

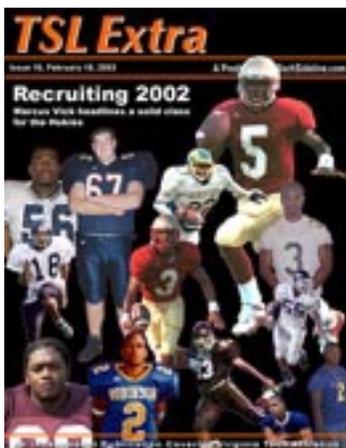
TSL Extra

Issue 16, February 15, 2002

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On the Cover

Photo collage of 13 recruits from the VT recruiting class of 2002 (see Cover Key for details on players' names). Artwork by TSL message board poster RU Hokie. Cover artwork copyright 2002 Maroon Pride, LLC.

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TSL EXTRA

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

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Dear Readers:

Every year in recruiting, the verbal commitments come in, and fans start to drool over the prospects that have committed to their school. They talk about what players like Montavis Pitts and Patrick Dosh will be able to do when they suit up in future years.

And those who have been through this many times before and are aware that verbal “commitments” can renege and sign with another school always say the same thing: “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.”

Signing Day 2002 has come and gone, and 20 chickens have hatched with Virginia Tech jerseys on. They’re the players who comprise the 2002 football recruiting class for the Hokies, 17 high schoolers and 3 prep school and junior college players.

Two of them — Dosh and Pitts — did not hatch. Or rather, they hatched with Florida and Auburn jerseys on, respectively, and they were summarily booted out of the Hokie nest. It’s NCAA rules, you know.

But we’re not here to talk about them. We’re here to talk about the players who belong to the Hokies. We have gathered together this month to break down the 2002 class, assign grades, rank the players, and generally talk about recruiting until the subject is worn out.

Sure, we’ll touch on some players the Hokies didn’t land, because there are some interesting stories surrounding them as well, and what went down with guys like Ahmad Brooks and Justin London — who did not sign with the Hokies — is as much a part of the rich recruiting landscape as the stories of guys who did, like Marcus Vick, Jonathan Lewis, and Mike Imoh.

In addition to ranking and grading, we’ll tell some stories about what went on behind the scenes in the hectic weeks and months leading up to signing day.

This issue isn’t all about recruiting, though. We’ve also got a profile of Kevin McCadam, who put in a sterling performance during the 2001 season at the Rover position for Virginia Tech. And we’ve got an article from a wheezing, coughing geezer named Jim Alderson, as he reflects on the first fifty years of his life — his Hokie football life, at least, as if there’s any difference between life and Hokie football.

Jim originally submitted his column as a free feature for TSL Columnists, but it was good enough to earn a spot in this month’s TSLX, and long enough to justify paying him his customary \$5 for it.

Lastly, we’ll give you the lowdown on web site traffic during Recruiting 2002, because we know many of you are fascinated by and interested in the web site hit statistics.

It all adds up to what we think is one of our best TSLX issues ever, and we’re pretty sure you’ll agree, once you’ve read it.

Enjoy issue #16.



Recruiting Roundup 2002

A position-by-position breakdown of how the Hokies did, including grades.

by Will Stewart, *TechSideline.com*

Now that the LOI's are signed, sealed and delivered, and we know who is and isn't part of Tech's 2002 football recruiting class, let's break things down position-by-position and see how we think the Hokies did.

Overall Comments

Of course, people keep asking me how I think the Hokies did in recruiting this year, and my guarded answer is, "I think they did pretty good." Expanding a little bit on that, the Hokies got their top two

targets, Marcus Vick and Jonathan Lewis, and they generally recruited well and recruited their needs.

Tech gets top marks from us on their recruiting for defensive line, defensive backs, and tailbacks. Coming in a close second are the quarterback, offensive line, and special teams (we'll explain later how a class that includes Marcus Vick doesn't get top marks at the QB position). Wide receivers come in third, and bringing up the rear is the linebacker position.

Let's run it down position-by-position, and yes, we will be so presumptuous as to give grades for how Tech did at each position. Let's begin on the offense, with the quarterback position.

Quarterbacks

More precisely, this category should be called *quarterback*, not *quarterbacks*, because Tech got one, and only one. But he's a good one: Marcus Vick.

Here's the skinny on Vick: he's the same height and weight (6-0, 185) as brother Michael was when he signed with Tech. In the film clips I've seen, his arm doesn't appear to be as strong (but whose is, for crying out loud?), and he's not as mega-quick as Michael is (but who is, for crying out loud?).

But Warwick Coach Tommy Reamon says that Marcus is a better QB than his brother was at this stage, better at reading defenses and running an offense. In two seasons as Warwick's starting quarterback, Marcus completed 68 percent of his passes (that is *not* a typo) for 3,992 yards and 40 touchdowns and also rushed for 1,468 yards and 26 touchdowns.

Compare those stats with Michael's stats as a three-year starter at Warwick: 4,846 yards passing, 43 TD's, 1,048 yards rushing and 18 rushing TD's. You can see that Marcus' per-year production easily exceeds that of his brother. In all fairness, I hear that Marcus played on better teams, though I can't say that for sure.

Can Marcus contribute earlier than Mike, i.e., as a true freshman? Only time will tell, but he will be given a shot. It's worth noting that the skinny #18 (Michael) who roamed the sidelines during his redshirt season at Tech in 1998 bore little resemblance to the 1999 Michael Vick, who was 26 pounds heavier, faster, and a more physical specimen. Marcus could undergo a similar transformation during his first year at Tech, with one difference: he might play during that first year.

So at the top, the Hokies did very well at the QB position. The problem is, there's no one else, and the Hokies wanted to sign two quarterbacks, not just one. They thought they had a second QB in Benedictine product Patrick Dosh, who verbally committed to the Hokies, but Dosh backed out on signing day and signed with Florida instead.

How important was Dosh to Tech's efforts? We'll never know, because he won't be here. But one source told me that a VT coach said that if Tech had gotten Dosh, the coach would have considered it Tech's best recruiting class ever. But since it's thin at QB, it's not the best.

Quarterback grade: B-plus, but only because of a lack of depth. If Vick turns out to be a great college quarterback who never gets hurt, the lack of depth won't matter, and you can consider this an A++ recruiting class at QB.

Tailbacks

And again, call it *tailback* instead of *tailbacks*. The only player Tech landed here was Mike Imoh, but there's a big difference between the QB position and tailback position this year, because whereas Tech wanted two quarterbacks, Imoh was the only tailback Tech recruited, and the only one they wanted.

Imoh is diminutive (5-7, 175), but don't let that fool you. He's explosive (4.4 forty), powerful (he's a competitive powerlifter), and a freak athlete (he can dunk a basketball).

Imoh ran for 5,277 yards in his high school career, including 2,100 yards and 34 TD's in a 13-game senior season. Watching him on tape is like watching a Virginia Tech coaches' tailback dream: Imoh runs between the tackles, gets into the secondary, and shows great vision and acceleration. At the yearly Recruiting Roundup at Boomer's Deli and Greg Roberts Sports Club in Roanoke, Imoh was easily one of the two most impressive players on tape (Aaron Rouse was the other).

Tailback grade: A. The Hokies set a target and nailed it. They didn't need much here, because of the depth already in the program, but they got a good one.

Wide Receivers

The Hokies' historical penchant for conservative, run-oriented offenses is coming home to roost in the recruiting wars, and at the wide receiver position, it's not pretty. Tech has now signed just three wide receivers in the last two years (four, if current QB Chris Clifton winds up there), and only one of them — Fred Lee (5-10, 175, 4.4), who was originally a 2001 recruit, failed to qualify, and re-signed with Tech in 2002 — is an "A-lister."

The other two wide receivers were late additions to Tech's recruiting list: Robert Parker (6-1, 190, 4.5) from Oscar C. Smith high in Chesapeake, and Warwick High's Brenden Hill (6-3, 195, 4.6). The Hokies took a look at them and offered scholies after national-level recruits like Santonio Holmes (Ohio State) and Justin Miller (Clemson) wouldn't seriously consider Tech.

Having said that, Parker and Hill could both turn out to be good recruits. Parker, based on his BeamerBall.com interview, is a great kid and a Hokie through-and-through, and recruiting film shows surprising explosiveness and speed from him. He may blossom in Blacksburg and prove to

be underrated, despite being named the Roanoke Times "Sleeper of the Year" in Virginia. As for Hill, he is tall and might develop into a good possession receiver for the Hokies.

Josh Hyman, from Deep Creek in Chesapeake, who did not sign with anyone on signing day, is a phenomenal physical talent, but he's a long way away from qualifying.

Wide receiver grade: B-minus, and that may be too optimistic. There's too much hoping for things to work out: for Lee to qualify (he hasn't yet), and for Parker and Hill to turn out to be sleeper recruits. No real headliners here, and if Lee doesn't make it and Parker and Hill are busts, the Hokies will start to get *very* thin at wide receiver *very* soon.

Offensive Line

The Hokies didn't go after a lot of OL this year, but they got two that they wanted: Brandon Gore (6-6, 315) from Liberty (Bealeton) High in Virginia, and Jimmy Martin (6-6, 270) from Fork Union.

Gore is obviously a big kid, and once he "gets into" a defender, that defender is toast. Gore's strength is run-blocking, and he looks like a kid who could use a redshirt year to enhance his conditioning and mobility. He has a great work ethic and will do well under Tech's Mike Gentry.

The coaches have said that they would like Martin to play this coming season, in the hopes that his extra year at FUMA has benefitted him, as it has so many others before him. But that call won't be made until he arrives and they get a look at him in two-a-days next July/August. Same for Gore.

Offensive Line grade: B-plus. Good recruits, but not enough of them. 3-4 four OL's a year would be more like it.

Fullback and Tight End

No recruits, none targeted; no grade issued.

Defensive Line

With the departure of five lettermen at the defensive tackle position, the Hokies needed immediate help at this position, and by all accounts, they got it.

Jonathan Lewis (6-2, 290, 4.9) from Varina High School in Richmond will arrive physically ready to play. Varina put a VT-like strength and conditioning program in place five or six years ago, and Jonathan has been in it since 8th grade. He is much more ready to play as a true freshman than his brother Kevin was.

That doesn't mean that Jonathan will be a great defensive tackle right out of the box. Like all freshmen, he'll have to work on his technique (like keeping his pads low) and his intensity (all-star high schoolers are notorious for taking a play off here and there, and they need to learn to turn up the wick and keep it up).

Lewis will be joined by "Big Jimmy Williams," (6-4, 305, 4.8), from Pasadena (CA) City College — in other words, a junior college (JUCO) player, with two years of eligibility left. That 4.8 sounds outra-

geous, but it's what the services are reporting, and Williams is a four-star (out of five) Rivals.com recruit and one of the top 100 JUCO's in the country, according to SuperPrep. The VT coaches wanted him badly, and got him. He'll likely provide immediate help, and I'm not going to tell you how *really* excited the VT coaches are about Williams, for fear that you, too, might get excited and blow a happy-gasket.

The Hokies also recruited Chris Burnett (6-3, 255, 4.7) from Liberty High School in Bedford, VA, and Lamar Veney (6-5, 260, 4.9) from Stuarts Draft HS in Stuarts Draft, VA. Both are probably redshirts. Burnett has been compared to former Hokie DT David Pugh (it hurts to say "former," doesn't it, Hokie fans?), and based on film evaluation, that comparison is fair. Like Pugh, Burnett fights through blockers and then explodes into the quarterback from the middle of the line. Very impressive.

At defensive end, the Hokies got near-twins Noland Burchette (6-3, 225, 4.6) from Highland Springs in Richmond and Darryl Tapp (6-2, 225, 4.6) from Chesapeake's Deep Creek. Burchette looks lankier than Tapp, and Burchette can run. And holy smokes, can he catch the ball at tight end. His recruiting film at Boomer's showed two great one-handed circus catches at tight end. The lanky Burchette is bound for a redshirt year, and the coaches will evaluate whether they want him at DE or TE.

The Hokie coaching staff seem to feel that Tapp does not get enough attention as a quality recruit (they're loathe to use the word "underrated"), and he picked the Hokies over Maryland and Florida.

Defensive Line grade: A. A great mix of DT's and DE's, with some guys (Lewis and Williams) ready to play and others ready to redshirt. Tech only missed out on one DL recruit that they really wanted, Levi Brown (to Penn State), and had they landed him, this would have been a no-questions A-plus class of defensive linemen. As it is, Hokie fans can't complain.

Linebackers

A swing ... and a miss!

Every once in a while, you just come up empty, and at linebacker this year, it happened to the Hokies. Whereas Tech's D-line haul is as full as a Pamela Anderson bikini top (okay, it's filled with plastic, but it's *still* full), their linebacker haul is as empty as her little surgically-modified head.

Tech came up bone-dry at the Mike (Jake Houseright and Brian Welch) and Backer (Ben Taylor) positions. They set their sights on Justin London and Ahmad Brooks and got neither one, and didn't seriously pursue the other linebackers listed in the TSL database.

This puts the pressure on the linebackers currently in the Tech system at those positions: Alex Markogianakis, Chris Buie, and Jordan Trott at Mike; and Vegas Robinson, Mikal Baaqee, and James Anderson at Backer. Tech should be okay at Backer, but Mike is a little more iffy.

At whip, look for Aaron Rouse (6-4, 195, 4.5) from First Colonial HS in Virginia Beach to land there. Rouse was originally listed as a DB in the TSL database, but Coach Jim Cavanaugh said Rouse will get his first look at Whip when he arrives at Tech, so we switched him to an LB entry.

The good news is that Rouse is (repeat after me) underrated. He was a near-unanimous choice (10 out of 11 votes) by the Beach District coaches for Defensive Player of the Year, and it's worth noting that the Beach District included a certain UVa recruit with an over-inflated ranking, Kai Parham from Princess Anne. Parham was rated — *cough!* — the #13 recruit overall in the nation by Tom Lemming.

Rouse's tape showed a hitter with good speed. A very good hitter. He can hit. He can also hit.

Linebacker grade: C-minus. Only Rouse saves this mess from being an F.

Defensive Backs

Just think to yourself: "5-11, 180 pounds, 4.5 forty." The Hokies got four players about that size and speed: Antoine Rutherford (5-11, 180, 4.5), Brian McPherson (6-0, 180, 4.5), Cary Wade (5-11, 180, 4.5), and Demetrius Hodges (5-10, 175, 4.5).

Those guys are all cornerbacks. Tech will also give ATH Jimmy Williams (6-4, 205, 4.5) a look at free safety, but Williams is wide open for receiver or linebacker — the coaches will decide when he arrives.

McPherson (Amherst County High) and Wade (Robinson High in Fairfax) are both Virginia guys, but Rutherford (Hollywood, FL) and Hodges (West Palm Beach, FL) are Florida products. McPherson and Hodges are both swivel-hipped guys who can turn and cut on a dime, whereas Wade and Rutherford are more rangy and fast.

I've got to think that out of those four guys, at least two will work out well, and Williams has the capability of providing a successor to Willie Pile and Vincent Fuller, who currently have the free safety position locked up.

Defensive Backs grade: A-minus. All in all, excellent depth in this area, and a good job recruiting. The only player the Hokies missed out on here was Stefan Orange (who signed with Virginia), but they probably won't miss him.

Special Teams

Special teams recruiting is rarely an area of emphasis — in recent years, Tech has offered PK Shayne Graham and P Vinnie Burns scholarships out of high school, but kickers usually don't sign on the dotted line on Signing Day. Most of the time, they're walk-ons.

Nic Schmitt out of Salem High School in Salem, Virginia, isn't your usual kicker. He's 6-3, 230 (big enough to beat up Sebastian Janokowski), and also plays safety, but rest assured, the Hokies recruited him exclusively as a kicker. And they like him enough to sign him to a scholarship.

Schmitt has a strong leg, and unlike most high school kickers, kicks off the grass, not a tee. So he's got that going for him, which is nice. But the Hokie coaches cautioned that recruiting kickers is like throwing spaghetti against a wall; sometimes it sticks, sometimes it doesn't. Schmitt could turn out to be the next Shayne Graham, or he could turn out to be Tech's next water boy.

Special Teams grade: B-plus. One very task-specific guy who may or may not work out. Typical of special teams recruiting.

Final Grades

So after all that rambling, how did the Hokies do? Let's take a look:

Grade by Position

Position	Grade
Quarterback	B+
Tailback	A
Wide Receiver	B-
Offensive Line	B+
Defensive Line	A
Linebacker	C-
Defensive Back	A-
Special Teams	B+

When you mash those ratings into offensive, defensive, and special teams units, here's what you get:

Grade by Unit

Unit	Grade
Offense	B+
Defense	B
Special Teams	B+

Which leads us quite naturally to an overall grade:

OVERALL GRADE FOR THE 2002 CLASS: B+

Throw Levi Brown, Ahmad Brooks, Patrick Dosh, and Justin London, plus a star-quality receiver or two into this class, and you've got a slam-dunk A+. As it is, though, it's a very good class but not great. Fortunately, in Lewis and Vick, it's got some potential difference makers, and among the others, some guys who may develop into great VT players.

Of course, the real story will be told 4-5 years from now, but you know the drill: we do this kind of stuff because it's fun, not because we really think we know what we're talking about. Remember, Tech had one of their worst recruiting classes ever (on paper) in 1995, and they played for the national championship four years later.

That, my friends, is why we like recruiting. It's unpredictable, and never boring.

Inside Recruiting 2002

Now that all is said and done, here's the inside scoop on what was said and done.

by Will Stewart, TechSiideline.com

Every recruiting year brings with it more drama and intrigue than a John Grisham novel. For every public statement that the recruits make, ten more rumors are passed around about things that the recruits said to friends, family, and their recruiting coaches. Some of these rumors and tidbits make it to the message board, but surprisingly, many of them don't.

In this, the Internet Age, insiders to college and high school football programs are becoming more savvy about what to say, and when to say it — in other words, what to let “get out.” A well-timed statement on a message board or another public forum can excite the fans when they're down, or prepare them for bad news when they don't think it's coming.

I've never considered myself an insider to the Tech football program, and I have no real desire to be, at least not for the thrill of knowing the information. The only reason I desire “inside information” is to run the TechSideline.com site better: to distribute the correct information, quit chasing blind leads, and be prepared for what's coming.

For example, I like to know what a recruit is going to do before he does it, so I can either monitor the message boards for meltdowns (in the case of bad news) or get ready to release a TSLMail announcing a commitment (in the case of good news).

I've had the good fortune to have some good sources approach me the last couple of years and establish a good relationship, one where they pass on important information to me. I'm not sure why people do that, but I'm grateful for it, because it helps me keep my finger on the pulse of things. I rarely pass on most of the info given to me, because (a) it might compromise the source; and (b) it might be wrong — it occasionally is — which would make me look bad.

But now that this year's class is signed and recruiting 2002 is over, it's time to pass on some of the more juicy and interesting stuff that I heard. It will give you a look inside what was happening as it unfolded, and it might answer some questions that you have. I believe most of this information to be true, or at the very least, these are the things that were said to me by some of my best sources.

Let's talk about a few of the more interesting recruiting stories that unfolded this year, the ones that had twists and turns to them. We'll take them in the order that they committed, be it to Tech, or somewhere else.

Justin London

Every VT source I talked to for months told me that Justin London was a lock to go to Virginia Tech. Never mind that he was visiting UCLA, Tennessee, and Maryland. Never mind that he had never publicly named VT as his leader. London was going to be a Hokie. Take it to the bank.

But the morning of London's announcement (January 31st), I got a phone call that said the Hokie coaches weren't feeling good about things. The reason? Bud Foster had called London the night before, and London was very standoffish and didn't want to talk. He wasn't very communicative and said something about having been awoken from a nap. The conversation was short and not particularly cordial, unusual for a kid the Tech coaches had been recruiting for a long time and were on good terms with.

"Foster doesn't feel good about it," the source told me, "and he's usually on the money with his feelings."

The next day, London dropped the bomb and said he was going to UCLA. A source told me that night, after London made his announcement, the VT coaches discussed calling him, but Foster emphatically said, "I'm not calling him." Beamer considered calling him, but then decided, "I'm not calling him, either."

Virginia Tech worked Justin London hard for years. They were the first to offer him a scholarship, prior to his tenth grade year, and they never took him for granted. But at the last moment, he had spurned them to go to UCLA, and it upset the VT coaches. What hurt them the most was that he didn't tell them the night before, when he had Foster on the phone, that he was going to go to UCLA (and with his strange attitude during the phone call, it's a near-certainty that he had made up his mind by then). Instead, the VT coaches had to find out from his press conference. All this after they had worked so hard for two and a half years to establish such a good relationship with him.

It upset others outside of the coaching staff, as well, in Roanoke and Southwest Virginia. When a local boy decides to go elsewhere, particularly far away, he is taking a risk, because he's going from an area where everyone considers him to be a local hero of sorts, and he's going far away, where no one knows him, and no one will be there to catch him when he falls.

Ahmad Brooks

The Hokie coaches would have gladly taken Kai Parham (had he been interested in VT) and would have signed Justin London also. But the linebacker they really wanted, the "difference maker," was Ahmad Brooks, the USA Today Defensive Player of the Year.

Brooks was coy and hard to read with the media in the months leading up to his commitment date of February 4th. He was quiet, reserved, and almost impossible to pin down.

But I was hearing good things via email and in phone conversations.

I heard that during Brooks' official visit to Tech the weekend of December 14th, his parents were "blown away" by Virginia Tech — the campus, the coaches, the facilities, the academic advisors, all of it. They had previously known little to nothing about VT but went away very impressed. I was told that when Brooks left after his visit, he told the VT coaches that Virginia Tech was his leader.

I heard from three different sources that Brooks was consistently telling D.J. Walton, his childhood friend, former high school teammate, and redshirt freshman football player at VT, that he (Brooks) was going to be a Hokie. People told me that when they talked to D.J. about Brooks, D.J. said

every time, without hesitation, “Oh yeah, he’s coming here.”

I heard that on Thursday, January 31st, when Mike Imoh verbaled to Virginia Tech, that Brooks and his coach called Robinson High School, where Imoh’s press conference was held. Imoh and Brooks, Imoh once told me, are friends. They hung out together on their official visit to Virginia Tech and talked on the phone a couple days prior to Imoh’s verbal.

Brooks ended an in-home visit with Coach Beamer on January 31st by telling him that it was down to Tennessee and Tech, that UVa was out of it.

And I was told by one source that Brooks told D.J. Walton, just ten to twenty minutes before he verbally committed to Virginia, that he was going to Virginia Tech.

Brooks was quoted in a Washington Post story the day of his commitment: “I kind of made my decision a couple months ago, I just didn’t tell anybody. Everybody asked me where I was going to go, and I just basically told them a different school. I had to take all my visits to know that was really where I wanted to go.”

I will leave it to you to decide what you think of a young man who strings out his friends and recruiting coaches in that fashion. It’s one thing to have your fun with the 15 million dot-commers that cover recruiting, but to lead on one of your best friends, making him look like a fool to everyone he talked to? “D.J. was very hurt,” a source told me.

The odd thing is, if Brooks doesn’t qualify (he currently doesn’t have the SAT score he needs) and winds up at a prep school, it appears that the Tech coaches will recruit him again. “We’ll make that call,” one VT coach said at the Recruiting Rally at Boomer’s on February 9th, indicating that the coaches will contact Brooks and see if he wants Virginia Tech to recruit him.

Fine, coach, just don’t believe anything he tells you.

Marcus Vick

“Just FYI: Marcus did say, word for word, that there is no chance he’ll go to Va Tech. Says it’s not a consideration. (To be honest, I don’t even think the Tech coaches are trying to go after him.) And I spent two days with the kid—and of course talked to Mike about it, too — so I feel confident about what I reported.”

Angie Watts of the Washington Post told me that in an email last August, a day or two after a feature she wrote on Marcus appeared in the newspaper. In that article, Angie wrote, “One school Marcus has eliminated is Michael’s alma mater, Virginia Tech. Though he has speed and quickness similar to his brother and doesn’t hesitate to run, Marcus said he will look for a team that is more pass-oriented than the Hokies.”

So what happened to cause Marcus Vick to do a complete 180-degree turn and sign with the Hokies? Publicly, Marcus has said it was the hiring of QB Coach Kevin Rogers, and the promise of a more wide-open offense for him to run.

Marcus became “a strong Tech lean” at some point in December, and after a while, it was widely

perceived that he would commit to and sign with the Hokies. But on February 4th, the night before Vick was supposed to commit, this post appeared on the TechSideline.com recruiting message board:

Subject: It's Official, Marcus Vick Will Announce.....

Posted by: HokieCop2B on Mon Feb 4 2002 9:27:42 PM

Message:

That he will be attending the University of Virginia. The Football Staff (sic) were just advised by Marcus Vick. Marcus said that Michael had made a name for himself at Virginia Tech and He was going to make a name for himself at University of Virginia.

I know that I will be blasted for this post but tomorrow at 3:00 PM, the Hokie Nation will be humbled.

Suddenly, the message board trembled, but only for one reason: the night before Justin London had committed, HokieCop2B had nailed it, saying that London would “follow his boyhood dream” and go to UCLA. Those were almost the exact words that London used when he committed to the Bruins on January 31st, so when HokieCop2B posted that about Vick, people got worried.

Unfortunately, one message board reader who knows the VT coaches got *really* worried and called two of Tech's coaches that night, pulling them away from their families and setting off a round of phone calls among the Tech coaches, along with a lot of worrying.

The worrying was compounded by the fact that many of UVa's recruiting “gurus” were saying on TheSabre.com message boards that Vick was indeed going to go to UVa. This rumor had more momentum than just one stray poster on the TSL board.

The morning of Vick's commitment, all the evidence seemed to be pointing to “Vick to UVa.” But one source finally contacted me late that morning and said, “Supposedly, one of (Warwick High coach) Tommy Reamon's staff said that to the UVa staff, but Reamon's staff denies it (to the VT coaches).”

You know the rest: Vick verbally to Tech that afternoon, at 3 o'clock. And by some accounts, many insiders in UVa's camp were surprised. They really *did* think Vick was going to UVa.

One UVa friend (yes, I've got them) emailed me and said, “There is definitely a story in the MV2 decision somewhere, since everyone who tells me things regarding UVa — some of whom are very well connected and right more often than not — were universally stunned (by Vick's decision to attend Tech). Your similar thoughts and e-mails suggest somebody was getting played.”

Very interesting. Was something truly said to the UVa staff with regards to Vick going to Virginia? If so, what was it, and who said it? I don't know the answer to those questions, but it sure added drama to the proceedings in the eleventh hour, and yes, someone was left feeling “played.”

And it wasn't the Hokies.

Tidbits and Outrageous Comments

- On the topic of Justin London, one source told me that the Hokie coaches thought he would make a better fullback than linebacker, and they were actually going to steer him towards fullback.
- I was told by one person associated with the Robinson High School program that Mike Imoh was Tech-bound throughout the entire recruiting process, and that he was just “going through the motions” with his other visits (Pitt and Wake Forest). We’ll try to interview Mike and find out if that’s true.
- Outrageous comment #1: JUCO defensive tackle Jimmy Williams “could become the best interior lineman to play at VT other than Bruce Smith,” said more than one source. Williams’ uncle supposedly found VT by getting on the Internet and researching which schools were losing defensive linemen. He called from California, followed up with film, and the VT coaches, to say the least, liked what they saw.
- Outrageous comment #2: Once source said that the VT coaches feel that defensive end Noland Burchette could be one of the best players ever recruited to play for the Hokies. Gosh, let’s not put any pressure on the guy.

Most Likely to Play Soon

Sources say that both Jimmy Williams the ATH and Jimmy Williams the DT, along with DT Jonathan Lewis and OL Jimmy Martin, are the most likely to play soon, and in the case of Big Jimmy Williams and Lewis, it’s more like “they *will* play soon.”

And of course, Marcus Vick will get a shot.

Sleepers of the Class

Noland Burchette, DT Chris Burnett, LB Aaron Rouse, and Jimmy Williams the ATH, with a nod to WR Robert Parker (but if the Roanoke Times names him the “Sleeper of the Year,” is he really a sleeper?).

If You Build It, Will They Come?

What recruits think of the facilities at Virginia Tech and other places.

by Art Stevens

Of all the NCAA rules that might need to be changed, one needs to move to the top of the list. Currently, when prospective athletes come to visit, the school can't give him or her anything like a t-shirt or pair of workout shorts.

Well, something has to give with the way things are on campuses today. Namely, a school ought to be able to issue a hard hat.

Pick a campus, any campus, and chances are you'll find construction crews adding to or improving the athletic facilities. It's a

"build it" world out there and no one wants to fall too far behind.

"That's what it seems like to me," said Brian Mattes of Wyoming, Pa., a well-regarded defensive lineman who signed a grant-in-aid with Notre Dame. "I went to so many campuses and it seemed like 75 percent of them were building something new."

Said Aaron Rouse of Virginia Beach, a Virginia Tech signee: "Everybody wants to keep up with the technology and all the latest developments."

Facilities do count. Sometimes they don't count for everything, but they always count for something. Good facilities may not always get you your man (or woman). Bad facilities will pretty much guarantee you don't.

Virginia Tech is well aware of that and is continually trying to upgrade facilities that already rank with the best. The Hokies have done an excellent job of arranging everything for their football players in a central location. Major stadium expansion has begun that will, when finished, leave Tech with what coach Frank Beamer has called "one of the best stadiums you'll find anywhere."

Work on a new training room has begun, and Tech is also continuing to upgrade its facilities for other sports as well.

TechSideline.com Extra spent some time talking with recent recruits about what they were looking for and what they found on their various visits around the country. We talked to athletes who chose Tech and those who didn't.

We found out that facilities didn't cause Tech to lose any of the players who signed elsewhere.

"They have great facilities," Mattes said. "I just felt like Notre Dame had a little more to offer me educationally. I think when Tech gets that stadium finished it will be really awesome. I was there for the Miami game (Dec. 1) and it was so loud. I can't imagine what it will be like when that end zone is enclosed."

Athletes placed different priorities on facilities. Running back Mike Imoh, a Tech signee from Robinson High in Fairfax, ranked them very high. Mattes said they were somewhat important but

ended up not choosing the school he thought was best in the facility department – Penn State. Others said academic and “non-football” facilities were just as important.

“The most important thing to me was coaching staff,” said Rouse, a prep defensive back who projects as a collegiate linebacker. “The facility needs to be state of the art, but it doesn’t do you any good if the coaches don’t have a good work ethic. I found a lot of the schools are pretty even with facilities. Guys are looking at where they can get some playing time as much as they are facilities.”

Said Imoh, “Facilities were huge for me. Tech’s are incredible and that’s what got me to sign with Tech.”

Let’s take a tour through some athletes’ eyes.

Imoh, the Group AAA player of the year in Virginia, took official visits to Tech, Pittsburgh and Wake Forest.

Tech, he said, got big points for the proximity of everything. You take a short walk from the locker room to the practice field. Same thing – meeting rooms to practice field. Lane Stadium is a tunnel away. If you think that’s a small consideration, try trudging a good distance in football gear after practice on a hot day, during mid-August two-a-days, knowing another practice is five hours away.

“Everything seemed to be right about Tech’s facilities,” Imoh said. “You walk in and immediately you’re comfortable, and you want that out of a place you’re going to be for four or five years.

“The memorabilia room (in the Merryman Center) is so nice and the practice field is great. The weight room is incredible.”

Imoh and Mattes (more from him later) gave Pittsburgh extremely high marks. In fact, Imoh said, Pitt may have an edge (very slight) with their locker, weight and training facilities.

“Just incredible, everything new and top of the line,” he said. “It was tempting, really tempting, really, really tempting.”

The big strike? Pitt shares the facility with the Pittsburgh Steelers, but that’s not the strike — the problem is, it’s not easy to get there. “You can’t just walk out of your room and be there like you can at Tech,” Imoh said. “But once you get there, it’s WOW.”

Wake, he said, is trying. The campus itself is “beautiful, like a country club.

“But the football stuff isn’t quite up to date. They’re in the process of renovating, but it’s not quite up to the rest of them.”

Imoh also saw Penn State and called the Nittany Lions’ facilities “very nice, kind of like Pittsburgh’s.”

Mattes’ seconded the notion about Pitt and Penn State.

“Penn State was probably the best I’ve seen,” he said. “The football building has everything imaginable in it and it’s all state of the art. A stadium that seats 110,000 can’t be compared to much.”

Mattes said Georgia Tech has a very nice weight room “and they’re supposed to be adding on to that.” He also paid a compliment to Tech’s big in-state rival. “I liked Virginia’s setup. Everything was self contained,” he said.

Weight rooms were an important consideration for the 6-6, 245-pounder, and he said they all were much the same.

“My thought was that it is much more what goes on inside them,” he said. “It doesn’t matter how nice the weights look. You still have to lift them. I tried to look at the whole thing along with academic support systems, which was pretty important to my choice.”

Notre Dame’s facilities didn’t particularly stand out. He liked many other things the Irish offered.

“They have all the things everybody else has,” Mattes said. “The facilities are very nice. They do things a little different with housing and stuff. You have to stay in a dorm, your roommate is not a football player. I had a great visit there.”

Antoine Rutherford, a defensive back from Miramar, Fla., who signed with the Hokies, only took an official visit to Tech. He agreed with Mattes that people who knew how to use the facilities were perhaps more important than the physical plant itself.

Tech won him over quickly with its support. “I took a good look at the nutritional part, how they eat, how they exercise, stuff like that,” he said. “I got the impression they really looked out for the people who came there. The educational part was important.

“For me, it was much more about education. Then I considered the athletics. I do like the way Tech always seems to be working to improve (facilities). They’ve made a lot of progress and I liked that, too.”

Rouse said his first impression of Virginia Tech was, “Wonderful. That weight room was awesome. I’d never seen anything like that. I thought the training room they had was great, too, and then I found out they’re building a new one. That was a big plus.

“I loved the stadium and the fans there made me feel like I was already there. It will be something with an even bigger crowd.”

Rouse also saw Georgia Tech and said it seemed the walk to the practice field was long. He also said the field didn’t appear up to par with other schools. The rest of the facilities there were fine, he said.

“What brought me to Virginia Tech were the people and the atmosphere,” he said. “I didn’t feel like I was leaving home. I felt like I was at home. If I wasn’t comfortable, I wouldn’t want to be there.”

Laenar Nixon, a tight end from Miami, signed with Oklahoma. Like Notre Dame-bound Mattes, he had no complaints with the facilities at Tech. He does think Oklahoma’s are better.

“Everything was in one area,” he said. “They have spared no expense. They have a two-floor weight room with top-quality equipment and a lot of motivational stuff like slogans on the floor and ceilings and stuff. Everything at Oklahoma just seemed bigger and a lot more intense.

“The weight room was the first thing I had to go see. That’s what is going to make me the player I am, give me the foundation. Then I took a look at the educational center and other things on campus, the places I could go to get away from it for a while.”

Tech, he said, “was good and all, just not like Oklahoma.”

Nixon’s other visit was to Central Florida and he wasn’t at all complimentary of the Golden Knights’ facilities.

“Garbage,” he said. “It was like a high school weight room. Everything was like ... unorganized. That’s one thing that turned me off, the unorganization. It didn’t stand a chance with Oklahoma.”

Word gets around quickly among top recruits. Though some obviously prefer other schools, Tech’s reputation for facilities and support is excellent. Imoh said North Carolina is another school with a reputation for some serious facilities.

“I have not seen it but I’ve heard when you do, it is very hard to walk away from that,” he said.

Maryland, Imoh said, is a school he expects to make great strides following the success of 2001.

“With the money they brought in, they’ll soon be on their way to being up there with everybody else,” he said.

Schools that ignore their facilities will pay a price, no matter how strong everything else is around them.

“I wouldn’t want to go anyplace that’s really a dump,” Mattes said. “I really didn’t focus on it all that much. To me, it seemed like everyone was trying to keep up with the Joneses.”

That’s why a hard hat should be mandatory.

Kevin McCadam: A Rover Finds a Home

Kevin McCadam traveled distances great and small to finally find a home.

by Neal Williams

Who hasn't had the experience when shopping for shoes?

You go into the store knowing you are a perfect size 11. You've been a size 11 all your adult life. The salesman brings out a stack of size 11s from a variety of makers in a variety of styles.

One feels OK. Pretty good, actually. Just not quite right. One is a tad tight, another is a tad loose.

Then you slip your feet into one – still a size 11 – and you know right away that's the shoe to buy. It's perfect, like it was made specifically with you in mind.

All size 11s, and only one is just right. The shoe thing kind of sums up Kevin McCadam's life as a football player. He was a free safety. The position fit him just fine. Then he tried on rover and he knew. He'd found the perfect spot.

"Once I switched, I realized I was just more comfortable playing the rover position. It fit me a little better," McCadam said.

Watching McCadam play as a Virginia Tech senior, it was obvious he'd found his perfect spot. McCadam slipped into the rover spot like he'd been there all his life and turned in a season to remember.

It was a season that's given him hope that he can continue his playing career in the National Football League.

"Kevin had a great year, was a pleasant surprise," said Jim Cavanaugh, the Hokies' assistant who coaches rovers and outside linebackers. "As the season went on he became more and more confident at the position. He became a very good tackler and his coverage skills were excellent."

It's OK to admit now that the idea of McCadam at rover wasn't one that inspired thoughts of potential greatness. It wasn't that anyone thought he'd be a bad rover. There was just nothing to suggest that he'd emerge as a standout.

His path to Tech was very long and very twisted. From the San Diego area, he originally headed to Colorado State. The move came not long after his father – and perhaps his biggest fan – died. It turned out to be too soon. He was not ready to be away and he was worried about leaving his mother alone so soon after such a tragedy.

He stuck out that first season, sitting it out as a redshirt. During spring drills, he broke a collarbone. He decided soon after that to head home, a decision that proved to be very wise.

McCadam enrolled at Grossmont College not far from his home. He sat out the following season to let his collarbone heal then turned in a standout season for Grossmont. He was the team's defen-

sive Most Valuable Player and special teams player of the year. J.C. Grid Wire named him a second-team All-America.

The two years at home helped him personally as well as athletically. He could move on again, and he chose to move a long way away. Virginia Tech, he knew from watching the 2000 Sugar Bowl, offered a chance to compete at the highest level.

McCadam's first year as a Hokie was spent backing up Willie Pile at free safety. The best way to describe the year was non-descript. Not good, not bad. He played in nine games after recovering from an ankle injury and made 28 tackles.

"It was kind of hard," McCadam said. "I wasn't completely comfortable with the defense at the time. Willie could make a lot of checks that I couldn't. I understand why I didn't play as much as I would have liked."

McCadam's difficulties weren't anything that most first-year players don't experience. The difference was he was first year to the program. He was third-year overall, which left him with one more season. He had to put it in fast forward.

"I knew I couldn't afford another mediocre year," he said.

He looked at the rover position, at the time manned by Cory Bird and backed up by Philip Summers. Both seniors. Hmmm, McCadam thought. Pile, a year behind McCadam, wasn't going anywhere. Maybe I could be a rover, he thought.

McCadam started dropping hints to Cavanaugh and defensive coordinator Bud Foster.

"I was kind of hounding them, encouraging them to make a decision," McCadam said with a laugh. "I wanted to get on the field. There was no sense having me and Willie play the same position. That was really the only position I could move to.

"It was kind of joking and kind of serious. They were receptive from the start. I'd always ask Coach Cav, 'When's our first meeting?'"

Rover is a key position in the Tech defense. It's most comparable to strong safety – that's where Bird ended up with the Indianapolis Colts and where McCadam will play if he makes the NFL – but there's more to it than that. Coverage responsibility, run responsibility and more go into the job.

McCadam proved to be the right pick.

He's a fierce hitter who didn't forget the basics of his days as the deep back. He became a defensive mainstay. He, Pile and linebacker Ben Taylor were the only Hokie defenders to play more than 600 plays in 2001, and only Taylor (659) was on the field for more defensive snaps than McCadam (642).

McCadam was Tech's third-leading tackler with 83, eight of them behind the line of scrimmage. He recovered two fumbles and intercepted three passes. He scored two touchdowns, one with a fumble and one with an interception.

He was somehow left off the All-Big East teams. If there was a most improved award, he would have been an exceptional candidate, although he really wasn't that improved. He was just showcased in a better spot for him.

"I had a good year," McCadam said. "I wouldn't say it's a great year. I would never say that about myself. If I had a great year, I would have had more interceptions, would have made more big plays. I kind of just did my job.

"I think it could have happened at free safety but that would have been hard with Willie still there. I needed to step out from that position and kind of make a name for myself."

Said Cavanaugh, "We knew he had the skills and were pleased he was able to apply them as quickly as he did. It was like all of a sudden, bingo, there it is. Going into the season, I was worried about his tackling being consistent. He was what we'd call a block tackler, he'd shock them but wouldn't wrap up all the time. He became very good at that. Another problem at free safety was he'd sometimes try to do too much, try to see everything. At rover, he really concentrated on his assignments and did a good job."

With the season over, McCadam hasn't stopped thinking football. Signing date for prep prospects is just past, and the Hokie Nation is abuzz about the incoming crop. McCadam in a way is going through the recruiting process on the other end.

He'll be poked, prodded and tested and hope someone is impressed enough to use a draft choice or offer him a free agent opportunity. At the very least, he should get that much.

"I try not to get too much into that," he said. "I've seen a lot of people in the past, they listen too much to their agents or what the scouts are saying. We like you here, we like you there, throwing out rounds ... it doesn't mean much. There's so much that can happen."

McCadam is enrolled at Tech this semester. He'll finish a bit short of a degree in history "but the classes I'll be short will be easy to make up." He's also working out hard in preparation for the Hokies' first pro testing day March 14. That'll be a big chance to catch the eye of a scout or several.

He's operating somewhat below the radar. He tried but didn't get an invitation to any of the seemingly three zillion all-star games. He wasn't invited to the annual scouting combine.

He'll have to make his point completely on his own, and that's OK by him. He just looks at the case of former teammate Nick Sorensen for encouragement. Yes, the same Sorensen who played in the Super Bowl with the St. Louis Rams.

"Watching Nick's whole situation is definitely an inspiration," McCadam said. "I've been so happy to see all his progress. It would have been nice to go to one of those games, get to the combine. But so many guys who do all that stuff don't make it. And you get guys like Nick who didn't go to the combine and he goes to the Super Bowl.

"From this point to the draft, it's like a beauty pageant. It's how big you are, how fast you are, how you look in all your drills. They want to see your upside, your potential, that kind of thing."

With his background on the west coast and his two seasons at Tech, McCadam has become a bi-coastal guy. He loves different aspects of both places and would be comfortable eventually settling down on either side of the country. For purposes of pro ball, he has no preferences. He'll go to either coast, anywhere in between, anywhere up or anywhere down. Warm, cold, east, west, north, south ... he's easy to please.

"It's all very exciting," he said. "Growing up as a little kid, you watch football on TV and you're like, 'I want to play there.' It's a light at the end of the tunnel thing, and it's right here in front of me. I kind of seize that opportunity every day when I go and work out.

"I definitely have a chance. Anywhere in the NFL is a great place to play. I will play hard. That's the mentality I bring and I just want a shot to let them know I can play."

A Hokie Looks at Fifty

Jim Alderson has seen half a century of Tech football. He even remembers some of it.

by Jim Alderson

I recently celebrated another of those milestone birthdays, the one signifying half a century among the quick.

'Celebrating' might not be the correct term, as none of the previous forty-nine have resulted in my being treated to a birthday party (one was attempted when I turned six, but when one's birthday lands in February there is always the possibility of inclement weather, and a foot and a half of snow that day resulted in the scrapping of plans due

to poor attendance. No one has risked that kind of blizzard since), and as far as I can tell nothing is planned this time around, either. Birthdays are not a big deal among my relatives, but no matter.

Turning fifty does give one pause. There is a certain amount of official standing to it; solid evidence that one is no longer young, no matter how much one, in the words of most every woman I have ever been associated with, "refuses to grow up." I have officially entered the period of life that is commonly referred to as 'Middle Age,' although, quite frankly, I'm not sure why it is denoted as such. Given my family history and personal habits, it is safe to say that over half my life has been consumed, much of it with gusto.

This is the time of life that many males become afflicted with what psychologists refer to as 'mid life crisis.' I am not exactly sure what that is. Certainly I find myself thinking often about sports cars and women much younger than I, but I have been doing that for decades. No, the subject I find myself reflecting on often — right after time spent wondering how I might pay for that snazzy Lexus SC 430 I have my eye on, or darkly contemplating the undeniable fact that women in their early twenties no longer seem very interested in me, and, of course my other chief interests, my income and my health — is not surprisingly Tech football (this is, after all, a TSL Extra column). I have seen a bunch.

I made my first appearance in this life February 13, 1952, shortly after 5 p.m., beginning what was to be a lifelong disinclination for any type of labor past five o'clock. Nine months later I was attending my first Tech football game. I do not remember either the opponent or the result, and no one else who accompanied me seems to either. Given the clues provided by what they do remember, that it was a Thanksgiving Day game played in Roanoke's Victory Stadium, I have been able to deduce that the Hokies under Coach Frank Moseley knocked off VMI 26-7 on 11/27/52. I was off to a good start. I am told I became quite disagreeable during the Fourth Quarter (I imagine I must have been hollering for RUTS) and a bottle was necessary to shut me up, thus beginning another game tradition that has endured, although the shape and the contents of the bottle have changed.

The Thanksgiving Day Tech-VMI game, known as the 'Military Classic of the South,' also became a tradition in my family. I was married to the young lady who was to become my son's mother and my first ex-wife before I discovered that there were families where Thanksgiving was not spent packing the car at the crack of dawn and heading for Roanoke to watch Tech football, instead spending the day stuffing themselves with turkey. It is an interesting concept, but I would just as soon Tech go back to playing a game that day. In fact, I was in Lane Stadium the last time Tech played on Thanksgiving, a 1982 21-14 defeat of the Hoos, played before a sparse crowd on a night I recall as

bitterly cold, although I am sure there are those who will swear the 8 p.m. kickoff was accompanied by sunny skies and a temperature in the high seventies. This is certainly not the year to add yet another weeknight game, but I would be up for a return to Thanksgiving games.

I also attended the last Tech-VMI game played in Roanoke, the 1971 34-0 Tech thrashing of the Keydets, a game remembered as the 'Snow Bowl,' when the Corps of Keydets, displaying tactics unchanged since they were taught by Stonewall, charged across the Victory Stadium field into a barrage of snowballs launched from the Tech stands. It was a day of ignominious defeat all around for VMI.

Other games that for whatever reason stand out in my memory that were played in very cold conditions were 1973's 36-13 pounding of Florida State, a 21-22 loss to VMI that same year (the game that ended Charley Coffey's three year run at Tech), the 1980 10-20 Peach Bowl loss to Miami and a 35-14 win over East Carolina in 1996.

I observed Tech lose 21-23 in pouring rain in 1977 to Florida State, 13-31 to Clemson that same year and a 55-28 blasting of Maryland in 1993. I recall the 1967 Tech-Miami game, won by the Canes 14-7, played in a raging snowstorm.

There are other games that stand out as I look over a game-by-game record of my fifty years of Tech football. In 1969 Tech under Jerry Claiborne was poised to move into college football's elite as they opened the season at home versus Alabama. It was not to be, as a late blunder by the Tech special teams enabled Bear Bryant's Crimson Tide to escape with a 17-13 win. Claiborne's teams were never the same after that, losing the next four games and stumbling to a 4-5-1 record, and at the end of the following season (a 5-6 finish), he was fired. I often wonder what might have happened had Tech held on that day against Alabama.

Some big wins I remember:

- a goal line stand in 1972 that enabled underdog Tech to defeat SMU 13-10, beginning a run that included Dave Strock's late field goal to beat Oklahoma State 34-32.
- the Hail Mary that beat William and Mary 22-19 in 1978.
- the 30-0 rout of the Hoos in a newly-expanded Lane Stadium in 1980.
- the 48-0 wax job in Hooville in 1983, the day the Scott Stadium goal posts came down at the hands of Hokie fans.
- a 42-10 win over the Hoos in 1986, Bill Dooley's last win over the Hoos and the 'Hoo Quit Again?' game.
- the 25-24 nail biting win over NC State in that year's Peach Bowl, Tech's first bowl win ever.
- a 1989 25-23 victory at NC State after I had stood in the parking lot of Carter-Findley Stadium listening to Pack friends explain Tech had "no chance, none whatsoever" of winning the game.

- the 45-24 win over Syracuse in 1993 that cemented Frank Beamer's first bowl bid.
- the first win over Miami, 13-7 in 1995.
- a very drunk Alabama fan congratulating me after Tech's 38-7 Music City Bowl win in 1998 over the Tide, this after he had assured me heading into the stadium that his team would win because "we're Alabama" (I also remember that Alabama fan and his friends as being some of the friendliest opponents I have ever tailgated with, along with this year's FSU fans).
- and the 38-14 besting of Boston College that wrapped up 1999's 11-0 regular season.

There have been many, many others but these particularly stand out.

Other memories I have that pertain to my watching Tech football, although I no longer recall the specific game or games, include a delightful elderly couple who had season tickets in Section 16 during the Seventies, the gentleman a Tech alumnus who as a youth had watched Hunter Carpenter play. These terrific people always brought to games a thermos filled with gin and tonic, which, although they never once offered to share it with me, was always empty by the end of the game.

I remember the mad dash during halftime from the Theta Chi section of Lane, and that of every other fraternity with which I was familiar, to the Gables liquor store, and walking back into the stadium carrying large shopping bags filled with booze ... and nobody caring.

I recall once getting a speeding ticket on Route 460 near the Corning plant following a game, back when the area's rural nature and lower attendance made that possible. Attitudes were a little more casual towards drunk driving back then, and I was relieved to only be getting nabbed for speeding. I also remember the officer being quite helpful when my companion, the young lady mentioned above, became violently ill while we were stopped, the result of consuming about a pint of her drink of choice, sloe gin, during the game.

There was also the episode following a game that involved the same young lady, one of Radford's infamous proctors, a hasty escape from a first-floor Madison Hall room and a dash across that campus with the finest of what was then known as Radford College in hot pursuit. It's the memories that matter.

I have read that a lot of men when they approach my age reflect back on their life's accomplishments, or lack thereof, and I am no exception. I have examined my life against my hopes and dreams and concluded that I will never play football for Tech, despite still retaining all of my eligibility. If Frank didn't put me in at the end of last year's UConn game he never will, and that is going to be an unfulfilled dream.

My window on coaching Tech is also closing. When I first learned Rickey Bustle was leaving, I felt certain Frank would recognize my qualifications derived from years of suggesting plays from the stands in full throat and offer me the job of Offensive Coordinator, and I waited by the phone for days. The call never came, and I can only feel that the hiring of that young pup Stinespring constitutes age discrimination. After a couple of years of my play-calling Frank would certainly have been coaching someplace else, paving the way for me to cap my career by becoming Tech Head Coach.

I am in consultation with my lawyer, a Hoo on the far side of sixty who considered himself and most anyone else a better choice of coach than what *they* got in Al Groh. This may take a while.

I have turned fifty and have to deal with it, despite having no experience in turning fifty and no notion of what being fifty is supposed to feel like. I suspect that not much will change and my fifty-first autumn is going to be spent as my previous half a hundred, watching Tech football.

I consider this country's finest writer to have been the late Joseph Heller (sorry Papa). In his novel *Closing Time*, he wrote of its aging protagonist: 'Yossarian planned to live forever or die trying.'

It is how I feel about Tech football.

Inside the Numbers: Ranking the Recruits

We mash the recruiting rankings together and rank the new recruits.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Here we are again, all present and accounted for and ready for our second annual installment of “Inside the Numbers: Ranking the Recruits.”

The premise is simple: We take the Rivals.com, SuperPrep, and PrepStar rankings of Virginia Tech’s football recruits and mash them down into one complex ranking system that gives each VT recruit a composite ranking.

We picked Rivals, SuperPrep, and PrepStar because of the depth of their ranking systems. Other longstanding recruiting analysts are excluded because they either don’t have a ranking system that has the required depth, or their rankings are subjective and obviously biased towards some schools and/or against others.

We ran our first edition of ITN:RTR last year, in TSL Extra issue #4 (Feb. 16, 2001), and Kevin Jones, the top recruit in the nation according to Rivals.com and SuperPrep, nailed a near-perfect score of 44.8 out of 45.

KJ’s 2001 score will probably never be beaten by a Hokie recruit, or perhaps *any* recruit, for that matter. Think of it as being analogous to Bob Beamon’s incredible long jump record at the 1968 Olympics, which stood for well over two decades before being broken; or compare it to Roger Maris’ record of 61 homers, which stood for 37 years before thinned-out pitching and a juiced ball finally led to its downfall.

(No letters from angry baseball fans, please....)

Any installment of ITN:RTR is interesting in and of itself, but as the years go on, the ability to compare one recruiting class to classes from years past will make things even more interesting. And this year, the second year we’ve done this, will give us our first chance to compare classes by putting the 2001 class up against the 2002 class.

As a sidebar, we can go backwards in time and rank the 2000 and maybe even 1999 classes some day, but we’re limited by the relatively short life span of the Rivals.com recruiting database, since our formula relies heavily on them.

Let’s get started, but first, the same disclaimer we ran last year.

Standard ITN:RTR Disclaimer

If you’re into this stuff, you may think that the formula and methodology that I use stinks. So let me warn you not to take this too seriously. I’m always under time constraints here at TSL, so when I came up with my ranking system, I probably put a grand total of 30 minutes of thought into it, tops. The remaining hours and hours were spent coming up with a spreadsheet full of formulas and entering everyone’s rankings into it, and then wrapping this wordy article around it.

The Ranking Methodology

If you're not a detail-oriented person, and you like to bite the Tootsie Pop and immediately get to the chewy center, then you can skip to the end of this article and see the final TSL recruiting rankings, which list all 17 players from the highest-rated to the lowest-rated (prep school and JUCO players are excluded — this year, that includes WR Fred Lee from Milford Prep, OL Jimmy Martin from FUMA, and DT Jimmy Williams from Pasadena City College JUCO).

If, on the other hand, you like to eat a Tootsie Pop one lick at a time and take your sweet time getting to that chewy Tootsie Roll center, or if you're just the type of person who likes to see numbers discussed in mind-numbing detail, then pull up a chair.

I will first describe all three ranking systems (Rivals, SuperPrep, and PrepStar), and then I'll describe how they're integrated into a TSL composite ranking. Then I'll present the final rankings for your perusal. And if you're really insane, I'll even give you a link so you can download the spreadsheet I used, which is totally incomprehensible and may even be chock full of errors.

Remember, this is supposed to be fun. Let's go.

SuperPrep Rankings

SuperPrep can give up to three honors to a player, depending upon how highly he is ranked. They are as follows:

Elite 50: the top 50 players in the country, ranked from #1 to #50, without regards to position.

All-American: the top 288 players in the country, split up and ranked by position. Among the 288 AA's, SP ranks 22 quarterbacks from #1 to #22, 41 running backs, 11 tight ends, 36 wide receivers, 3 fullbacks, 43 offensive linemen, 43 defensive linemen, 29 defensive backs, 34 linebackers, 17 skill athletes, 7 jumbo athletes, and 2 kicker/punters.

All-State: the top 1075 players in the country, ranked in their state, without regards to position. For smaller states, SP will combine them into a region. Some examples: Florida has a Top 90 ranked from #1 to #90, Texas has a Top 112, Virginia has a Top 39, and there is a Mid-Atlantic Top 32 that is taken from Delaware, DC, Maryland, and West Virginia.

Note that a player in SuperPrep's system who is in the Elite 50 is also, by default, All-American and All-State. Likewise, every All-American is an All-State player.

PrepStar Rankings

I don't like PrepStar's ranking system. It's sort of like SuperPrep's, but not really, and it is impossible to fit it properly into a mathematical formula. Like SuperPrep, PrepStar can honor players in up to three ways:

Dream Team: the top 125 players in the country, split up and ranked by position. Among the 120 Dream-Teamers, PS ranks 15 quarterbacks from #1 to #15, 18 running backs, 3 tight ends, 11 wide receivers, 16 offensive linemen, 24 defensive linemen, 15 linebackers, 8 defensive backs, 12

athletes, and 3 kickers.

All-American: the top ??? players in the country (PS doesn't explicitly say how many All-Americans they have, and I'm not going to flip through their magazine and count them), ranked in their region, by position. PS has six regions: Western, Midlands, Southeast, Midwest, Atlantic, and Eastern. So, for example, if a player is ranked as the #6 running back in the Southeast region, that means he is an All-American.

All-Region: this ranking is a little confusing and annoying. In their regional rankings, beneath the AA level, PS lists players as All-Region, but there is no effort made to "rank" them — they're just listed. For example, in the Atlantic Region, PS ranks 5 defensive linemen #1 to #5, which means that they're All-Americans. Then they list a handful of other defensive linemen in alphabetical order, without rankings. The guys without rankings are All-Region. The first 7 guys, with ranking numbers, are AA's *and* All-Region.

Similar to SuperPrep, a PrepStar Dream Teamer is also an All-American and All-Region player. Every All-American is All-Region.

Rivals.com Rankings

Rivals takes a lot of heat for the perceived accuracy of their rankings, but as a rating system, they're the simplest and easiest to understand. And, most importantly for this article, they're by far the easiest to cram into a mathematical formula. Rivals.com honors players in up to three ways (are you seeing a pattern here?):

Rivals 100: the top 100 players in the country, ranked from #1 to #100, without regards to position.

Rivals Position Ranking: Rivals ranks the top 50 "dual-threat" QB's in the country, the top 55 all-purpose running backs, 115 wide receivers, etc. Each player in their system is ranked at his position, or is listed as "not ranked."

Rivals Stars: every player listed in Rivals' system gets ranked from 1 to 5 stars, with 5 stars being the best. The 5 star ranking is very exclusive, so exclusive that there are players on the prestigious Rivals 100 list who are "only" four-star players. Only a few dozen kids — 38 this year — out of thousands are given 5 stars.

TSL's Composite Rankings

Now that I've explained how SuperPrep, PrepStar, and Rivals.com rank the recruits, the idea is to take the nine different ranking levels of the three services listed above and compile them into one composite ranking.

For each of the nine ranking levels, I'm going to award a player 0 to 5 points, for a total maximum composite rank of 45. Here's how the points are going to be awarded (please see the "Important Note" after I talk about the points system):

SuperPrep Elite 50: 0 points if the player is not in the Elite 50, and 1 to 5 points if he is. The #50 player gets 1 point, the #1 player gets 5 points, and those in between are awarded points on a

sliding scale.

SuperPrep All-American: 0 points if the player is not an AA, and 1 to 5 points if he is. The player gets 5 points if he is the top-rated All-American at his position, and 1 point if he is the bottom-rated All-American at his position. Players in between are awarded points on a sliding scale. Examples: the #1 running back gets 5 points, and so does the #1 QB, etc., but the #41 running back (out of 41) gets 1 point, and the #25 QB (out of 25) gets 1 point.

SuperPrep All-State: 0 points if the player is not ranked in the state, and 1 to 5 points if he is. The player gets 5 points if he is the top rated player in the state, 1 point if he is the bottom rated player in the state, and those in between are awarded points on a sliding scale. Example: Ahmad Brooks (#1 in VA out of 39 players) would get 5 points, while Brenden Hill (#36 out of 39) gets 1.08 points.

PrepStar Dream Team: 0 points if the player is not on the Dream Team, and 1 to 5 points if he is. The player gets 5 points if he is the top-rated Dream Teamer at his position, and 1 point if he is the bottom-rated Dream Teamer at his position. Players in between are awarded points on a sliding scale. Examples: the #1 running back gets 5 points, and so does the #1 QB, etc., but the #24 defensive lineman (out of 24) gets 1 point, and the #15 QB (out of 15) gets 1 point.

PrepStar All-American: 0 points if the player is not a PrepStar AA, and 1 to 5 points if he is. The player gets 5 points if he is the top rated player at his position in his region, 1 point if he is the bottom rated player at his position in the region, and those in between are awarded points on a sliding scale. Example: Jonathan Lewis (#1-ranked DL out of 5 in the Atlantic Region) gets 5 points, while Aaron Rouse (#9-ranked DB out of 10 in the Atlantic Region) gets 1.80 points.

PrepStar All-Region: 0 points if a player is not All-Region, 5 points if he is. Remember, PS lists players who are All-Region alphabetically and does not rank them, so there's no way to split the ranking further. Therefore, I award a straight 5 points for being PS All-Region.

Rivals.com "Rivals 100": 0 points if the player is not in the Rivals 100, and 1 to 5 points if he is. The #1 player gets 5 points, the #100 player gets 1 point, and those in between are awarded points on a sliding scale.

Rivals.com Position Rank: 0 points if the player is not ranked at his position, and 1 to 5 points if he is. The #1 player at his position gets 5 points, the bottom-ranked player gets 1 point, and those in between are awarded points on a sliding scale.

Rivals.com Stars: 1 point for each star. One-star players get 1 point, two-star players get 2 points, etc.

Important Note!! The mathematical formula that I used is a little sloppy, and the sliding scale isn't perfect. For players ranked 1 to 50, for example, it will give 5 points to the #1 player, but it actually gives 1.02 points to the #50 player, not 1 point. I could have taken the time to iron out the formula perfectly, but it's pretty darn close, so I went with it, primarily due to schedule pressures.

And Without Further Ado...

To summarize:

- A player can get up to 5 points from 9 different ranking sources (three services, three categories for each service, 0 to 5 points in each category).
- 45 is the highest possible composite rank. For a recruit to be ranked as a 45, he would have to be the top player in the SuperPrep Elite 50, be the top-ranked player at his position on the PrepStar Dream Team, and be the #1 player in the Rivals 100.
- The lowest possible composite rank is 1 (every player in the Rivals.com system gets at least one star). For a recruit to receive a ranking of 1, he would have to be unranked in all services and earn just one star in his Rivals.com ranking.

Now, here are Tech's 17 high school signees for the 2002 recruiting class, and their composite rankings. Please note that junior college (JUCO) and prep school players are not included, because the recruiting services do not apply their rankings to those players. For VT, this includes DL Jimmy Williams (JUCO), WR Fred Lee (prep school), and OL Jimmy Martin (prep school).

2002 Composite Recruiting Rankings (out of 45 possible points)

		SuperPrep	PrepStar	Rivals.com	Total
	Posn	Points	Points	Points	Points
Vick, Marcus	QB	12.1	12.6	14.6	39.4
Lewis, Jonathan	DL	8.0	14.2	8.7	30.8
Gore, Brandon	OL	5.8	8.0	6.9	20.7
Tapp, Darryl	DL	3.7	9.2	5.7	18.6
Imoh, Mike	RB	4.9	5.0	6.3	16.2
Rouse, Aaron	LB	2.7	6.8	6.6	16.2
McPherson, Brian	DB	3.1	8.0	4.5	15.6
Williams, Jimmy (ATH)	ATH	2.3	5.0	7.3	14.6
Wade, Cary	DB	2.2	6.0	5.5	13.7
Veney, Lamar	DL	2.1	5.0	5.8	12.9
Schmitt, Nick	ST	1.6	6.0	4.9	12.6
Rutherford, Antoine	DB	0.0	5.0	3.9	8.9
Burnett, Chris	DL	2.9	0.0	4.1	7.1
Burchette, Noland	DL	3.2	0.0	3.6	6.8
Hill, Brenden	WR	1.4	0.0	2.0	3.4
Hodges, Demetrius	DB	0.0	0.0	3.0	3.0
Parker, Robert	WR	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.0

Average 2002 Score: 14.3

Average 2001 Score (last year): 16.3

Top player: Marcus Vick (39.4 points out of 45) is the #8-rated recruit overall by Rivals.com and the #2 QB out of 50. This leads to him receiving 14.6 points out of 15 from Rivals.com, with lower scores from SuperPrep (12.1 points) and PrepStar (12.6 points). But as discussed previously, Marcus finishes far behind last year's winner, Kevin Jones (44.8 points).

Bottom player: Robert Parker (2 points out of 45) was not ranked by SuperPrep, PrepStar, or Rivals.com, and was a Rivals 2-star player. He tops last year's lowest-ranked player, Brandon Frye (1 point out of 45).

Random example: Aaron Rouse (16.2 out of 45). Aaron is not a SuperPrep Elite 50 or a SuperPrep AA, but he is ranked as the #23 player out of 39 in Virginia — 2.74 SuperPrep points. Aaron is not a PrepStar Dream Teamer, but he is an All-American (#9-ranked DB out of 10 in his region — 1.80 points), and All-Region (5.00 points) — 6.80 PrepStar points. Aaron is not in the Rivals 100, he is ranked the #32 DB out of 90 (3.62 points), and he is a 3-star Rivals player (3.00 points) — 6.62 Rivals.com points. Aaron's total is $2.74 + 6.80 + 6.62 = 16.16$ points.

Comparison to 2001 Class

Just for fun, let's throw the players from the 2001 and 2002 classes together and see what we get — here's a composite ranking of the 38 players from both classes (excludes Jordan Trott and Chris Caesar, because as late signees, they were never ranked using the TSL system):

Comparison of 2002 Class to 2001 Class

Player	Points	2001	2002
Jones, Kevin	44.8	X	
Vick, Marcus	39.4		X
Randall, Bryan	36.1	X	
Lewis, Jonathan	30.8		X
Hall, DeAngelo	26.4	X	
Lee, Fred	26.2	X	
Hamilton, Justin	23.5	X	
Gore, Brandon	20.7		X
Humes, Cedric	20.7	X	
Bradley, Curtis	20.4	X	
Walton, D.J.	20.0	X	
King, Jeff	19.1	X	
Tapp, Darryl	18.6		X
Imoh, Mike	16.2		X
Rouse, Aaron	16.2		X
Pannell, Chris	15.7	X	
McPherson, Brian	15.6		X
Williams, Jimmy (ATH)	14.6		X
Wade, Cary	13.7		X
Hunt, Will	13.4	X	
Veney, Lamar	12.9		X
Schmitt, Nick	12.6		X
McGrath, Danny	12.1	X	

Warren, Blake	12.0	X	
Hilton, Kevin	11.9	X	
Murphy, Jason	9.8	X	
Anderson, James	9.3	X	
Rutherford, Antoine	8.9		X
Clifton, Chris	8.9	X	
Burnett, Chris	7.1		X
Burchette, Noland	6.8		X
Fleck, Andrew	4.6	X	
Sandidge, Tim	4.0	X	
Hill, Brenden	3.4		X
Hodges, Demetrius	3.0		X
Butler, Reggie	2.0	X	
Parker, Robert	2.0		X
Frye, Brandon	1.0	X	
Two-Year Average:	15.4		

You can see that the 2001 class is more top-heavy, but the 2002 class comes on strong in the middle. Overall, these two classes blend together in terms of the numbers of highly-rated recruits, underrated players, and “projects.”

But in terms of the rankings, the 2001 class (average rank of 16.3) exceeds the 2002 class (average rank of 14.3). But as you know, the VT coaches don’t put much stock in rankings.

The Data

This spreadsheet I used for analysis, is available for download at the following location (Microsoft Excel 97 compatible):

<http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue016/RecruitingRankings2002.xls>

Warning: it is nearly incomprehensible, so download it and read it at your own risk. Hopefully, it contains no significant errors.

Inside TSL: Traffic Jam

This year more than ever, recruiting rocked the web site.

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

In the early days of February, 2002, as the recruiting drama played itself out on the message boards, something else happened behind the scenes: two long-standing TechSideline.com site traffic records fell.

Those of you who were around in November of 2000 remember the frantic action the day that Frank Beamer almost left Virginia Tech for UNC. The site was brought to its knees by a crush of posters and visitors who

wanted to know what Tech's coaching legend was going to do, and what was going to happen to Virginia Tech football.

At the time, we had never seen anything like what we saw that day, and the site couldn't handle the traffic. But some interesting fallout from that day is that we learned some lessons on how to make our site and its message boards more efficient.

We removed, relocated, and improved a lot of the cgi scripting that writes our boards; we eventually jettisoned the home-page poll, which was running a new cgi program (and therefore bogging down the server) every time someone read the home page; and we took some hidden, non-obvious steps to help the site survive that sort of traffic.

The bottom line is that we can't guarantee that our site will be completely accessible in the event of extremely heavy traffic, but we did make it more *likely* to be accessible, and we improved its reliability (not being able to get into the site is one thing; having it crash under the traffic is another, and we fixed the crashing).

February of 2001 saw some heavy traffic, but still nothing like what we witnessed on that November day of 2000. So the site traffic records we set that day stood for a long time ... until early February of 2002.

Beamer-to-UNC Hit Statistics

Back in November of 2000, we averaged about 120,000 page views a day, and about 1,000 message board posts a day. To remind you of what a "page view" is, it occurs whenever anyone downloads a TSL article, a message board post, our home page, our Football Page, etc. That gets registered as a single page view.

Frank Beamer's decision day was Nov. 27th, 2000, and here's what page views and site traffic did in the days surrounding that time (from TSL Extra #2):

Date	MB Posts	Page Views
Nov. 2000 Ave.	1,000	120,000
11/26/00	1,966	280,141
11/27/00	4,424	606,637
11/28/00	1,738	215,364

The closest HokieCentral.com/TechSideline.com ever got to breaking the site traffic record set on 11/27/00 came the following January 24th, 2001, the day that Kevin Jones verbaled to Virginia Tech. On that day, TSL recorded 359,153 page views, the first time it had gone over 300,000 since 11/27/00.

Before recruiting 2001 was finished, two more days went over 300,000 page views: the day after KJ's verbal, and National Letter of Intent signing day 2001 (2/7/01):

Date	Page Views	Event
1/24/01	359,153	KJ Verbals
1/25/01	304,108	
2/7/01	304,774	Signing Day 2001

But despite the overall growth in site traffic throughout 2001, no single day ever came close to breaking the record of 600,000+ page views in November of 2000 — not even close. From early February of 2001 through December of 2001, the site did not top 300,000 page views on any given day.

And then Recruiting 2002 started to peak in late January and early February.

Recruiting 2002 Hit Statistics

As you know, we brought increased recruiting coverage to TSL this year. We still have a way to go to get where we want to be, but there is no question that there was a big jump in our traffic.

In January of 2002, we averaged 232,485 page views a day, the first time we had ever gone over 200,000 a day for an entire month. On January 22nd, 2002, we went over 300,000 page views for the first time since February 7, 2001. And as a matter of fact, in the last ten days of January, 2002, we went over 300,000 page views seven times. Two of the days we didn't go over 300,000 were a Saturday and a Sunday, typically our lightest-traffic days.

Things really kicked into high gear on January 31st. That was the day that Justin London and Mike Imoh announced their college choices, and TSL was hopping from that day through signing day (Feb. 6th, 2002). Here are the page view and message board post statistics:

Date	Page Views	Posts*	Event
1/31	**	**	London, Imoh Verbal
2/1	310,427	2,043	
2/2	152,397	844	
2/3	160,804	844	
2/4	557,929	3,710	Brooks, Tapp Verbal
2/5	606,954	3,544	Marcus Vick Verbals
2/6	533,179	4,429	Signing Day 2002
2/7	311,596	1,717	

* Note: # of posts is for the Recruiting Board only.

** Note: these two figures are not given because they are the subject of this month's TSLX Contest. See below.

There you have it: on February 5th, 2002, the day Marcus Vick verballed to Virginia Tech, TSL's record for page views was broken — by a mere 317 page views, or 0.05%.

It's worth noting, however, that on 2/5/02, the TSL database server crashed just after midnight and was down until nine o'clock in the morning. People could read posts, but they couldn't post new messages. If they could have put up new posts for the full 24 hours of that day, instead of just the last 15 hours, I estimate that the site traffic would have approached 650,000 page views or more that day.

On that same day, TheSabre.com did 439,060 page views, which means that the server the two sites reside on did a whopping 1,046,014 page views. Over a million page views, in one day.

If you've got a sharp eye, you noticed that the record for message board posts was broken on signing day, 2/6/02 — by a scant 5 posts (the previous record was 4,424 on 11/27/00), or 0.11%.

I don't think the posting record would have been broken on signing day, except for the fact that Patrick Dosh reneged on his VT verbal and signed with Florida. That brought out a lot of angry people with a lot to say. One truth about message boards: people post more when they're angry than they do when they're happy. In other words, message boards are a reflection of real life, in that people will open their mouths to complain before they'll open them to say something nice or happy. It's just human nature.

So, it took nearly 15 months, but on February 5th and 6th, two long-standing records finally fell here at TechSideline.com.

The Most-Read Article Ever on TechSideline.com

Recruiting season also produced another ground-breaking statistic: it was responsible for the most-read article ever on TechSideline.com.

Typically, in the middle of football season, an article that is posted on TSL will get downloaded (read) 4,000-8,000 times. Game previews, game recaps, and game analysis articles, which are long articles, are typically accessed about 6,000 times, with totals of 8,000 being rare. Last fall's Syracuse preview was downloaded 8,711 times, and that was the most for any article last fall.

Except for one. Among our Rivals, A Friend for Whom We Grieve, a heart-rending tribute to Miami Hurricane fan Michael Mott and the terrible loss he suffered on September 11th, when his wife was killed in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, was read far more widely than your typical TSL article.

From Sep. 13th (when it was posted) to Sep. 30th, that article was accessed 14,575 times. That's unheard of for your "typical" TSL article, but that one was beyond typical, and it was accessed and read by more than just Hokie fans.

That article has probably been read many more times since Sep. 30th, but the way our statistics package works, those later totals do not show up in our summaries for October, November, etc.

I assumed that that record would stand for a while, but I once again discovered the power of recruiting coverage.

On January 14th, I posted a simple Recruiting Update that listed the recruits Tech was involved with at that point in time and gave some updates on players who were on the list.

By the end of January, that article had been accessed 16,582 times, topping "Among Our Rivals" by over 2,000 views.

I did other Recruiting Updates as signing day approached, and each one was accessed over 10,000 times, with most of them being read over 12,000 times. When you consider that no single game preview, recap, or analysis article has ever been accessed over 9,000 times, it just goes to show the captivating power that recruiting has over the Internet audience.

This Month's TSL Extra Contest

Yes, TSLX subscribers, it's the return of the TSL Extra monthly contest!

You'll note that in one of the traffic tables above, I left out the January 31st figures for page views and message board posts. So here's the contest:

Guess the number of TechSideline.com page views on January 31st, 2002, the day that Justin London verbaled (to UCLA) and Mike Imoh verbaled (to VT).

As a tiebreaker, guess the number of message board posts on the Recruiting Board on that same day.

The subscriber who comes the closest (it doesn't matter if you go over) will win a \$75 shopping spree at TechLocker.com.

I actually gave these figures out on the Recruiting message board on February 1st, so if you were watching that day and have a good memory, then you've got a good chance of winning. Don't try to find my post from that day, because it has been auto-deleted by our message board software, which doesn't retain posts for more than a few days.

Send your entries to contest@techsideline.com. PLEASE DO NOT SEND THEM TO will@techsideline.com. March 1st is the last day to send in entries, so get yours in soon, and we'll announce the winner next month.

Sponsorship Update

Advance Auto Parts just finished their three-month trial run with TechSideline.com, and they were thrilled with the results and have signed a one-year contract to sponsor the web site.

This is huge news. As you know, Advance is a good supporter of Tech sports in general, and we're very pleased to welcome them to TechSideline.com.

A big thank you goes out to all of the TSL visitors who dropped by Advance Auto Parts' web site by

clicking on a link on TSL, and who gave them positive feedback in other ways about their sponsorship of TSL.

It is *your* efforts that made them satisfied with their TSL trial sponsorship and led them to resign for a longer term, and we thank you for it.

In the coming weeks and months, you'll see new TSL sponsors coming on board. Please be sure to give them the same positive feedback that you have given Advance Auto Parts and Plan 9 Music. If we can garner new sponsors and keep making them happy, then let's just say that TSL will be around a long, long time.

If you're interested in sponsoring TechSideline.com or can pass on a good lead for someone we should talk to, please email TSL's Director of Ad Sales, Trey Copeland, at trey@techsideline.com.

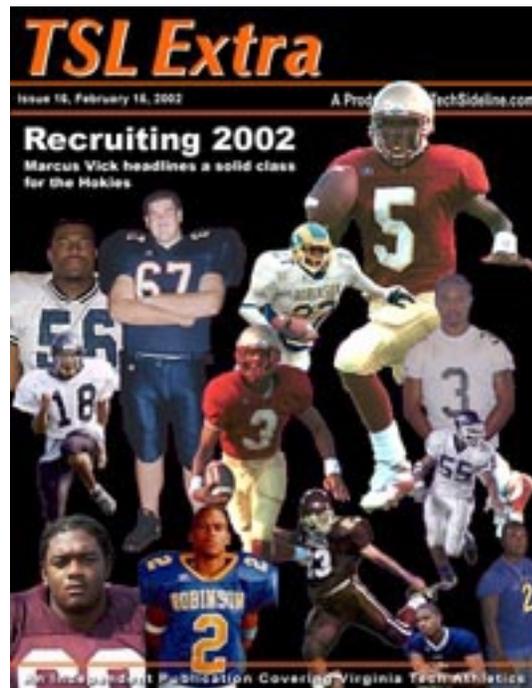
See you next month.

Cover Key

Clockwise from upper left:

Jonathan Lewis (#56)
Brandon Gore (#67)
Mike Imoh (#27)
Marcus Vick (#5)
Fred Lee (#3)
Darryl Tapp (#55)
Demetrius Hodges (#2)
Antoine Rutherford (arms crossed)
Nick Schmitt (#23)
Brenden Hill (#3)
Cary Wade (#2)
Lamar Veney (#69)
Noland Burchette (#18)

Not Pictured: Jimmy Williams (ATH), Jimmy Williams (DL), Robert Parker, Aaron Rouse, Jimmy Martin, Chris Burnett, Brian McPherson. We regret that pictures of those players were not available.



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