

Insurance woes dampen spirits

by **Tiffany Hoffman**
Managing Editor

For many people in Blacksburg, \$70 isn't the difference between having heat and having presents to give at Christmastime. Right now, as students focus on finals, their major concerns are passing grades — not water bills. But for Hava Gjata, a housekeeper in Derring Hall, Christmas is an afterthought to be considered once she divides her money between house payments, basic utilities and doctor's bills for her poor health and asthmatic difficulties.

Gjata is concerned because \$71 is being deducted each month from her paycheck that she said should not be taken.

Both Gjata's husband and her daughter are covered by Medicaid in addition to Gjata's insurance from Virginia Tech. However, Gjata said she should only be paying \$28 for her personal coverage — not for their's too.

"The health insurance changed for everyone," Gjata said. "And everyone knew, except they didn't send any letter to let me know it changed. When it changed, I started paying for (my husband and my daughter) with \$70 I need to pay for energy and water."

Gjata said she was on sick leave for five months, during which time the plan changed. Since that time, she has filed for an appeal, but according to the state department of human resource management, nothing that can be done.

"You can make changes in your type of membership during open enrollment or when you have a qualifying mid-year event," said William King, senior health benefits specialist. "And eligibility for Medicaid is a qualifying event, but (a person) must apply for change within 31 days. (With Gjata), it was several months."

King said he approached the associate director of policy and asked if there were any

loopholes for something like serious financial hardships. However, no such loopholes were found. According to section 125 of the IRS code, if Gjata's case is considered and her appeal is accepted, it could in turn jeopardize the no-tax premium all state employees with health insurance appreciate.

"It is \$99 for COVA Care," King said. "And it's a big advantage not to pay taxes (on health insurance). The IRS set this up as an advantage for group health plans, but they can make the employer drop the plan."

King said the agency director makes the decision whether or not to grant an appeal, but it's not very likely.

"If the agency director denies her request, it can be taken to a higher level," King said.

The open enrollment period is a one-month time period where policy holders can make any changes to their plans. Outside of that

See **SPIRITS**, page 2

Fall keynote speakers set

by **Aaron Blackwell**
Associated News Editor

Virginia Tech will hold its 2003 Fall Commencement ceremonies Dec. 19. This will be the first time undergraduate and graduate fall ceremonies have been held on the same day.

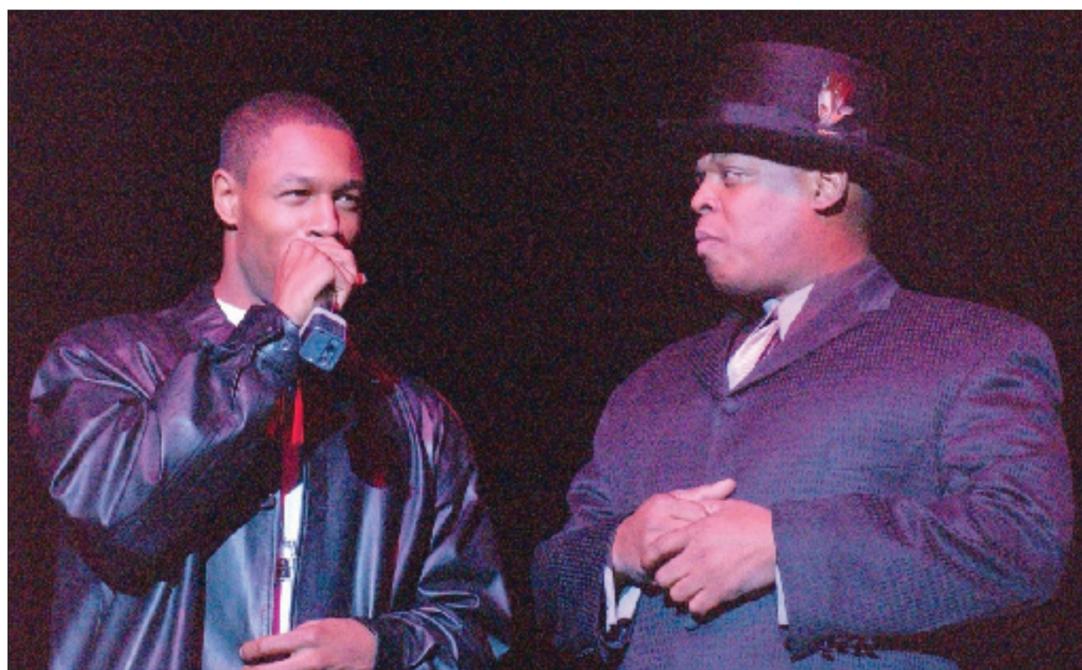
Budget constraints and the event's close proximity to the holidays caused the ceremonies to be moved to the same day, said Ed Henneke, chair of the university commencement committee.

Tech mathematics professor Ezra "Bud" Brown will be the keynote speaker at the undergraduate ceremony.

Brown has been a faculty member at Tech since 1969 and said he looks forward to speaking at commencement.

"It's a great honor," Brown said. He said he welcomes the opportunity to be in the company of other great commencement speakers — Bud Robertson, Tony Distler and Lucinda Roy.

"These are people that I See **KEYNOTE**, page 2



ANNEBELLE OMBAC/SPPS

Tank (left) and his bodyguard were part of the Rockafella hip hop concert that played at Burruss Hall on Saturday. The Young Gunz showed up too late for the concert, and promoters of the event are filing charges.

Show promoter to file charges

▪ G-Town Entertainment said they followed the contract, and they could not guarantee what time the artists, the Young Gunz, would arrive in Blacksburg because of bad weather

by **Eliot Kriviski**
Features Editor

Moe Hamden, owner of Ascension Entertainment, said he plans to file a civil suit against G-Town Entertainment, because he said the booking company is the reason he had to cancel the appearance of Young Gunz at Saturday night's concert in Burruss Hall Auditorium.

Ascension Entertainment is responsible for handling

transportation and performance fees for the artists to appear. According to Hamden, G-Town Entertainment, the company responsible for providing the artists, did not live up to their end of the contractual agreement between the two companies.

Hamden said the duo known as Young Gunz was initially supposed to leave Philadelphia on Saturday morning, but almost two feet of snow prevented the artists from departing until later. Hamden said he then arranged for a tour bus to leave Philadelphia at 12:30 p.m., so that the artists would arrive at Blacksburg at 7:30 p.m., and postponed the concert in order to allow the artists time to arrive and to complete a sound check. However, the artists did not arrive until 11:15 p.m., said Hamden, who had just announced he had to cancel the Young Gunz act just minutes before.

See **CHARGES**, page 3

Greek council holds charity event for children

by **Ellen Biltz**
News Assistant

For many, the holiday season is a time for joy, but for some families in Blacksburg, it is a time when need shines through.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council at Virginia Tech will be hosting a Christmas party tonight to help the underprivileged children of Blacksburg.

"We wanted to do something for the local community," said Monique Vanloo, NPHC special events chair and a senior interdisciplinary studies major.

The party will be held in Old Dominion Ballroom in Squires Student Center at 7 p.m. tonight.

The event will cater to about 27-30 children. Parents of the children are invited to attend the party along with the members of NPHC. All families were chosen from low-income housing in Blacksburg.

"If it wasn't for the party, some of the kids wouldn't see a Christmas," said NPHC President Tarvaris McCoy, a junior business information technology and busi-

ness management double major. "It just makes (the children's) hearts that much lighter."

Activities for the occasion include a visit from Santa Claus.

"A member of the NPHC will be dressing up as Santa and will come see the kids," Vanloo said.

There was a toy drive done by the council last month so the children could receive toys. Fourteen toys were collected at the drive and NPHC will be providing the remainder so that each child will receive a gift. The toys will be handed out as part of Santa's festivities.

"I think the party is really important because it's great just to see the smile on their faces," McCoy said.

A face painter will be providing entertainment, posing as "Santa's little helper." The painter will also be doing caricature pictures for the kids. Games and balloons will be provided, along with food and drinks for the families.

The party is an annual event the council holds.

"We've done this as long as I've been here and I think it just gives the less fortunate a place to come together," McCoy said.

"If it wasn't for the party, some of the kids wouldn't see a Christmas. It just makes (the children's) hearts that much lighter."

Tarvaris McCoy
NPHC President

Gov. Warner to visit Blacksburg next week

by **Christina Peña**
News Assistant

Gov. Mark Warner will visit the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce on Monday, Dec. 15, to discuss his new tax plan.

Warner is touring the state to discuss the plan, and he asked the Chamber of Commerce to sponsor his visit to Montgomery County.

Warner plans to stay at the Event Centre from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. There is also a possible question-and-answer period at the end of the presentation, Adams said.

Invitations were extended to 11 of the members of the Chamber of Commerce, which is mainly made up of businesses.

"We are always honored to have the governor visit our area, but it doesn't necessarily mean we're going to agree with his tax plan," Adams said. "But we're always pleased to give our members a chance to hear him."

Adams said he had only heard about

Warner's tax plan through the news, including that some state Republicans are against it.

Warner's tax plan claims to make the tax system more fair, meet Virginia's constitutional commitment to provide quality public education and protect the Commonwealth's fiscal integrity, according to Warner's website.

Warner stated that working families pay more taxes than they should, and his new plan would cut taxes for 65 percent of Virginians, especially the working class.

He plans to accomplish this tax cut by lowering the income tax for "most Virginians," reducing the food tax by 1.5 cents, increasing the sales tax by one cent, closing corporate loopholes and increasing Virginia's well-known low cigarette tax to pay for healthcare needs.

According to Warner's website, he also plans to complete the abolition of the car tax first proposed by his predecessor Jim Gilmore in 1997, end the estate tax for farms

See **WARNER**, page 3

Santa's got a brand new sleigh



JAMES LANG/SPPS

Santa Claus made an appearance at the annual Blacksburg Christmas Parade, held Saturday. The event was originally scheduled for Friday, but was postponed because of inclement weather.

News in Brief

Suspect sought in assault outside of Slusher Wing

(CT) — The Virginia Tech Police Department is looking for a suspect in an assault that took place Friday night outside Slusher Wing.

A female student told police that a white male, 5 feet 10 inches tall and of medium build, tackled her and fondled her in the area between Slusher Wing and Main Campbell Hall around 10 p.m., said Capt. Robert Baudo.

The student was returning to her residence when the suspect allegedly approached her and began talking to her. She ignored him and started to walk away when the suspect knocked her to the ground and fondled her, she told police.

The alleged victim said she kicked and slapped at the suspect until she broke free, then she ran into Slusher Wing, Baudo said.

The suspect was wearing baggy jeans and a red ski jacket, Baudo said.

The student said she did not know the suspect, but thought she might have seen him around campus before, Baudo said.

Anyone with information should call Tech police at 231-6411.

Sources: Gore to endorse Dean

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Former Vice President Al Gore intends to endorse Howard Dean for the Democratic presidential nomi-

nation, a dramatic move that could cement Dean's position in the fight for the party's nod.

Gore, who lost to President Bush in the disputed 2000 election, has agreed to endorse Dean in Harlem in New York City on Tuesday and then travel with the former Vermont governor to Iowa, sight of the Jan. 19 caucuses which kickoff the nominating process, said a Democratic source close to Gore.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Dean will return from Iowa in time for Tuesday night's Democratic debate in New Hampshire.

Survey estimates 61,000 executions

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Saddam Hussein's government may have executed 61,000 Baghdad residents, a number significantly higher than previously believed, according to a survey obtained Monday by The Associated Press.

The bloodiest massacres of Saddam's 23-year presidency occurred in Iraq's Kurdish north and Shiite Muslim south, but the Gallup Baghdad Survey data indicates the brutality extended strongly into the capital as well.

The survey, which the polling firm planned to release on Tuesday, asked 1,178 Baghdad residents in August and September whether a member of their household had been executed by Saddam's regime. According to Gallup, 6.6 percent said yes.

Spirits: Insurance law not always clear, lawyer says

Continued from page 1

timeline, there are certain mid-year events specified in section 125 that may result in an immediate change. However, this only happens if the information is submitted in the allotted time — for most places, 31 days.

"State personnel are very adamant about the 31-day change," said Douglas Martin, senior human resources manager at Tech. "They won't let us make a change outside of open enrollment."

Martin said the department sent two e-mails to employees, mailed hard copies to employees' homes and put information in the Spectrum newsletter to let people know about the open enrollment period.

King said the state also used to send a booklet, "Spotlight on

Benefits," to all state employees, but when the state cut taxes they sent them only to agency's benefits office.

"We made it clear they have to mail (open enrollment information) to (employees') home address," King said.

Though there is no way to prove whether or not Gjata received the information, King said they maintain confidence in the Tech benefits office. However, even if Gjata did receive the information, attorney John Robertson said citizens reading over policy information are at a loss.

"The problem with insurance law is there are only two entities that really understand it — insurance companies and insurance lawyers," Robertson said. "There needs to be explicit information that anything that

happens is all their responsibility. Your obligation is to read it, follow it and ask questions if you don't understand it."

Robertson said little booklets are required by law to be sent to all employees, but they're not always easy to understand.

"There's little about insurance law I find to be logical or favorable to the average person," Robertson said.

King said he sympathized with Gjata and said her type of situation is not unique, however, he knows of little that could be changed.

"We're not in a system that allows much change to be made," Martin said. "As much as I'd like to allow it, we just don't have the mechanism to do that. There's always going to be someone along the way that doesn't realize it's urgent."

Knife, blood found in suspect's car

by Dave Kolpack and Curt Woodwar
Associated Press

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — A knife and blood matching Dru Sjodin's type were found in the car belonging to the man accused of kidnapping the University of North Dakota student, a source told The Associated Press on Monday.

The source close to the investigation told the AP about the knife discovery in the car's trunk and also confirmed earlier media reports about the blood and a knife sheath being found in the parking lot of the mall where Sjodin disappeared.

Sjodin, 22, of Pequot Lakes, Minn., was last heard talking to her boyfriend on a cell phone on Nov.

22 after she left her job at a Victoria's Secret at the Grand Forks mall.

Alfonso Rodriguez Jr., 50, has been charged with kidnapping Sjodin. Evidence in the case, which was sealed by a judge after Rodriguez's arrest, should be released on Tuesday, the source said.

Rodriguez's maroon, four-door 2002 Mercury Sable was impounded by authorities before his Dec. 1 arrest in Crookston, Minn.

Rodriguez is a convicted rapist who has a history of attempted kidnapping with adult women, and has used a weapon in at least one assault. He was registered as a predatory offender, the classification for those believed to be at the highest risk of committing another sex crime.

Keynote: Ceremonies both held on same day

Continued from page 1

have the absolute highest regard for — to be in that number is a real honor," Brown said.

His main point during his speech is something he calls "Rule Zero," Brown said. It means that if someone wants to accomplish something, it must first mean something to that person. "Indifference just doesn't cut it," he said.

Brown said graduates should not take life so seriously and should be kind to everyone since everyone is working to be successful.

"The purpose of this address is to affirm that (students) did a great job and to tell parents that (the faculty) took care of their kids," Brown said.

Walter Rugaber, Tech presidential fellow and former president and publisher of the Roanoke Times, will be the keynote speaker at the graduate ceremony. He moved to the Roanoke Times in 1982 after having worked at other newspapers including the Greensboro Daily News & Record and the New York Times' Detroit, Washington and Atlanta bureaus.

In 2001, he was named one of the Roanoke Valley's 50 most influential people.

Both commencements will be held at Cassell Coliseum, with the undergraduate ceremony starting at 11 a.m. and the graduate ceremony beginning at 3 p.m.

STOCK MARKET REPORT — 12/08/2003 —		WEATHER	TODAY	TONIGHT	WEDNESDAY	WEDNESDAY NIGHT	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
DJIA	9965.27 ▲ 102.59							
NASDAQ	1948.85 ▲ 11.03	Partly cloudy Highs: 34°–49°	Mostly cloudy, slight chance of showers Lows: 36°–40°	Scattered rain, windy Highs: 33°–49°	Mostly cloudy, chance of showers Lows: 29°–33°	Partly cloudy, snow showers 25°/44°	Mostly sunny 22°/44°	
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Malvo believed he would be killed

by **Matthew Barakat**
Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE — Lee Boyd Malvo believed his adoptive father figure John Allen Muhammad would kill him if he ever deviated from the plan in last year's sniper spree, a psychologist testified Monday at Malvo's trial.

Muhammad's two rules for the pair's mission were "whatever it takes" and "no turning back," said Dewey Cornell, a University of Virginia psychologist who interviewed Malvo more than 20 times after his arrest. Muhammad often told Malvo that Malvo should shoot and kill Muhammad if he ever strayed from the mission. Malvo assumed the same would happen to him if he deviated.

"He viewed it as deadly serious that there was no turning back on this mission," Cornell said.

Malvo's lawyers are trying to convince the jury in Malvo's capital murder trial that he was under the sway of sniper mastermind Muhammad, rendering him insane.

Cornell also testified about Malvo's intense interest in the film "The Matrix," which he watched more than 100 times. Cornell said the movie influenced Malvo's behavior, as did violent video games played by the pair including "Halo" and "Rainbow Six."

The judge allowed the jury to see a short, violent clip of the film, despite prosecutors' objection that the clip was out of context and irrelevant to Malvo's case. Jurors also saw video-game clips.

Cornell said the film "seemed to represent the situation (Malvo) was in," or at least how Malvo viewed his situation, with a hero specifically chosen by an African-American father figure to lead a revolution against "an evil government ... that has people oppressed to the point where they don't even know they're oppressed. There's sort of a rampage of violence ... for the

greater good of freeing oppressed people," Cornell said.

That mirrored Malvo's indoctrination under Muhammad, who taught his protege that black Americans were the chosen people of God, but oppressed by a white government in America, defense attorneys have said.

While the film did not control Malvo's actions, it influenced them, Cornell said.

"There is compelling evidence that exposure to entertainment violence desensitizes people to violence, makes it seem more rational," he said.

Muhammad never fully revealed his mission to Malvo, but certain elements of it were clear: Muhammad wanted to regain custody of his three children, who were living with Muhammad's ex-wife in the Washington, D.C., suburbs; Muhammad wanted money from the U.S. government that would fund his vision of a new utopian society, in which 70 boys and 70 girls of all nations and races would gather in a compound, possibly in Canada or Ghana, and be taught to live in peace and harmony; and that Muhammad and Malvo would be at the vanguard of a revolution.

"Lee came to believe there could be a revolution if he followed John Muhammad's teachings," Cornell said.

The Sept. 11, 2001, attacks were a bellwether of the revolution against the U.S. government, Muhammad told Malvo, according to Cornell's testimony.

If the two were ever arrested, Malvo had been instructed to "self-destruct" and "allow himself to be martyred in the hopes it would spare John Muhammad. He was to take full responsibility for the crimes," Cornell said.

Malvo confessed to pulling the trigger in all the shootings during last year's spree in metropolitan Washington, which left 10 people dead over a three-week span.

But Malvo's lawyers have contended the confession was bogus, that it was Malvo's way of protecting the man he saw as his father.

Charges: Artists were bussed to Blacksburg

Continued from page 1

"I have no clue what took them 11 hours to get here," Hamden said. "(G-Town Entertainment's) job was to make sure that they were here at 7:30."

During his announcement, Hamden also said that everyone would be fully reimbursed for any ticket purchases made, and that everyone was welcome to stay and watch the performance of the other headlining artist, Tank, for free.

Yet, Wesley Powell, president of G-Town Entertainment stated that, "We did live up to our contract, all the artists were there."

According to Powell, there was no agreement between Ascension Entertainment and G-Town Entertainment guaranteeing that the artists would arrive there by a specific date because of the severe weather system of snow storms that hit the East Coast over the weekend.

Powell said that when the tour bus the artists, Young Gunz, were originally supposed to take was canceled, he gave

Hamden two options: Either they could postpone the show until Sunday, allowing the artists enough time to travel safely; or they could go ahead and put the artists on the road and try to get them there in time for the concert.

"Had it been a clear day weather-wise, we wouldn't be having this problem," Powell said. "We could have easily moved it to Sunday, to make sure that the roads were safe and clear."

According to Powell, who also provided R&B artist Tank, once the artists arrived at the venue, they were told that they were not going to get paid for their appearance.

"The artists were misled into thinking that they were going to be paid, which, according to the contract, should be done an hour ahead of time," Powell said.

Powell said that Hamden is making an

error in taking legal action against G-Town Entertainment, and not only will Hamden be facing opposition from his company, but from the managers of the artists and different entities as well.

"He is in the wrong," Powell said

Hamden plans to file a civil suit in the days to come.

"We feel confident to leave the case in Montgomery County," Hamden said.

In regards to refunds, the situation is still currently being worked out between Ascension Entertainment and the University Unions and Student Activities, said Nate Howe, assistant

ticket office manager for the Squires Ticket Office, who also said that because tickets were sold through multiple vendors that the refunds might take a few days to process.

“Had it been a clear day weather-wise, we wouldn't be having this problem.”

Wesley Powell
president, G-Town Entertainment

Warner: New tax bill will be addressed

Continued from page 1

and family-owned businesses, end the accelerated sales tax collection for retailers, provide incentives for small businesses to invest, ease taxes on military families and streamline the collection of the state sales tax.

"I believe with all of my heart that the Commonwealth of Opportunity plan is the right thing to do for the people who pay the bills," Warner said on his website.

Warner stated that Virginia has not sufficiently invested in public education, leaving the local government responsible. Also, he claims more students are entering the Virginia school system at all levels, and his tax plan promises to alleviate both problems.

Warner also plans to protect Virginia's AAA-bond rating,

which has been held for 65 years — longer than any other state — thanks to his new tax plan. Virginia has a tradition of conservative fiscal management, according to Warner's website.

Virginia faces a \$1.2 billion deficit in the next two-year budget, even though no new programs have been added.

The costs of necessary programs like Medicaid and the prison system are also expected to rise.

Required spending is expected to exceed the projected revenue through the end of the decade, even with budget cuts.

"I believe Virginians want their elected leaders in Richmond to solve problems instead of passing them on to future governors and future generations," Warner said on his website.



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Congress approves anti-spam legislation

by **Ted Bridis**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress on Monday approved the first national effort to stem the flood of unwanted e-mail pitches offering prescription drugs, cheap loans and other come-ons.

President Bush has indicated he intends to sign the measure into law. Indeed the White House revamped its own e-mail system this summer over a flood of so-called spam.

Clogged inboxes have become a leading irritation among Internet users, an increasing business expense for companies and a popular target for Washington interest before an election year.

The House voted without dissent to approve slight changes Senate lawmakers made to the "can spam" legislation, which would outlaw the shadiest techniques used by the Internet's most prolific e-mailers, who send tens of millions of messages each day.

The bill would supplant tougher anti-spam laws already passed in some states, including a California law that takes effect Jan. 1.

The bill was among the farthest-reaching Internet measures approved during the Bush administration, which has largely continued the Clinton administration's hands-off approach toward regulating America's technology industry.

The last such major legislation was a 1998 law banning Web sites from collecting personal information from children under 13.

The anti-spam bill encourages the Federal Trade Commission to create a do-not-spam list of e-mail addresses and includes penalties for spammers of up to five years in prison in rare circumstances.

The Senate previously voted 97-0 to approve the bill.

The legislation would prohibit senders of unsolicited commercial e-mail from disguising their identity by using a false return address or misleading subject line.

It also would prohibit senders from harvesting addresses off Web sites and require such e-mails to include a mechanism so recipients could indicate they did not want future mass mailings.

"This is one of the more sweeping

Internet regulatory schemes we've seen," said Alan Davidson of the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology. Although he criticized parts of the anti-spam bill, he said consumer frustration was driving lawmakers.

"Most people are going to be glad this bill is heading to the president soon," he said.

Some critics said the bill didn't go far enough to discourage unwanted e-mails. The Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial E-mails called the congressional effort "really disappointing." The group prefers a law requiring marketers to obtain someone's permission before sending them any e-mails.

It said the alternative method of consumers asking marketers not to send them any more messages hasn't worked.

"What Congress is effectively doing is ignoring these laws that haven't worked everywhere else they've tried," said the group's spokesman, John Mozena.

"This bill fails the most basic tests for anti-spam legislation; it doesn't tell anybody not to spam."

U.S. soldier, Iraqi policeman killed

by **Christopher Torchia**
Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Insurgents shot and killed a U.S. soldier guarding a gas station Monday in northern Iraq, and an Iraqi policeman died trying to defuse a bomb, the U.S. military said.

The attack on the soldier from the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division took place in Mosul, 250 miles north of Baghdad, Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said in Baghdad.

"Four Iraqi males traveling in vehicles stopped approximately 50 meters (yards) from a gas station in Mosul and opened fire on coalition soldiers guarding the station," Kimmitt said. "One coalition soldier died of gunshot wounds in that attack."

Hours after the killing, three U.S. soldiers in Mosul were

wounded when a bomb exploded as their patrol passed, a U.S. military spokesperson said on condition of anonymity.

On Sunday, a soldier was killed and two others were injured when insurgents detonated a roadside bomb in Mosul. The killing came one day after another soldier from the same division was killed and two others were injured when insurgents detonated a roadside bomb in Mosul.

Iraqi police in Baqouba, 35 miles north of Baghdad, discovered an explosive device near the government building, Kimmitt said. A member of the police bomb squad tried to defuse the bomb, but it exploded and killed him.

Kimmitt said there were 18 engagements between Iraqi guerrillas and U.S.-led coalition forces in the past week, a marked decline over previous weeks.

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Editorial

NATIONAL ISSUE

New bill will help curb spam e-mail

Congress approved a bill yesterday that would curb spam e-mail, which floods computers on a daily basis. The legislation, which President George W. Bush intends to sign, will not abolish mass mailings, but prohibit some aspects of junk mail.

For example, the bill will forbid senders of unsolicited commercial e-mail from concealing their identity with a false return address or misleading subject line. It also prohibits the senders from obtaining addresses off of Web sites.

While this bill does not keep junk mail from entering the e-mail system, it will extend an appropriate amount in stemming false representation in online mailings. A bill with greater breadth would infringe on rights of advertisers.

The Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial E-mails said the government should enact a law requiring marketers to obtain someone's permission before sending e-mails. Its main criticism is that the current system of consumers asking marketers to resist mass e-mails is not effective. The coalition's proposal takes it to an extreme.

E-mail delivery involves the sender and receiver. Using e-mail, much like a television or telephone, one must be aware of the potential for commercial activity. E-mail is a viable medium for advertising and the main difference between online mailings and a television commercial has been false representations.

An e-mail with a subject reading, "Hey friend!" that advertises penis enlargement pills does not convey the advertiser's true intentions.

Separation of church and state is impossible

Jordan Green

The column "Homophobic Christians quick to condemn homosexuality" (CT, Dec. 5) shows that the author obviously does not know Christianity or government. I don't claim to be an authority on homosexuality, but I do know the values of Christianity.

No, real Christians do not skip over the parts in the Bible about lying and adultery; real Christians know what sin is. No Christian is perfect, but they do know what sin is and should strive to avoid it.

Kosher dietary laws pertain to Judaism, not Christianity. Christians do not hate gay people. Christians hate the evil and sin associated with homosexuality.

We are a nation based on Christian morals. I laugh at the idea of leaving Christianity out of our legal system, for it was based on Christian morals. Christianity has always been a part of our government.

Separation of church and state means government cannot interfere with church practice. If the majority of the state is part of the church, then we find Christian morals a very real part of the legal system.

I assure you, not all Christians are homophobic. Homophobia is the fear of homosexuals. Just because one does not believe homosexuality to be right does not automatically make them homophobic. Even from a non-religious point of view, disagreeing with homosexuality is not homophobia, it is an honest, just and entitled opinion.

Being gay does not give one the right to diagnose homophobia. Homophobia is becoming a label that gays use to defend themselves with a sort of justification for being singled out.

The author was also wrong when he stated, "Marriage is simply a legal contract between two people. Any spiritual, emotional or other implications may be added by the couple..." Why would two people get married if there were no spiri-

tual, emotional or other implications that brought them together?

The law that makes the contract of marriage legally binding would not exist if there were no reason to get married. Marriage is synonymous with love, and marriage without love serves no purpose.

Christianity proves homosexuality to be immoral. If homosexuality is immoral, then their love is immoral, and a marriage between them would serve no purpose.

There are things science still can't explain today. The American Psychological Association uses a scientific structure of analysis. According to current science, (which may be dictated by society) homosexuality is not a disease. But, when homosexuality goes against the laws of nature and Christian beliefs of creation, how can it not be a disease?

If the majority of people in America claim to be Christian or to have Christian morals, same-sex marriage should be illegal just as a matter of statistics.

Freedom has always been dictated by sets of rules. True freedom would be, in a sense, anarchy.

When gays become the majority, then same-sex marriage won't seem so immoral to society. However, I will always view homosexuality to be immoral.

I agree that homosexuals have to face a lot of hatred. I believe society has to stop the prejudice and agree on a solution. We should understand the problem and support homosexuals in realizing their sin.

As humans, we always try to place the blame on someone else. The straight say it is the homosexuals' fault for not blending in with the rest of society. The homosexuals say it is the straight people's fault for not understanding. I say we are both right, we are just so caught up in defending our beliefs that we miss the truth.

The truth is, straight people don't want to help and homosexuals don't want to be helped.

Jordan Green is a senior interdisciplinary studies major.

Letters to the Editor

United States has right to defend itself and ideals

Why does being a superpower exclude you from the right of defending yourself?

Must we wait for another strike against us to bring justice to those who defy Islam in the name of Allah?

Does a sovereign nation not have the right to defend itself against any threat it deems legitimate?

As the most powerful nation in the world, we are subject to attacks from the most cowardly people on this planet.

Our government has one duty, and that is to protect the citizens that vote, pay taxes and live in this country.

If doing this compromises the liberties of the spineless cowards who attack a building that holds Americans, as well as the Muslims they die in the name of, then what is a good reason to fight?

It is very easy to attack our president because you disagree with war.

However, when a country is attacked, especially for such a poor reason as the explanation for Sept. 11, then it is not only justified, but it is necessary for us not only to strike quicker, but harder.

This country guarantees nothing but the opportunity to succeed, and any person, group or nation that threatens that guarantee deserves no protection, no second look and no pity.

That country deserves the full wrath of the U.S. military and every bomb, tank and soldier that we bring to the table.

Do not object to a war whose purpose is to protect the people that oppose it.

God bless America.

Colin Hauck
 sophomore, political science major

Insurance industry has too much power

After reading the column, "Insurance companies must help in fighting obesity" (CT, Dec. 5), I concluded that perhaps the author should reexamine what role insurance companies play in our society.

The primary purpose of an insurance company is to provide relief from a catastrophic loss, usually monetary. In recent times, however, insurance companies have gained unprecedented power in our society as a result of changing political policy. This effect has been granting insurance companies powers equal to a level of government.

Insurance companies force policy in our society by refusing insurance to an individual or company for not following its rules, which are based on its profit margin and perceived financial risk. Forcing insurance company policy on individuals strips away our personal freedoms.

A specific example would be the sport of springboard diving. If one looks at specific cities, most diving boards in cities have been removed from residential swimming pools, apartment complexes and public pools. The usual reason is the insurance company will double or triple the premium if the diving board is retained.

Should the policies of the insurance industry force the ban of a sport? Do we really want a corporation managing our health or running our lives?

I work for a medical laboratory in a large city and our company recently lost its group health insurance because of a few employees who have medical conditions. Now our laboratory has been blacklisted by the insurance companies and can no longer afford to purchase group insurance.

A better solution than giving more control to the insurance industry in healthcare is to eliminate it from the equation totally. It is a middleman and drives the costs of health care up. The money lost in bureaucratic red tape could be used to pay for the healthcare of millions of uninsured people and be used for preventative education, such as programs to combat obesity.

Scott Jones



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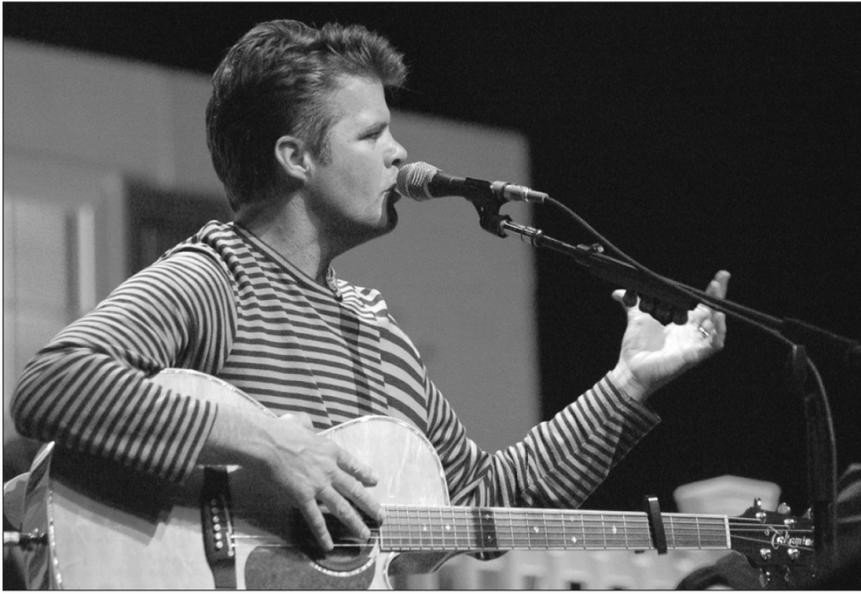
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Features



JOCELYN SCHNIEDWIND/SPPS

Lead singer Richie McDonald and the rest of Lonestar brought a sense of humor to the show, and even involved the crowd in their pieces.

Lonestar plays to sold-out Burruss Hall audience

■ The show was VTU's second sold-out show of the year and most successful country show to date

by Alison Cordell
Staff Writer

Virginia Tech Union hosted its second consecutive sold-out show Friday when the six-time Grammy-nominated country group Lonestar played in Burruss Auditorium.

The band played 20 songs, including songs from its new-

est album, "From There to Here: Greatest Hits," which has 13 songs from previous albums and three new songs.

The playlist even included two Christmas songs to "get in the holiday spirit," according to lead singer Richie McDonald.

Opening for Lonestar was Kyle Davis a singer/songwriter from Richmond. He played at Tech last year with SheDaisy, but he has also played with musicians such as John Mayer and Sheryl Crow.

"It was amazing. I don't know how else to describe it," said Jen Forman, a sopho-

more marketing management major.

Most of the crowd enjoyed the concert, some standing and dancing to the music or even line dancing in the aisles.

"It was fun seeing all the cell phones in the air and everyone swaying with each other," said Kim Hogan, a sophomore marketing management major.

Lonestar was able to get the crowd involved and feel like a part of the show.

For many songs, including hits such as "From My

See LONESTAR, page 7



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Dance raises AIDS awareness

■ Support for the Red Ribbon Club came not only from the LGBTA, but from other student organizations as well

by Jessica Pritchard
Staff Writer

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Alliance of Virginia Tech, along with four other student organizations, planned Club Red Ribbon as part of Aids Awareness Week.

"The planning started back in August," said Justin Wienckowski, a senior computer science major. "There has been tons of work on everyone's part."

This is the fourth year the LGBTA has promoted AIDS awareness.

"This year we have expanded to AIDS Awareness Week," said Kevin James, the chair of LGBTA and a senior computer science and political science double major.

The primary goal is broadening public awareness outside of just homosexuals.

AIDS is something that affects everyone, not just one particular group.

"We need to come together to fight it," James said. "We don't want to just make the connection between gays and AIDS."

This is the main reason that the LGBTA has worked hard to gain more support from other student-run organizations.

This year, they have the

support from the Student Government Association, the Black Student Alliance, the Pan-Hellenic Council, the Residence Hall Federation and the Interfraternity Council.

"It was ridiculous that it was only the LGBTA promoting AIDS awareness when it affects everybody," said Stephanie Fier, a marketing management major.

"We're trying to get other groups involved to stress that AIDS affects everyone."

To stress even farther that the LGBTA is for everyone, not just lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders, two of the three committee members of the LGBTA are straight.

Kicking off AIDS Awareness Week, the LGBTA hosted an AIDS panel discussion in Squires Student Center on Wednesday.

Along with Club Red Ribbon on Friday, they also showed the movie "Philadelphia," which deals with a man confronting his own uncertainties and the discrimination of homosexuality.

At Club Red Ribbon, free condoms and information pamphlets on sexually transmitted diseases were given out to help increase AIDS awareness.

The night's events included club dancing all night, a drag queen show and guest speaker

Christine Brownlie, a Unitarian Universalist minister.

"The drag queens organized their show on their own," said Wienckowski.

The drag queens were from all over the state of Virginia and came on their own to support the event.

This is the third year Brownlie has spoken for AIDS awareness.

"When I talk to the students, I talk about how everyone who is sexually active is at risk of an STD," Brownlie said.

"Having lost someone in my family to AIDS, it's really important for me to speak out."

The big improvement this year the LGBTA and other organiza-

tions are proud of is more students are becoming involved.

"I'm excited how students here at Tech are becoming more supportive," Brownlie said. "It's not just a gay man's disease anymore. We're facing the reality of what AIDS really is in our world."

The students at Club Red Ribbon were also glad to see the amount of support shown by the student body.

"I'm glad they have the support they need to do this," said Leon Kok, an alumnus of the class of 1999 in biochemistry.

For more information on AIDS awareness and how you can get involved, visit the LGBTA website at www.lgbta.org.

"It's not just a gay man's disease anymore. We're facing the reality of what AIDS really is in our world."

Christine Brownlie
Unitarian Universalist
Minister

Lonestar: VTU proud of turnout

Continued from page 6

Front Porch Looking In" to a cover of Jimmy Buffett's "Margaritaville," the group had the crowd sing along.

At one point the band called a few people on stage to help them play musical instruments and sing.

For the song "Little Drummer Boy," five people from the audience went onstage to play percussion, piano and to sing.

They were referred to as "The Hokie Ensemble" by the band.

"They had a great sense of humor," Hogan said.

"I loved it when they sang 'Amazed' all the way through and then replayed it and had us sing along."

Becca Ebaugh, a sopho-

more biology major and VTU member, said the Lonestar concert came about after volunteers suggested trying to have a country concert.

The concert was a mark of success for trying to reach Tech's country music fans.

"When compared to our most recent country concerts, Lonestar was by far the most successful country concert in the past two years," said Jason Shanks, VTU's director of concerts.

Shanks also said having an award-winning band

such as Lonestar come to Tech to play was an honor and made the three months of hard work to make the concert possible well worth it.

Shanks said VTU's success with the past two sold-out shows is helping them accomplish their goals.

"Our goal this year (is) to present each of the major genres of music to the student body of Virginia Tech," Shank said.

"Before the year is over, we plan on producing a large-scale rock-n-roll show, a punk rock concert and at least one more show."

"They had a great sense of humor. I loved it when they sang 'Amazed' all the way through and then replayed it and had us sing along."

Kim Hogan
sophomore, marketing major



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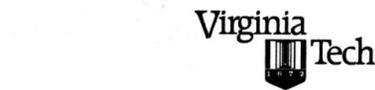
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ACROSS

1 Babysitter's bane
4 Move through water
9 Tennis stroke
12 Pirouette pivot
13 Book "for dummies," e.g.
14 Past
15 Cox and Eisenhower, to Nixon
17 Crafty
18 H.S. subj.
19 Solid no more
21 Fly
24 Asset
25 Round Table address
26 Columbus sch.
28 Wood strips
31 Corn territory
33 Pitch
35 Caspian Sea feeder
36 Mrs. Ralph Kramden
38 Old Olds
40 Hearty brew
41 "I Remember Mama" role
43 Gushed out
45 Triangular insert
47 Glutton
48 Blond shade
49 Woodshop tool
54 Geneticist's abbr.
55 German pastry

DOWN

1 "Impossible"
2 Barnyard sound
3 Corral
4 Religion of Japan
5 "The - Yard" (1974 film)
6 Field mouse's predator
7 Philatelist's prize
8 Millionaire aboard the
9 Breaking point
10 Lothario's look
11 Hopalong Cassidy por-trayer
16 Vast expanse
20 Waikiki wingding
21 Pacific firm locale
22 Bowed instrument
23 "The Young Lions" author
27 Egypt and Syria, on old maps (Abbr.)
29 Nathan or Barbara
30 Coaster
32 Dogfight fighters
34 Break
37 Votes for
39 Thought out loud
42 Condescend
44 Silly Putty container
45 John Irving hero
46 Ensigns' school (Abbr.)
50 Opposite of "post."
51 "Mayday!"
52 Grand rd.
53 Tussaud's material

Look for this week's solution on page 13.

Media, insecurities play role in disorders

Eating disorders not only affect women, but also a growing number of men are diagnosed each year

by Anne-Henley Beck
Staff Writer

Sitting atop the doctor's bench, the words pierced her ears, stinging her eyes as the tears trickled down her face. She knew what the doctor said was true.

At 5 feet 5 inches, she weighed 98 pounds, and was diagnosed as anorexic.

It started innocently enough, by being careful of what she ate, but slowly it progressed to eating nothing but a handful of carrots and an apple, if that. Eating anything more, she felt stuffed and fat. She often came up with excuses for not eating, and if forced to eat she'd pick at her food, swearing to later go running.

Although this is an extreme case, so many women fall into the trap of looking at their body and disliking what they see. According to the National Eating Disorder Association, 91 percent of women on college campuses have dieted, and 22 percent dieted often or "always." After puberty, five to 10 million girls and women in the United States, as well as one million boys and men, struggle with an eating disorder.

Part of this is due to the media's influence on American culture. Media surrounds the public with images of unrealistic ideals for women and men. An average female model can be up to 5 feet 10 inches tall and wear a size six or smaller. The 1997 Psychology Today Body Image Survey reported 43 percent of women become more insecure about weight after seeing "very

thin or muscular models."

"Media definitely plays a role," said Christine Dennis, the counseling and advocacy coordinator for the Women's Center. "It is impossible to achieve media's ideals."

To form an eating disorder, though, other components are usually the trigger. Low self-esteem, lack of control and depression are main psychological factors. In addition, problems with family and friends and sexual and emotional abuse can also be factors in forming eating disorders, according to the National Eating Disorder Association.

"Nobody really knows why people develop eating disorders," said Rita Klein, a psychologist at the Cook Counseling Center.

"Some patients come in and say, 'I know I shouldn't be doing this. I know this is bad for me,' but they still are doing it. It's hard to change behaviors and perceptions of themselves."

Klein said an eating disorder also becomes physiological after a person with the disorder enters the level of malnutrition. The decreased caloric intake affects the brain chemistry and the person sees things differently.

Researchers believe many times either overeating or under-eating are ways for the patient to self-medicate themselves, according to Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc. Research has also shown that a family history of other psychiatric problems increases the likelihood of an eating disorder.

Eating disorders do not just affect females, though. For every

four females with anorexia, one male also has it, and for every eight females suffering from bulimia, one male suffers, according to Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc. Male eating disorders have increased, mainly due to athletic pressures and media influence.

"Males are starting to pay attention to the media," Klein said, "And the media is changing the perceptions of acceptable male body shape."

Unfortunately, many patients deny they have a problem. For this reason, most visitors to resources available on campus are the friends of those suffering from an eating disorder, Dennis said.

"The role of a friend is to be there for the person. A lot of times we want to fix it for them. You can express concern, but you can't change their behavior."

Christine Dennis
Counseling and Advocacy
Coordinator

"One of the things, as a friend, is to become educated," Dennis said. "It's not as simple as just being able to eat more. The role of a friend is to be there for the person. A lot of times we want to fix it for them. You can express concern, but you can't change their behavior."

Professional help greatly increases chances of recovering, but, as Klein said, many feel a negative stigma about receiving help.

"If someone is not motivated to start making changes, then we are not going to have an effect on that person," Klein said. "The time it takes for recovery is dependent. It is going to be a lot harder to change behaviors for someone who has had the illness for a longer period of time. We encourage to get the family involved ... and friends help a lot, too, with coping."

Although on-campus resour-

ces are limited, those available provide information, assessment, short-term treatment for milder eating disorders and referral to sources of off-campus support. Klein said Cook Counseling Center tries to see patients on a weekly basis but finds it very difficult with the volume of other students needing assistance, especially in the months of October and November. The Center has only one psychiatrist available for patients that may need medication. Schiffert Health Center has one part-time dietician to help with concerns and questions a recovering person may have.

"We have basic resources available on-campus," Dennis said, "But not enough to treat someone with a serious condition of an eating disorder."

The Women's Center does not see patients on an on-going basis, but it has worked with other on-campus organizations to inform more students of the problem and promote positive body images. Working with Greek Life, the Women's Center hopes to implement a resource person within each sorority.

In addition, the Women's Center is planning a "Cool Women Calendar," which shows alternate views of women aside from a bikini. Women on campus will be featured to "send out positive images that do not have to do with how thin they are," Dennis said.

For more information on signs of an eating disorder or general information, visit the National Eating Disorders Association (www.NationalEatingDisorder.org) or Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc. (www.anred.com). Friends and victims are encouraged to also seek help at the Cook Counseling Center or the Women's Center. Pamphlets on the subject are also available in the resource center of SHC.

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Sports

QB rotation to follow Tech into 2004 season

by **Rajan Nanavati**
Sports Editor

It is the most heralded, yet most difficult position in all of sports. It requires peak conditioning of both the mind and the body; it even requires a touch of ESP, to a certain extent.

He is the leader of the offense and, in many cases, the entire football team. He is seen as the hero when the team wins, and there is no bigger scapegoat on the field when the team loses. He is the one and only quarterback,



ELEANOR HOPSON/SPPS
Bryan Randall saw most of the playing time early on.

your main man.

So what happens in those certain circumstances when the team has two quarterbacks and simply can't decide who should be the one it sticks with?

Welcome to the conundrum facing the Virginia Tech football team. In one corner, you have incumbent quarterback Bryan Randall, a junior who has been the starting signal caller for the Hokies for the better part of two seasons. In the other corner stands the much-heralded sophomore Marcus Vick — younger brother of former Hokie sensation Michael Vick.

The two quarterbacks split time all season long, with the younger gaining more and more playing time as the season progressed. In the team's win against the University of Miami, Vick saw his first extensive playing time of the season in arguably Tech's most important game of the year.

At the time, the coaches felt Vick's scrambling ability would be a favorable match-up against a Miami defense that had a tough time accounting for mobile quar-

terbacks. However, the coaching staff decided to stick with Vick as the primary quarterback during the team's loss against the University of Pittsburgh. Since then, the team has gone back and forth between the two signal callers, creating a potential problem as the team looks toward the 2004 season.

"The fact of the matter is the one guy with more experience is going to be more consistent," said Tech quarterback coach Kevin Rogers, who was one of the primary reasons Vick chose to attend Tech over other schools recruiting him. "We've got another guy that's got a chance to be a great player."

Some argue that Randall may have played himself out of the job after the outing he had against West Virginia University, where he, along with most of the team, looked very out of sync. He threw three interceptions after throwing a total of three in the previous five games. Since that game, Vick has seen more playing time, and the coaches seemed quicker to shuttle the main signal caller in and out of the game.

"Human nature being what it is, I'm sure Bryan Randall thinks he's the best player," Rogers said. "I think that human nature is that you're selfish, and I think that Bryan Randall does a tremendous job of fighting that, but it's not easy."

In whatever playing time he has received, Vick has shown flashes of brilliance, which the coaches want to harness. His quick release and deep balls are reminiscent of his older brother, and he certainly has the advantage over Randall in those areas. He is faster than Randall in pure straight-line speed, which is another reason the coaching staff wants to get more and more Vick on the field.

"He's a terrific talent," Rogers said of Vick. "He's an outstanding player, (and) he's got a lot of the same qualities that his brother had. We're trying to keep him active and not let him get stale and not let him assume the role of a backup and not competing."

It is apparent, however, that Randall certainly has a greater command over the offense and is more comfortable running it due to his extra year of experience. Moreover, Randall is more accurate on shorter passing, upon which the Tech team predicated most of its offense. These were the primary reasons the coaching staff decided to go with Randall



ROBERT DRAKE/SPPS

After the West Virginia game, Marcus Vick started seeing more and more action in games.

over Vick to start the season. "When they put me in there, I just try to do the best that I can do," Vick said. "That's the main thing. I just try not to turn the ball over; trying to make the big play will bring you down."

Tech is not the only school that has had to deal with this problem. Perhaps the most prominent case is the University of Texas, where a debate between incumbent Major Applewhite and talented prospect Chris Simms raged on a couple of years ago. Applewhite rallied the team after a few losses when Simms became starter and eventually held onto the job until he graduated.

The University of Georgia

employed a similar system during its 2002 season between quarterback David Greene and the physically gifted D.J. Shockley. Shockley rotated series with Greene during certain occasions, but as the season wore on, Bulldogs head coach Mark Richt decided to stick with Greene for the stretch run, along with this season.

However, the coaching staff feels that a situational rotation may be something Tech can employ.

"I still think we've got two good quarterbacks," said Tech head coach Frank Beamer. "We've got to find a way to get them both on the field at some points."

Sports Notes

Women's basketball: Hokies extend winning streak, beat Alabama

The No. 19 ranked Virginia Tech women's basketball team stayed undefeated Sunday by defeating the University of Alabama Crimson Tide 68-51. The Hokies' 6-0 record is the second best start in school history. The win also snaps Alabama's 53 home-game winning streak against non-conference opponents.

Tech's defense played a huge role in the victory, holding the Crimson Tide to only 19 points in the second half.

Junior Erin Gibson recorded her second double-double of the season for the Hokies, with 13 points and 12 rebounds. Senior Ieva Kublina and sophomore Dawn Chriss also added 13 points, while sophomore Carrie Mason scored nine and tallied five steals.

Men's basketball: Ohio State beats Tech, 62-57

The Virginia Tech men's basketball team fell to 3-3 on the season with a 62-57 loss to Ohio State University on Saturday.

The Hokies fell behind early as the Buckeyes started the game on a 9-3 run. Ohio State took a 16-point lead into the half as a result of Tech's poor shooting. The Hokies only hit 30 percent of their first-half shots.

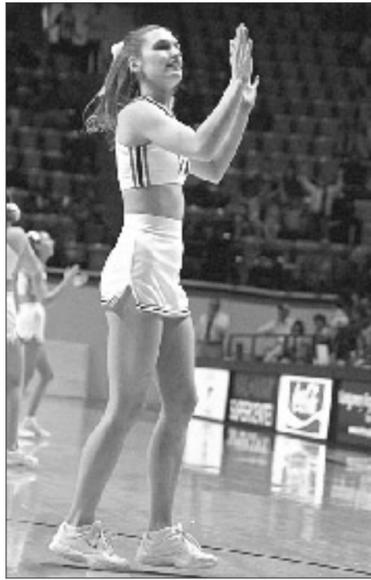
A more accurate Hokie offense opened up the second half with an 11-point run. However, they were never able to catch up to the Buckeyes. With four minutes left, Tech pulled within six, but senior standout Bryant Matthews fouled out two minutes later, hurting the Hokies' momentum. Matthews was named Big East Conference player of the week for his performance in last week's games. Freshman Zabian Dowdell led Tech in the loss to the Buckeyes, finishing with 18 points.

Football: Hokies close to signing deal to play USC in 2004 opener

Virginia Tech athletic director Jim Weaver is close to sealing a deal for the Hokie football team to play University of Southern California next season in the 2004 Black Coaches Association Classic. The game would be held at either Giants Stadium in New Jersey or FedEx Field in Washington, D.C.

Weaver postponed a 2004 contest at No. 2 Louisiana State University in order to schedule the BCA Classic, but the BCA rejected his proposal to play East Carolina University at Lane Stadium.

Tech cheerleader in competition finals



ROBERT DRAKE/SPPS

Jessica Clem is a finalist in the spirit competition on Athlonsports.com.

by Michelle Hershman
Associate Sports Editor

The regular football season has ended, but Virginia Tech's most spirited fan isn't ready to quiet down. Hokie cheerleader Jessica Clem will keep the spirit going as one of six cheerleaders nationwide to make the final round of the Athlon Sports Spirit Contest.

Athlonsports.com's first annual sideline spirit competition recognized the senior captain in October after it shot pictures of the Tech cheerleaders.

Athlon chose to use Clem and the Hokies as a Big East conference representative, and Clem is the only Big East cheerleader remaining.

To make her way to the final round, Clem had to compete with cheerleaders from schools from each of the six BCS conferences in an online poll. Fan votes determined the winner of each round, and Clem led the second round with 30,211 votes.

"I was pretty proud of the support Tech showed," Clem said. "I was a little surprised I got over 30,000 votes."

If she wins the final round, Clem will be given the chance to be on the cover of

Athlon's annual college football preview. Athlon will also award Tech's cheerleading squad \$1,000.

A finance major from Roanoke, Clem joins cheerleaders from University of South Carolina, University of Arkansas, University of Nebraska, North Carolina State University and Clemson University in the final round.

Voting for the final round began Dec. 2 and will last until the national championship game in New Orleans on Jan. 4, 2004.

Right now, Clem is tied with Kristen Hardcastle of Arkansas for fourth place with 11 percent of the vote.

Chelsea Kimmerling of Nebraska leads the pack with 9,709 votes, which is 26 percent of the total. Clem narrowly beat Kimmerling in the second round. Clem said the winner depends mostly on how many people you can get to vote.

For the second round she had a lot of help from professors who wrote to listservs and asked their classes to vote.

"I haven't been following (the final round) that closely," she said, "but I'm voting everyday."

Votes for Clem can be cast at www.athlonsports.com/spirit on the right-hand portion of the page.

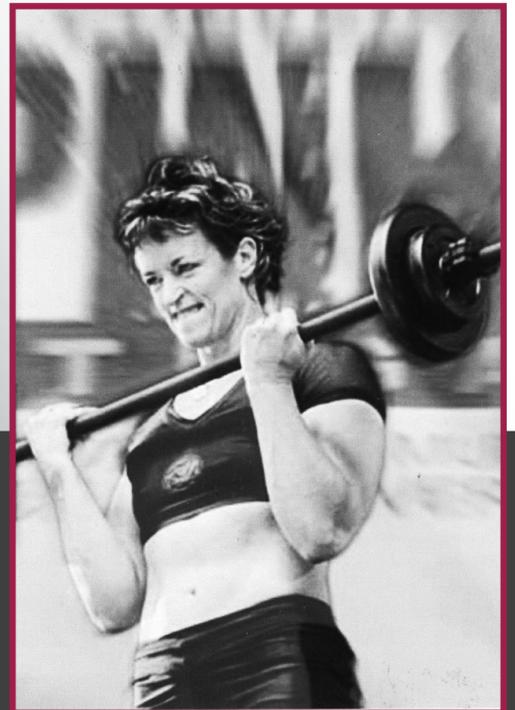
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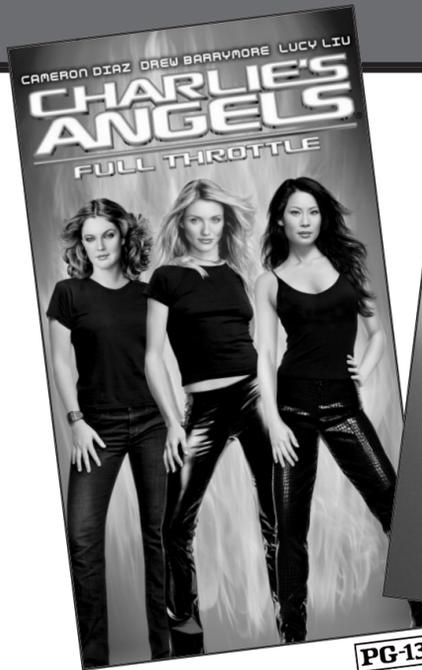
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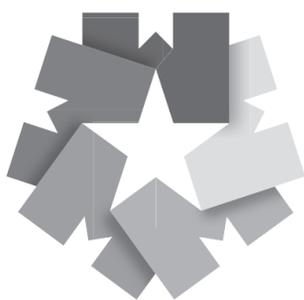
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**Kumar
Alumni status
Malhotra**

"They say 'they never really miss you til you dead or you gone'

So on that note I'm leaving after the song."

Preach Hov, preach. I always wanted to start a column off with a rap lyric — it took me four years, but I finally got one in.

All joking aside, this will probably be the last time my words will grace these pages so I find it necessary to take a stroll down memory lane.

The four and half years I've spent in Blacksburg have been some of the most memorable of my life. I've seen many things, been many places and met a lot of great people along the way — I'll definitely miss it all when I'm gone.

But it is time to move on. Lets put it this way, I had a chance to see the greatest quarterback in Tech's history do his thing in Lane Stadium and now his baby brother is playing there. Yep, I've been here a long time.

Obviously, the staple of my time here at Tech has been trials and tribulations of the football team. I wouldn't by any means, consider myself a diehard fan, but I have grown fond of Hokie football in the five seasons I've been here.

How could you not — it's such a big part of the culture here and for a born cynic like me, it gives me a platform to piss people off.

By no means am I a hater, I just like to play devils advocator.

The last game I attended as a fan was last year's home game against Marshall and I really had

a lot of fun — rooting for Byron Leftwich. I knew his team had no chance against the mighty Hokies, but I loved to see the look of disgust on the faces of the Tech faithful around me.

Many a time, I've been asked "Don't you have any school spirit?" Every time, I shoot back "Do you?"

People root for the football team because many of them are diehard college football fans and because the fanfare and hoopla surrounding a Tech football game make it an event people look forward to. This passion people display for the pigskin doesn't always translate to other sports. When's the last time you heard of people tailgating outside War Memorial awaiting the start of a Swim & Dive event.

The truth is, not many people really have school spirit; they just want to watch a winner.

Obviously I want the Hokies, especially the football team to succeed. How do you think we got all these new buildings around campus? What do you think funded the Torgersen Hall and bridge and Lane Stadium expansion? What do you think gave the promenade at Cassell it's beautiful makeover?

Truth be told, covering football games will be one of the things I miss the most about Tech.

Nothing beats sitting in the press box, high above the stadium or standing on the sidelines during the end of the fourth quarter. The game is much more impressive from 20 feet away, trust me.

I'll also never forget the dozen or so basketball games I've been lucky enough to sit courtside for, including the two huge upsets of a year ago (against the University of Virginia and UConn).

With the move to the ACC set to take place next year, the future looks bright for all Hokie

sports. The ACC is one of the top conferences in the country in that it is more than one-dimensional. Obviously basketball and now football will be the ACC's premier sports, but the conference has historically been dominant in other areas, including lacrosse, soccer and baseball.

For those of you that consider yourself "diehard Hokies" I challenge you to expand your horizons beyond the confines of Lane Stadium.

I expect you to support our men's basketball team as they do battle in their last year in the Big East. While they may be struggling now, don't expect the losing seasons to continue — Coach Seth Greenberg knows his stuff and will restore this program to greatness.

I would hope you see our women's team play at some point this year. Coach Bonnie Henrickson has built a respectable, top-25 program that is Tournament bound. So what if they're women? They ball better than half you bums at McComas.

Then of course theirs our top-25 men's soccer team and baseball team that produces All-Americans and pro-prospects year after year. The list goes on and on.

I've rambled long enough; it's time to hang 'em up. Congratulations to all those moving on to bigger and better things. To all who remain, make the most of your time here, because you'll never get these four years back.

While the real world may hold economic and financial security, you can't put a price on the comforts and enjoyment of the college life. B E Z.

Kumar Malhotra is the sports editor for the Collegiate Times. He has worked at the CT for 3 1/2 years, as a staff writer, sports assistant, and sports editor.



Congratulations to the CT's graduating seniors:

Kumar Malhotra - Sports Editor
Rajan 'Hollywood' Nanavati - Sports Editor
Michelle Hershman - Associate Sports Editor
Thanks for your dedication and hard work through the years! Good luck.

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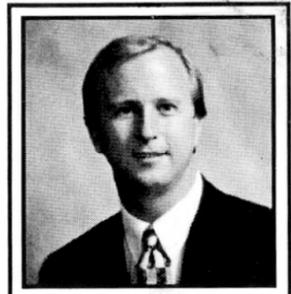
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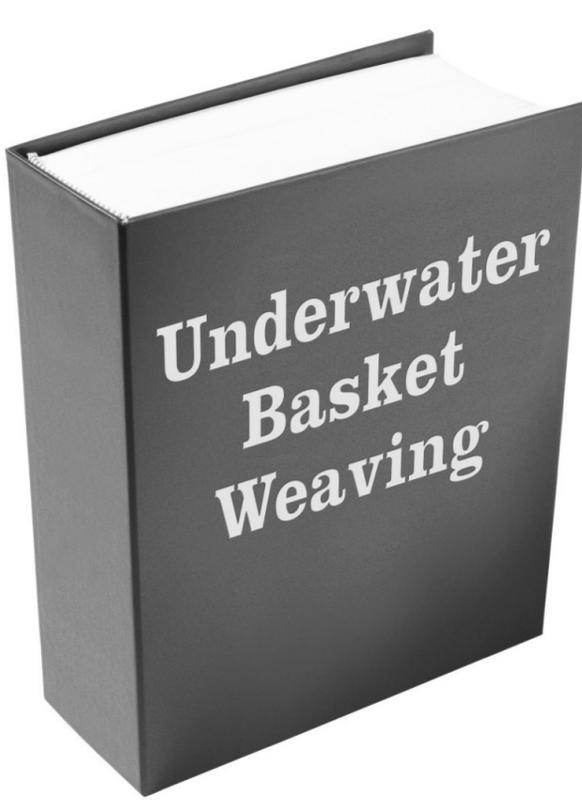
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Today's Crossword Answers

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