez by putting him in the shotgun and letting him do his thing. With Marcus, they gave him the chance to roll out and either run or pass, and use his strengths. So I didn't really get a chance to see his throwing skills, and I don't know if he's really ready yet for the whole college atmosphere and the defenses.

I can just tell by watching him that he had great ability to get open [as a receiver]. He probably hasn't practiced at receiver much at all in his life, but he was able to get open against our corners.

Noland Burchette (East)
(TE/DE, 6-3, 225, 4.6)

He ran the ball. He's a pretty good running back, but he seemed to me to be one of those guys that's mouthy. I think it's just one of those game-time things, because in the dining hall and at dinner and lunch and stuff, he seemed quiet, like he's a good guy. He really didn't talk much. But during the game, things got heated and everybody else was talking, so I guess he felt like talking, too.

He's a good running back. He's pretty good size. He had a lot of good backs to share time with.

I think with his size, he's capable of playing tight end. He's going to have to beef up a little bit, though.

Jonathan Lewis (East)
(DL, 6-2, 290, 4.9)

We scrimmaged him for two years at Pulaski, and I played offense in high school, so I got to see first-hand what he was like. He definitely did a good job plugging up the middle in the All-Star game. Everything that we tried up the middle was stopped, and he was a big reason why. We couldn't get anything up the middle, and he forced us outside. We weren't able to get anything going, and for the most part, that was his doing. It was his birthday, and he played a good game.

At lunch, he was sitting with guys like Anthony Martinez, and he was being cool with everybody.

Darryl Tapp (East)
(DL, 6-2, 225, 4.6)

I heard good things about him all week. I heard he's the best athlete down here, and all that stuff. He didn't really stand out in the game, though.

Brandon Gore (East)
(OL, 6-6, 315, 5.2)

I didn't encounter him [during the game]. He may have leaked out on our corners or our linebackers, but he didn't make it into the secondary, so I didn't see him.

Size-wise, he's gifted, he's got a lot of size. He looks like he's got good strength. I don't know anything about his quickness or anything else about him.

He's a wild guy. We were out on a boat ride one night, and we were bored, and he wound up taking a dare and drinking his own dip spit for \$65 [laughs]. It was one of those barbarian guy

things. I guess he's like that. He seemed like a tough guy. He's a lineman. He's one of those guys.

Editor's Note: We also asked Wheeling about UVa recruit Ahmad Brooks, who signed with the Cavaliers but will attend Fork Union this fall. Wheeling had some interesting — and very complimentary things — to say about Brooks.

Ahmad Brooks

On the bus and stuff, when everybody was talking about going to Fork Union, I know Ahmad Brooks said he doesn't know if he's going to go back to Virginia or not. People were asking him that all week, and he was just like, "I don't know." It was a sensitive subject with him, and he didn't want to talk about it much.

He didn't say anything more specific. He just said he wasn't really sure what he was going to do yet. He seems like one of those spontaneous guys, he just goes with the flow and he'll make the decision when he has to.

But I'm pretty sure that Keenan Carter and Robert Armstrong [also FUMA-bound] will both end up at UVa. They talked about taking visits [to other schools] and having fun and enjoying them, but I think they're still going to be UVa-bound.

I think Ahmad was by far one of the best people down there, not only as an athlete, but as a person. There's a lot of little things that I saw this week that I kind of looked down on people for. Like we were in lunch line, and me, I'm 5-10, 175 pounds, I'm not going to say anything to Keenan Carter, who's 330 pounds, passing me in lunch line. There were some guys that took advantage of being all-stars. They passed people and cut in line, and they kind of walked around, knowing that they were "it."

By "them," I mean pretty much the big guys, and I don't mean just Tech guys or UVa guys, it was some of both. Really a lot of people were show-

ing a lot of attitude, but that was one thing Ahmad didn't do. He sat on the bus with me a lot, and we'd talk. He's a cool guy, and he'll talk with anybody. He didn't have anything against anybody. He didn't cut in line, and he didn't really act up.

Everybody else thinks highly of Ahmad, and they all think he's cool. I was really high on Ahmad, and especially as an athlete. He's the real deal.

In practice, he didn't say a word. He practiced hard. He was just working hard and getting better. He's one of those guys that doesn't have any friends on the field, but once he's off the field, he's like, "Hey, man, how you doing?" He's a real cool guy.

[On reports that Ahmad misled people during his recruiting] I can see that about Ahmad. I don't know if he was really doing it on purpose. That's just his way of doing things. He changes his mind really easy. Maybe he's really vulnerable in that way. He seemed like that kind of guy, to do whatever comes to him.

UVa Recruits Versus VT Recruits

I don't know that I could compare them as teams, but as individuals, I think Anthony Martinez ... I'm really high on him after the game. He could pretty much pick our defense apart. So I think UVa might have an edge there at quarterback. Marcus is a great athlete, and I didn't get to see him much at QB, but as a pocket passer, UVa will be set with Martinez.

As plain athletes, with Cary and Brian and Tapp and Jimmy Williams, all of them such great athletes, Tech will be able to do some things with them.

I rate the classes pretty even, based on what they recruited. But I know that three of the UVa guys are going to Fork Union. [Ahmad Brooks, Keenan Carter, and Robert Armstrong].

Rating the 1990 Recruiting Class

We rate the class that produced Pyne, DeShazo, and Freeman.

by Will Stewart, *TechSideline.com*

Welcome to the first in a series of articles that will rate Virginia Tech recruiting classes from 1990 to the present. We're going to use a numbers-based system to assign points to recruiting classes, and we're going to start this issue with the 1990 recruiting class.

Rating the success of a recruiting class is a complicated endeavor. Do you evaluate the accomplishments of the individual players, or do you rate what they accomplished as a unit on the field?

Do you factor in statistics, wins, graduation rates, off-the-field problems (or lack thereof), and accomplishments in the NFL?

In an effort to numerically rate the "success" of a recruiting class, both as individuals and as a team, I created a detailed point system that awards points for individual accomplishments and team accomplishments. I created a large table of "accomplishments" that players and recruiting classes could achieve, and then awarded points to players and classes that achieved those objectives.

Individual players, for example, can earn varsity letters, set records, become All-Americans, and get drafted by the NFL. Recruiting classes can win games, go to bowls, and obtain Top 25 rankings.

A detailed discussion of the point system I

created is included elsewhere in this issue, titled *Inside the Numbers: The Recruiting Class Rankings Point System*. If you have any questions about the point system, please refer to that article first before emailing or asking on the message board.

For this article, which rates the 1990 recruiting class, I'll just list the categories in which individual players and the entire class can score points, and how many points are awarded for each achievement by the players or class. For that data, see the table on the next page.

Example From the 1990 Recruiting Class

Let's do a walk-through with Tyronne Drakeford, a key member of the 1990 recruiting class. Here are his accomplishments:

- Lettered, 1990-93 (4 points, 1 for each letter)
- Started, 1991-93 (6 points, 2 for each season)
- Led VT in interceptions, 1991-93 (12 points, 4 points for each season)
- All-Big East 2nd team, 1991 (3 points)
- All-Big East 1st team, 1992-93 (10 points, 5 for each season)
- Led Big East in interceptions, 1992 (5 points)
- Drafted in the second round, 1994 (9 points)

Total points for Tyronne Drakeford: 49

It's a pretty simple procedure, though time-consuming, and not without its flaws, some of which are discussed in the accompanying "Inside the Numbers" article.

The Feb. 23, 1990 issue of the *Hokie Huddler* was the "1990 Recruiting" issue, and it listed 22 players: 12 in-state players and 10 out-of-state players. Tailback Ranall White later joined the class to be its 23rd member, and OL Calvert Jones transferred in from Pittsburgh to become its 24th member.

TSL EXTRA POINT SYSTEM FOR RECRUITING CLASS RANKINGS

A recruiting class receives points for the accomplishments of the individual players, as well as the class as a whole. This table lists the achievements for which players and classes can receive points, and how many points each achievement is worth in the system.

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Accomplishment	Points Awarded
VT letter earned	1 point per letter earned
VT starter	2 points per season started
VT statistical leader for a season	2 points per statistical category led
VT game record holder	5 points per game record held
VT season record holder	7 points per season record held
VT career record holder	10 points per career record held
All-American	10 points
First team AA	15 points
Consensus AA	20 points
Unanimous AA	25 points
Retired jersey	25 points
National award	20 points
Heisman finalist	30 points
All-Big East Second Team	3 points
All-Big East First Team	5 points
Big East Player of the Year	10 points
Big East statistical leader for a season	5 points per statistical category led
Big East game record holder	6 points per game record held
Big East season record holder	8 points per season record held
Big East career record holder	11 points per career record held
Big East academic honor roll	2 points
Drafted by the NFL	10 points for 1st round, 9 for 2nd, 8 for 3rd, etc.; 5 bonus points for being #1 pick overall

CLASS ACHIEVEMENTS

Accomplishment	Points Awarded
Win	2 points per win
Conference Win	2 points per conference win
Win over Virginia	5 points per win
Win over Miami	5 points per win
Big East Championship	25 points per championship
Finishing in Top 25 for season	10 points
Finishing in Top 10 for season	15 points
Go to non-BCS (minor) bowl	15 points per bowl
Win non-BCS bowl	10 points per bowl
Go to BCS bowl	25 points per bowl
Win BCS bowl	25 points per bowl
Go to championship game	50 points per championship game

The 1990 class featured some great names in Hokie football history. C Jim Pyne, QB Maurice DeShazo, CB Tyronne Drakeford, WR Antonio Freeman, and LB Ken Brown (called "Kenny" by the Huddler) were the five that would go on to have the most decorated careers, and of those five, all but DeShazo were drafted by the NFL.

The 1990 class would help lead the Hokies to their first bowl under Frank Beamer, the 1993 Independence Bowl.

Individual Points Scored

Here's the entire 1990 recruiting class, and how many points each player scored in the TSL Extra system:

Player	Pos	Points
Pyne, Jim	C	93
DeShazo, Maurice	QB	90
Freeman, Antonio	WR	89
Drakeford, Tyronne	CB	49
Brown, Ken	LB	29
McMahon, Damien	OL	12
Henley, Stacy	DB	8
Sanders, Steve	WR	7
Barry, Chris	OL	6
Martin, Kevin	TE	5
Landrum, Kenny	DB	4
Miller, Andy	LB	4
Smith, Mike	DL	4
Swarm, Billy	DE	4
Hodges, Mike	FB	3
White, Ranall	RB	3
Charlton, Leroy	DE	2
Grayson, Sean	TE	2
Jones, Calvert	OL	1
Boyer, Jason	DE	0
Greene, Lee	RB	0
Jennings, Sean	OL	0
Strong, Richard	LB	0
Tennant, Mike	LB	0

Total Points: 415

The Top Five and Their Accomplishments

Jim Pyne (C, 93 points): Started and lettered all four years; unanimous All-American (one of just two in VT history); retired jersey (one of just four in VT history); All-Big East 2nd team 1992; All-Big East 1st team 1993; Big East Academic Honor Roll 1992-93; 7th-round draft choice, 1994. One of the most decorated VT football players of all time.

Maurice DeShazo (QB, 90 points): started and lettered three years; led Hokies in passing 1992-1994 and in total offense 1992-1994; holds Tech records for TD passes in a game (4) and season (22, 1993); holds four Tech career records: most TD passes thrown (47), yards-per-completion average (14.4), yards-per-attempt (7.7), and total offense (6,105 yards); led Big East in passing efficiency in 1993. One of the greatest players in VT history whose reputation is tainted by a subpar senior season in 1994.

Antonio Freeman (WR, 89 points): lettered four years; started three years; led Tech in receiving in 1992-94 and in punt returns 1993 and 1994; holds VT game records for TD receptions (3) and punt return yardage (164); holds VT season record for TD receptions (9); holds VT career record for TD receptions (22); All-Big East 2nd team, 1992-94; led Big East in punt returns in 1994; 3rd-round draft choice, 1995. A lightly-recruited, true sleeper in every definition of the word, Freeman went on to greatness in the NFL.

Tyronne Drakeford (CB, 49 points): lettered four years; started three years; led VT in interceptions, 1991-93; All-Big East 2nd team 1991; All-Big East 1st team 1992 and 1993; led Big East in interceptions in 1992; 2nd-round draft choice, 1994.

Ken Brown (LB, 29 points): lettered four years; started three years; led VT in tackles in 1993 (113); All-Big East 2nd team 1993; All-Big East 1st team 1994; 4th-round draft choice, 1995.

Team Points Scored

In terms of team accomplishments, the 1990 recruiting class wins points for what the team accomplished in the 1991-1994 seasons (refer to the accompanying "Inside the Numbers" article for an explanation why the 1990 season is not included). These accomplishments are:

Games Won: 24 (48 points)

Conference Games Won: 10 (20 points)

Wins over Virginia: 1 (5 points)

Top 25 finishes: 2 (1993, 1994 — 20 points total)

Minor (non-BCS) Bowl invitations: 2 (1993 Independence and 1994 Gator — 30 points total)

Bowl wins: 1 (1993 Independence — 10 points)

Total Team Points: 133

**TOTAL 1990 RECRUITING CLASS RATING:
548 Points**

**POINTS PER PLAYER (24 PLAYERS):
22.83**

The numbers of 548 total points and 22.83 points per player don't mean much by themselves, of course, but in the coming months, you will be able to compare them to recruiting classes from 1991-onward.

The 1990 class had some great players in it. Two of them, Maurice DeShazo and Jim Pyne, made last issue's list of the ten most influential players of the Beamer bowl era, and Antonio Freeman got serious consideration.

But the overall rating of the 1990 class is dragged down by factors beyond their control. They didn't start round-robin play in the Big East until 1993, for example, thus decreasing their opportunities for conference wins.

Not to mention that their players may have set Big East and VT records which have since been wiped out by later recruiting classes. Antonio Freeman, for example, held the Big East record for punt return yardage in a game from 1994-1997, before Nate Terry of WVU eclipsed his mark, so Freeman does not get credit for the record in these ratings.

The Data

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

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue021/1990RecruitingClass.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/issue021/1990RecruitingClass.xls>

Inside the Numbers: The Recruiting Class Ranking System

The gory details of the TSLX's new recruiting class ranking system.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

This guide describes how I made up the recruiting class ranking/rating system that we're going to use in the TSL Extra in this month and in the coming months. I created a large table of "accomplishments" that players and recruiting classes could achieve, and then awarded points to players and classes that achieved those objectives.

Individual players, for example, can earn letters, set records, become All-Americans, and get drafted by the NFL. Recruiting classes can win games, go to bowls, and win bowls.

This detailed guide explains the TSL Extra recruiting class rating and point system, which is used in this issue to rate the 1990 recruiting class and will be used in future issues to rate later classes.

General Comments

1.) The criteria I chose to use are objective, not subjective. This means that I didn't factor opinion in at all, just based the ratings on a stats-based formula.

2.) The statistics used to rate players and classes must be easy to find and consistent. For example, it's easy to research how many letters a VT player earned, whether or not they set any

Hokie records, and whether or not they were All-Americans. It is NOT easy to determine whether or not a player graduated, particularly when researching, say, the 1990 recruiting class (because it was so long ago). I therefore used statistics and accomplishments that could be (and this is the key statement here) looked up in a VT media guide or a Big East media guide.

3.) Accomplishments after leaving school were not factored into our ratings. Bruce Smith, for example, is an outstanding professional player, but that shouldn't factor into whether or not he was a good recruit for Virginia Tech. All Bruce's pro career does is reflect nicely in some small way on Virginia Tech; it is of no direct value to VT, in terms of wins, losses, or statistics, during the time he was actually at Tech.

4.) Points were awarded for individual accomplishments and team accomplishments. Maurice DeShazo gets credit for the records he set and letters he earned while at VT, and his 1990 recruiting class as a whole gets credit for games won, bowls won, and rankings achieved.

5.) Team points for bowls, wins, etc. are awarded for the four seasons in which the class would have been redshirt freshmen, redshirt sophomores, redshirt juniors, and redshirt seniors. For example, the 1990 class is awarded points for accomplishments in the 1991-1994 seasons, but not for the 1990 season. We feel this is fair. True freshmen rarely have an impact (1990 Jim Pyne, 1993 Cornell Brown, and 2001 Kevin Jones are exceptions), but redshirt freshmen can (see Michael Vick).

A recruiting class must be five football seasons old before this rating and points system can be applied to them. At the conclusion of the upcoming 2002 football season, for example, the 1998 recruiting class of Vick-Suggs-Houseright can be evaluated, but not any class from 1999 onward.

We thought of weighting the accomplishments of a class from years 1-4, since a class has a

bigger effect in year 4 than in year 1, but we decided not to further complicate an already complicated formula.

6.) More points are awarded for accomplishments that are more difficult to achieve. For example, VT has hundreds of lettermen, so lettering for a season only earned one point. An equal number of points (10) is awarded for being a VT career record holder, an All-American, or a Big East Player of the Year, since all three accomplishments are roughly equal. Having your jersey retired by VT (25 points, achieved by four VT players) is roughly equal to being a unanimous All-American (25 points, achieved by two VT players; some could even argue that it's *easier* to get your jersey retired by VT than to be a unanimous AA). Etc., etc.

7.) The system is, not surprisingly, biased towards skill players and against linemen, particularly offensive linemen. Points are awarded for leading VT in a statistical category and for holding VT records, neither of which is possible for an offensive lineman to ever achieve. On the other side of the coin, VT's passing leader for a year is usually also their total offense leader for a year, making it easy for the starting QB to rack up points, even if he's only half as good as the best offensive lineman.

8.) The system is also biased towards recent recruiting classes. For example, Antonio Freeman held the Big East record for punt return yards in a game from 1994-1997, before it was broken by Nate Terry of WVU in 1997. Had I done this analysis in 1995, Freeman would have gotten credit for a Big East record. Today, he does not. In much the same fashion, Lee Suggs set a Big East record for rushing TD's in a game (5) and will get credit for it. But someone may break that record in, for example, 2003 or 2004. I recognize this as a shortcoming of the system and make no effort to correct for it, because it's very labor-intensive to do so. Of course, you can always adjust the rankings over time to account for records that are broken.

Point Scoring Summary

Individual points are awarded for: lettering; starting for a season; VT statistical leader for a season; holding a VT game, season, or career record; being selected as an All-American; having a jersey retired; winning a national award (Lombardi, Outland, etc.); making All-Big East; winning Big East player of the year; BE statistical leader for a season; holding a BE game, season, or career record; making the BE academic honor roll; and getting drafted by the NFL.

Points are awarded to the class as a whole for: wins; conference wins; wins over UVa and Miami; Big East conference championships; finishing the season in the top 25 or top 10; going to and/or winning a non-BCS bowl; going to and/or winning a BCS bowl; playing in the national championship game.

A table detailing the point system is on the next page, and the following paragraphs provide some clarifications and explanations.

Detailed Notes and Explanations on Some of the Categories

VTS (VT Starter): This data is very hard to research and probably contains many errors. To compile this data, I researched old media guides and their depth charts, and looked through old Hokie Huddlers for their preseason depth charts. But those depth charts don't necessarily represent what occurred during the season. Jim Pyne, for example, was not listed as a starter in the preseason of his true freshman season (1990), but he started most of the season. When I know this information, I use it, but I don't always know this information and am forced to rely on old depth charts that may be inaccurate.

VTSL (VT Statistical leader for a season): Info taken from the year-by-year stats leaders listed in the VT media guide.

VTGR, VTSR, VTCR (VT game, season, and career records): Info from VT media guide.

TSL EXTRA POINT SYSTEM FOR RECRUITING CLASS RANKINGS

A recruiting class receives points for the accomplishments of the individual players, as well as the class as a whole. This table lists the achievements for which players and classes can receive points, and how many points each achievement is worth in the system.

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Symbol	Meaning	Points
VTL	VT letter earned	1 point per letter earned
VTs	VT starter	2 points per season started
VTSL	VT statistical leader for a season	2 points per statistical category led
VTGR	VT game record holder	5 points per game record held
VTsR	VT season record holder	7 points per season record held
VTcR	VT career record holder	10 points per career record held
AA	All-American	10 points
1AA	First team AA	15 points
CAA	Consensus AA	20 points
UAA	Unanimous AA	25 points
RJ	Retired jersey	25 points
NA	National award	20 points
HF	Heisman finalist	30 points
ABE2	All-Big East Second Team	3 points
ABE1	All-Big East First Team	5 points
BEP	Big East Player of the Year	10 points
BSL	Big East statistical leader for a season	5 points per statistical category led
BEGR	Big East game record holder	6 points per game record held
BESR	Big East season record holder	8 points per season record held
BEcR	Big East career record holder	11 points per career record held
BEAC	Big East academic honor roll	2 points
NFLD	Drafted by the NFL	10 points for 1st round, 9 for 2nd, 8 for 3rd, etc.; 5 bonus points for being #1 pick overall

CLASS ACHIEVEMENTS

Symbol	Meaning	Points
W	Win	2 points per win
CW	Conference Win	2 points per conference win
WOV	Win over Virginia	5 points per win
WOM	Win over Miami	5 points per win
BEC	Big East Championship	25 points per championship
T25	Finishing in Top 25 for season	10 points
T10	Finishing in Top 10 for season	15 points
MB	Go to non-BCS (minor) bowl	15 points per bowl
WMB	Win non-BCS bowl	10 points per bowl
BCS	Go to BCS bowl	25 points per bowl
WBCS	Win BCS bowl	25 points per bowl
CG	Go to championship game	50 points per championship game

AA and 1AA (All-American and 1st team AA): info taken from the VT media guide, which covers the full spectrum of AA teams (AP, UPI, Sporting News, Football News, etc.), not just AP and UPI. If a player was named first-team by any organization, they get 15 points; if they were second-team or third-team but not first-team, they get 10 points.

CAA and UAA (Consensus All-American, and Unanimous AA): a player is one or the other, not both. CAA gets 20 points, UAA gets 25. This is in addition to first-team AA points (10).

NA (National Award): these points (20) are awarded if a player wins the Lombardi Trophy, the Outland Trophy, the Butkus Award, etc., as noted in the VT media guide. Only two players have ever won such an honor for VT: Bruce Smith (Outland, 1984) and Corey Moore (Lombardi and Nagurski, 1999).

BESL (Big East statistical leader for a season): Info taken from the year-by-year stats leaders listed in the Big East media guide.

BEGR, BESR, BECR (Big East game, season, and career records): Info from Big East media guide.

BEAC (Big East Academic Honor Roll): Info from Big East media guide. This is our one nod to academics in our ratings, mainly because the information is easy to research and consistent. The only caveat is that the Big East didn't start naming its honor roll until 1992, which means that the 1990 and 1991 recruiting classes did not get the chance to score points for having players on the honor roll in 1991, the first year the Big East Football Conference was in existence.

W, CW, WOV, and WOM (wins, conference wins, wins over Virginia, and wins over Miami): these points are cumulative. In other words, a win over Virginia gets 7 points (2 for being a W and 5 for being a WOV), while a win over Miami

gets 9 points (2 for being a W, 2 for being a CW, and 5 for being a WOM).

T25 and T10 (finishing the season in the Top 25 and Top 10): rankings referred to are the AP and/or the coaches' poll, post-bowl-game rankings, and points are cumulative. If a VT team finishes from 11-25 in either poll, they get 10 points; if a VT team finishes from 1-10 in either poll, they get 25 points (10 points for being Top 25, plus 15 more points for being Top 10).

MB, WMB, BCS, and WBCS (minor bowl bid, minor bowl win, BCS bowl bid, BCS bowl win): "minor" bowl refers to a non-BCS bowl, be it the Gator Bowl or the Independence Bowl. Points are cumulative. If a VT team wins a minor bowl, they get 25 points (15 for being invited, plus 10 for winning). If a VT team wins a BCS bowl, they get 50 points (25 for being invited, 25 for winning). The recruiting classes that comprised the 1999 team will get 75 points for the 2000 Sugar Bowl (25 points for a BCS bowl invitation, 50 more points because it was the national championship game).

It's All About the Benjamins

When you talk about a playoff, the key question is: Who gets the money?

by Jim Alderson

Changes in how the BCS will determine the two teams that play for the National Championship have again been announced. The BCS continues to tweak its amalgamation of polls, computer rankings and guesses due to its tendency to shoot itself in the foot the last couple of years in coming up with participants in last year's Rose Bowl and the Orange the year before that. This has led to continued and repeated calls for some sort of playoff to determine a true national champion for the sport.

How to determine teams for said playoff run the gamut from a full-blown sixteen-team postseason extravaganza based on the model provided by the hugely-successful NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament to a more modest eight-team affair to a four-team one determined by re-seeding the winners following the four BCS bowls. Everybody has a notion of how a playoff should be run.

One Possible Format

The format seen often, especially by sportswriters, is the egalitarian sixteen-team playoff, in which all conference champions are invited. Looking at how this would have played out last season, one can start with the final [pre-bowl] BCS standings for a rough idea:

1. Miami
2. Nebraska
3. Colorado
4. Oregon

5. Florida
6. Tennessee
7. Texas
8. Illinois
9. Stanford
10. Maryland
11. Oklahoma
12. Washington St
13. LSU
14. South Carolina
15. Washington

That's a good start, but, of course, we have to include the champions of the non-BCS conferences, none of whom were within shouting distance of the BCS standings. These would have been:

- CUSA: Louisville
- MAC: Toledo
- Mountain West: BYU
- WAC: Louisiana Tech
- Sun Belt: North Texas State.

This would require the bumping of some teams from the BCS standings, starting with those below LSU, the lowest-rated BCS conference champion, South Carolina and Washington, then the next lowest of the non-champions, Oklahoma. We would arrive at a sixteen-team playoff of:

1. Miami
2. Nebraska
3. Colorado
4. Oregon
5. Florida
6. Tennessee
7. Texas
8. Illinois
9. Stanford
10. Maryland
11. LSU
12. Louisville
13. Toledo
14. BYU
15. Louisiana Tech
16. North Texas

First round games would obviously have to be held at the stadiums of the higher-ranked seeds, since, apart from the question of the fans of advancing teams traveling week after week to various sites, the neutral bowl site that got stuck with the North Texas-Miami clunker of a game would immediately opt out of the playoff, probably before the game was even played.

Going on the assumption that the higher-seeded team would win at home, a very reasonable one considering the first-round match-ups, even LSU at Tennessee — the Tigers, in a second game in a row against the Vols, this time at Neyland Stadium, would not be catching an emotionally spent UT team a week after its draining win over Florida, but instead a fired-up and angry group of Vols looking for payback.

Taking all of the higher seeds gives us a second round of:

Illinois-Miami
Texas-Nebraska
Tennessee-Colorado
Florida-Oregon

Continuing on would give us a potential Football Final Four of Miami, Nebraska, Colorado and Oregon. Where these three games would be held (at the sites of the existing bowls as generally advocated by playoff proponents) is the topic for another discussion.

We probably would have seen Miami emerge as champion (they were, after all, the best team around last year). The Canes would have earned their coronation as college football's best on the field in a democratic playoff featuring teams from all Division I-A conferences. It would be hailed as a triumph of sports, equal to or eclipsing the NCAA's Men's Basketball Tournament. It would be a terrific situation, claim its proponents, and, according to some, "will happen," except for the fact that it won't, and the reason is money.

Divvying Up the Dollars ... Or Not

Chances are the monies to be realized from the sale of the television rights to a sixteen-team playoff would be enormous, much greater than the \$90 million ABC is shelling out each year for the rights to the four-game BCS. The question is to whom that money will be paid.

Proponents of a playoff point to the staggering \$545 million CBS is shelling out each year for the rights to the hugely successful NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. But of that CBS money, only \$70 million is distributed to the thirty Division I conferences the NCAA lists as having received a share from the 2000-01 season.

Of ABC's BCS money, the same \$70 million is distributed, with virtually all going not across the board, but to the six BCS conferences. Each of the six BCS conferences is guaranteed almost \$12 million in BCS monies each year, with an additional \$6 million going to conferences that produce a second BCS team (the math doesn't add up because the Big Ten and Pac 10 have separate deals with the Rose Bowl).

This resulted, in 2000-01, of the \$12 million received by the BCS conferences being well above what the SEC [\$7.7M], ACC [\$7M], or even the Big East, a conference whose roots are in basketball [\$6.8M], received for the NCAA Men's Tournament. For the six BCS conferences, the really big bucks are in football.

The NCAA has used revenue from the Men's Basketball Tournament to run a huge welfare system. The teams and conferences that contend for the titles receive relatively little of the money, instead paying exorbitant taxes to finance, among other things, the astonishing \$271 million NCAA budget, and to cover losses of \$9.2 million conducting Division III championships, \$7.9 million conducting Division II championships, and \$17.8 million conducting those of Division I, including \$6 million lost on the women's tournament.

Throw in Pell Grants and other loans and monies made available to NCAA members, and there is not a lot left over to award the teams actually playing in the tournament.

The loudest proponents of a welfare system are always those receiving the monies and those charged with collecting and then handing them out. It should come as no surprise that the strongest voices in favor of a playoff system, other than sportswriters with a limited knowledge of economics or the workings of a market economy [it is why they are sportswriters], are the NCAA bureaucracy and those conferences not part of the BCS. They want another handout, one that would come from the NCAA running a Division I-A football playoff, and seizing the monies. It is not likely to happen. The BCS was expressly created to keep that money away from the NCAA, and it will not be given up without a fight.

Marking Territory

Following the 2000 football season, Big East Commissioner Mike Traghese, irate at Miami being jobbed out of the Orange Bowl MNC game, called for a playoff. In 2002, Big East Commissioner and Bowl Championship Series Chairman Mike Traghese, in a recent story in the Louisville Courier-Journal, called any proposal that would transfer football postseason income from the six BCS conferences to the NCAA "socialistic." Paul had only a slightly larger revelation on the road to Damascus.

This is from a commissioner who has often been criticized for favoring the basketball-only members of his conference. Traghese showed a remarkable grasp of college athletics' new economy when, in language that left little room for interpretation, he told the paper, "We [the BCS] don't want the NCAA to run college football." That is about as clear as it gets.

Traghese went even further. BCS founder and retired SEC Commissioner Roy Kramer, whenever the subject of a Division I-A football playoff

was broached in his presence, routinely threatened to pull the BCS conferences out of the NCAA. Traghese echoed that thinking when he said the only way the BCS schools would leave was if "the NCAA made a move to control postseason revenue." That can be regarded as a threat along the lines of "Leave our money alone or else," and considering the amount of money involved, not an empty one. This money is going to stay with the BCS conferences.

What will be the response of the NCAA? When one considers that over the last ten years thirty-seven of the forty participants in the Final Four have been BCS football schools, and the most recent non-BCS champion, Connecticut in 1999, is on its way to BCS inclusion, the answer is: not much. The NCAA and its membership cannot afford to jeopardize that fat CBS basketball contract, which is what would happen if the BCS conferences walked and took most of the basketball powers with them; it will cave in.

The sacrificing of the MAC, CUSA, WAC, Mountain West and Sun Belt will, in the end, be considered a small price to pay for the maintaining of the basketball tournament revenues. The BCS will get what it wants, which can be summed up in two words: Super Conference.

The BCS conferences want their own football division controlling their own purse strings, and chances are they will get it. The weeding out of Division I-A has already begun with new rules that will eliminate a number of non-BCS entities. There are rumblings of newer, even tougher rules that would apply to whole conferences instead of individual teams. An interesting 'Catch 22' of a rule for inclusion in the new 'BCS' Division would be one that demands that a conference have already played in a BCS game. It might not be quite that brazen, but expect something similar.

The Shakeup is Underway

The weeding out process has also begun within the BCS conferences, too. Temple is history,

replaced by a Connecticut that will meet the new guidelines, and programs at Baylor, Duke and Wake Forest are also drawing long looks. I imagine the Big XII would love to replace Baylor with BYU, and while Wake Forest is still Weak Forest, Duke is making a serious financial commitment to football, although it remains to be seen if it will have much of an effect. I see sixty-four teams in the new BCS Division. BYU might replace Baylor, but Louisville is the only other non-BCS program that has the financial budgetary muscle to perhaps shoulder its way in.

There will be much outrage and complaining on the part of the non-BCS schools and conferences left out of the new BCS Division, which has already started among non-BCS Athletic Directors such as Rick Bay of San Diego State, who sees the writing on the wall. There will be the inevitable call for lawsuits, but, quite frankly, if lawyers for the non-BCS conferences could find that the Constitution contained a clause allowing the Mountain West or MAC to participate at the top level of college football [and collect a cut], we would have already seen it. There were similar calls for legal action twenty years ago, the last time a major cut was made in the top ranks, relegating the weaker programs to Division I-AA, and they amounted to nothing. This next round should also pass legal muster.

There are some who wonder whether a tightening of Division I-A rules that lead to a BCS Division and perhaps major conference realignment would leave Virginia Tech on the outside looking in. My feeling is that if anyone in the Tech administration thought for one second that Virginia Tech would not be a part of the new football order, we would not be seeing the completion of the South end zone expansion to Lane Stadium with another major expenditure to add to the West stands.

Tech will do fine, and so will the Big East. Connecticut would not be spending the millions necessary to make the move to the top football echelon if they thought for an instant their

conference would suddenly be pulled out from under them. UConn AD Lew Perkins can be classified as a visionary for seeing this coming over a decade ago, when the Big East added football, and leading the charge to have the Huskies move up. Also, Big East Commissioner Mike Tranghese, often derided as a tool of his conference's basketball interests, also has shown that he has a firm understanding of what is coming in football, which is the super conference, or BCS Division.

The Commissioners of the six BCS conferences will meet July 29 to discuss the state of their sport. It will be interesting to read what comes out of their meetings. As for a playoff, I have always felt that when a playoff becomes more profitable than the current arrangement, we will see a playoff. When the BCS conferences formally control their own postseason destiny and, more importantly, postseason money, without interference from the NCAA or the non-BCS leagues, it will be.

One Man's (Skewed) Vision of Stadium Expansion

Lane Stadium is growing, but not the way
I thought it would.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Last issue, while preparing some articles on stadium expansion, I revisited an article I wrote in the summer of 1998 about Lane Stadium expansion. It was good for a few laughs, and I thought I would share the laughs with you.

The article was called "Stadium Expansion: Hot Ticket for the New Millenium," and it presented a plan for expanding Lane Stadium. I wrote the article in late July of 1998, which was back before VT had rolled out any ideas for expanding Lane. The Hokie brain trust was working on it, and Tech AD Jim Weaver had publicly spoken about the need to expand the stadium, but no details or plans had been released yet.

What *had* been released were UVa's stadium expansion plans. One year prior, in a Thursday night game against Auburn on ESPN early in the 1997 season, Virginia alumnus Carl Smith had publicly pledged \$25 million for the expansion of Scott Stadium into a 60,000-seat horseshoe. Virginia showed drawings to the public of a gorgeous expansion plan that would make Scott Stadium larger than Lane Stadium and would launch the Hoo football program into the 21st century with a state of the art facility.

At the time, that was a little scary for Hokie fans.

Later in that 1997 season, Virginia throttled Tech 34-20 in Charlottesville and appeared to be the state program with all of the momentum. The Hokies had experienced some success in 1995 and 1996 with Jim Druckenmiller at QB and Cornell Brown at defensive end, but 1997 was a rough season, and no one was convinced that the Hokies were going to rise to the level of a BCS team again.

And now UVa was getting ready to build themselves a real stadium, instead of that quaint little 42,000-seat excuse they had been playing in for so many years. I still recall "khhokie," one of HokieCentral.com's (as TSL was called back then) earliest and most controversial posters, coming on the message board one day and posting, "Fear this!" with a link to a picture of the artist's conception for the new Scott Stadium.

The message board lit up like a Christmas tree, as half of the Hokie fans there went into denial ("They still need to fill it with fans that won't leave at half time!") and the other half admitted that UVa's new stadium, if nothing else, was a formidable recruiting tool.

And heading into the summer of 1998, VT had no formal answer. They were talking about it, but no plans had been announced yet.

It was in this environment that I wrote the "hot ticket" article. I talked about multi-million dollar expansion efforts that were underway at Penn State, Virginia, Alabama, and even East Carolina, Houston, and Louisville. It seemed like the Hokies were falling behind (they were), and I advanced a plan for Tech to catch up with what everyone else was doing.

Looking back, I get a kick out of my little article. The goals were spot-on, but the execution was poorly envisioned. Let's review.

The Basics

Back in the summer of 1998, I said that Tech needed to do the following to Lane Stadium:

- Improve the visitor's locker rooms
- Improve the press/media facilities
- Add a video scoreboard/Jumbotron
- Add luxury boxes
- Add more seats

Those were all improvements that had been publicly talked about as being needed for Lane Stadium. The press box is small and antiquated, the visitor's locker room (with its six showers — *six!*) is a well-known joke around the Big East, and everybody else, at the time, was adding more seats, a video scoreboard system, and luxury boxes. Those items were no-brainers.

So at this point, I was a visionary and a smart cookie with the proper goals in line.

I then put forth my plan for adding all those improvements to Lane Stadium, and I proceeded to get waaaaay off track on the proper way to do things.

"The Order in Which Things Should be Done"

The problem was, the items as they are listed above are the exact order in which I said they should be built or added. I proposed the following:

- 1.) Build a facility housing visitor's locker rooms and media rooms in the South end of the stadium.
- 2.) Build a video scoreboard/closed circuit replay system.
- 3.) Build luxury boxes on the top of the West side stands.
- 4.) Add more seats (in the South end zone, by building them on top of the facility built in step 1).

As those of you who follow the Lane Stadium expansion plans know, instead of implementing

those things 1-2-3-4, Jim Weaver decided to implement them in the order 4-2-4-1-3-4:

1.) Add more seats: North end zone bleachers built, 1999.

2 and 4.) Add a video scoreboard and more seats: Video scoreboard installed and North end zone bleachers expanded, 2000.

1, 3, and 4.) Build a South end zone facility housing visitors locker rooms, media rooms, luxury suites, and more seats, 2002.

3 and 4.) Build more seats and luxury boxes on the West side (and expand the press box), 2005 (? The completion date is actually TBD at this point).

Good thing Jim Weaver is in charge and not me. The fundamental difference in my approach and Jim Weaver's approach is that my approach didn't generate any new revenue until step 3; Weaver's approach started generating additional revenue right off the bat, with new seats in the North end zone.

There's no question that my first two steps, a new building in the end zone and a Jumbotron scoreboard, were needed, but neither one of them was a revenue generator, just a money sink.

So, what was I thinking? Well, one thing you need to remember about VT football, circa summer 1998, was that the explosion in ticket sales and attendance hadn't happened yet. The Hokies had fielded very good 10-win teams in 1995 and 1996, and attendance had not increased. In fact, from 1994-1997, the Hokies averaged the following in per-game attendance:

1994: 46,383
1995: 44,777
1996: 45,717
1997: 45,577

There was nothing, absolutely nothing, to indicate that the Hokies were going to need a significant number of new seats any time soon. They were coming off two of their best seasons ever in 1995 and 1996, and from an attendance standpoint, there was a collective shrug. Lane had about 52,000 seats at the time, and it seemed like plenty. I wrote:

“By the time the other improvements are added that have already been discussed here [locker rooms, media rooms, video board, and luxury boxes], there will hopefully be a need for more seating in Lane Stadium.”

We all know what happened after that. The Hokies averaged 49,045 in 1998, and the post-Music City Bowl excitement, followed by the 1999 national championship run under Michael Vick, shot Hokie football into the stratosphere, attendance-wise. Suddenly, more seats became a much higher priority than improved media rooms and a video scoreboard.

But more importantly, Jim Weaver realized that if you're going to spend money, it's got to be on things that *make* more money, like more seats and luxury boxes, not on end zone buildings.

I did get this right, though; I wrote:

“I think that when the new seats are added, there will be between 12,000 and 15,000 of them. At a minimum, there must be at least 12,000, so the newly expanded Lane Stadium will be as large, or larger, than state rival UVA's stadium will be after expansion.”

The Overall Time Frame

The other thing that is humorous about my original article is this statement:

“The way I see it, if Virginia Tech wants to fund this sort of stadium expansion project, and they want it done strictly

through donations and normal revenue streams, then it will have to be a long-term project. Ten years minimum, probably 15 years total.”

Wrong again. It appears that the total expansion project will be complete by 2005 (seven years after my article), instead of the 2008-2013 time frame I envisioned. And I certainly didn't anticipate the addition of 11,000 seats by 2002.

Why the difference? Simple ignorance on my part. I was thinking about the Merryman Center, which was just being completed at the time at a cost of \$10.6 million dollars, completely funded through donations to the Hokie Club (to my knowledge — VT Athletic Department officials stated that publicly many times).

I failed to realize that if you build revenue-generating portions of the stadium expansion first, then those parts of the expansion can then service debt required for their construction. In other words, I thought that if it was going to cost \$37 million for a South end zone expansion (which is the cost of VT's current SEZ project), that VT would have to raise the entire \$37 million through donations.

Instead, VT is only raising \$15 million through donations, and the rest of the expansion will be paid for by taking on debt than can be serviced from the additional ticket sales and luxury box revenue. So the SEZ pays for itself, at least in part.

Things get a little trickier with the West side expansion. The last thing I read said that VT was going to have to find a heavy-duty private or corporate donor, to the run of \$15-\$25 million, to help fund the expensive West side expansion. That is all still up in the air, though, and it all depends on the details of the final design, which hasn't been produced yet.

My Cost Geusstimate

I was also off in my guess as to how much the

expansion would cost. I pegged it at \$57 million when done. The current expansion plans that VT is working under will cost about \$86.3 million - \$37 million for the South end zone, \$45.8 million for the West side, and another \$3.5 million or so for the already-completed North end zone bleachers and video scoreboard.

I underestimated, but I also did not foresee the huge press box expansion that VT is adding. I knew they would add luxury boxes to the West side, but Tech is also greatly expanding the press box, and some of the \$30 million difference is coming from there.

Note that VT's current cost figure of \$86.3 million is for a West side with an expanded press box and luxury boxes added, plus about 1,000 "club" seats. Jim Weaver is expected to present a plan to Virginia Tech in August that will increase West side seating by about 5,000 seats by adding another 18 rows on top of the current West side, before adding the luxury boxes and expanding the press box.

It is estimated that such a proposal will increase the \$45.8 million dollar cost estimate for the West side expansion by a few million dollars.

The Future is Now

Back in 1998, I thought it would be a long time before we would see an expanded Lane Stadium. I certainly didn't think that a massive structure, including 11,000 new seats, would be present in the South end zone a mere four years later, in time for the 2002 season.

The stadium expansion as a "regular fan" perceives it is mostly done. The addition of 5,500 seats in the North end zone and 11,000 more in the South end zone has created the bulk of the impression of the expansion by closing in both ends of the stadium. That adds most of the fans and most of the noise that are planned, and "expanding" the West side by adding luxury boxes and revamping the press box isn't going to make much difference in Joe

Hokie's game day experience from his seats halfway up the East side stands, at the ten yard line.

If Jim Weaver unveils plans for a 5,000-seat addition to the West side, that will increase the average fan's perception of the size of the stadium yet again, but I think you'll agree that the big impact has already been made with the North and South end zone expansions.

And that's just four short years after we first really started talking about it on HokieCentral.com.

I wonder what Lane Stadium's going to be like in the year 2025 ... ?

We Do the Hokey-Pokey ...

The origins of the word "hokie." Nonsense? Maybe not.

by Wayne Crump

Ah, we all remember those fond days at college. The football, the popcorn, and the cheers. Most of all we remember, with fond memories, one specific cheer echoing through our mind, "Hokie Hokie Hi, Tech Tech VPI ..."

Now most of us generally know about the "Old Hokie" cheer, and how it came to be. If you don't, you might want to refer to hokiesportsinfo.com's What's a Hokie? Page for an explanation. That link quotes the entire cheer and gives the VT Athletic Department version of how it came to be.

Quickly summarizing it, O. M. Stull wrote the cheer in 1896, in response to a contest. He claimed that the word "Hokey" was a "product of his imagination," and he used it because it "sounded good." None of the Stull creation story went down into print until a significant time period had passed.

Superficially, I had always assumed that this story might be factual, but always thought there was something uncomfortable about it. Why would the board pick a cheer with nonsensical words? Why would Tech's alternative nickname (Gobbler was preferred until Bill Dooley's reign as AD in the late 70's and early 80's) be selected from a word that has virtually no meaning at all? That really doesn't make a lot of sense.

Memory does play tricks. Both Stan Lee and Jack Kirby claim to have created the Fantastic

Four comic book characters alone, and in a vacuum. At least 5 people claim to have created the DC character Green Lantern. I have met most of these people and have felt that they all believe that their claims are sincerely true. However, some of them have to be wrong.

This brings us to Charles Panati. Mr. Panati came waltzing into my life in Christmas of 2001.

Charles Panati wrote a wonderful book about how the junk in our every day life originated and came to be. In his *Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things* (Harper & Row, 1987), you can learn the original source of those important things we all cannot live without, like forks, Velcro, ice cream, and zippers. It was the ice cream on pages 418 to 420 that was so disturbing for this particular Techman.

Frozen Ices reached Europe from the orient in the 1500's. Ice cream as we know it would not exist until much more recently and would only reach the masses in London and New York in the 1870's. This happened when Italian Ice Cream vendors migrated to England and the New World.

According to Pinati, there was a shout that they used from their street stands, "Ecco un Poco," or "Here's a little." Since the children had no idea exactly what these vendors were saying, they used the similar-sounding English words of "Hokey Pokey."

The "Hokey Pokey man" was a common name for these street vendors until the early 20th century. The term was replaced when someone found a way to put ice cream on a stick, and thus the "Good Humor Man" was born. To substantiate this, Mr. Panati presents a wood cut from 1868 of a "Hokey Pokey" man.

This is quite interesting, because the term "hokey pokey" sort of already existed in the language. Street magicians were commonplace in the 1600's through the 1800's, and they

invented the words “Hocus Pocus.” The earliest documentation of that phrase is 1655, and it was in common use by 1691.

The word hocus is the source of the word hoax. Cheap, fake magic became commonly known as hokey pokey, a derogatory variation on hocus pocus. The children that were misunderstanding those Italian ice cream vendors were probably just using a term that they had already heard elsewhere.

So how does this relate to Mr. Stull? Mr. Stull would have grown up during the period of about 1878 to 1894. Even if we allow for a significant amount of time for phrase to travel, the term “hokey pokey man” would have reached Virginia from New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. I have located the term in a New York publication dated 1868, and in a Philadelphia publication of 1871. By the late 1870’s the term had to have migrated as far south as parts of Virginia.

This brings us directly to our cheer. There is little chance that O. M. Stull had never heard the term “Hokey” prior to writing the cheer. There is also virtually no chance that he would have had any idea as to what that word meant, nor how it would be spelled. But one fact is for certain, he definitely did not make the term up. It was already in use during that period of time, and had been so for 15 to 20 years.

The term was also poised to fall out of common use in the very near future. So why has the word survived at all? Officially the word hokey makes a reference, to “noticeably contrived [back to hocus pocus], corny, and artificial.” I have always found it one of those words that is extremely hard to explain to someone that doesn’t already know its definition. Sort of like the words “Catawampus” in Virginia, or “Two-Four” in Canada.

The word still keeps hanging around, mainly because of Ray Anthony’s silly song “The Hokey Pokey” written in the 1920’s or 1930’s. Maybe if

the song could just go away, then we wouldn’t look so silly using “Hokie.” We might also note that all the variants of “hokey” use the “i”. These include “hokiest,” “hokiness,” and “hokier.”

I guess we just have to sit down and claim to be the “Fighting Italian Ice Cream Vendors.” And let us not forget, we are the Misspelled Fighting Italian Ice Cream Vendors, at that.

In closing, today the probably-misspelled variant of the word “Hokie” only seems to relate to Virginia Tech Athletics. However, I did a word search on “hokey” in AltaVista. It was interesting, because several alternative searches popped up. They included “hokey-pokey,” humor, and *ice cream*.

Now if you think we have trouble with hokey (or hokie), we just might like to take a quick look at our brethren, the Wahoos.

I can find four older references for Wahoo that might indicate a source for the name. First, the Wahoo is a game fish of the Caribbean, especially the southern Caribbean. Personally I find it unlikely that they are the Fighting Caribbean Game Fishes (actually funnier than DSU [but not quite as funny as Misspelled Fighting Italian Ice Cream Vendors]).

The second is Chief Wahoo, mascot of the Cleveland Indians. Try as I might, I do not know when Chief Wahoo came to be. The third is a comic strip that started in 1936 and eventually evolved into Steve Roper. Big Chief Wahoo has one major distinction: he graced the cover of the first newsstand comic book ever printed.

The last choice is a board game called, Wahoo. It is a version of Chinese checkers that is always played around a figure of a native American. I have seen copies of Wahoo on eBay whose owners insist date back to the Victorian era.

Except for the game fish, all the other uses of the word have one common thread. They are a

less than complementary term involving Native Americans. Eventually I would think that social pressure may force Virginia back to being solely the Cavaliers. Such pressure is already being applied to the Cleveland franchise. Candidly, why they traded Cavaliers for Wahoos is beyond me, anyway.

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