FOR DEAR OLD UVA
Virginia looks to take back the Commonwealth Cup

After up-and-down seasons for both teams, who will come out on top?

Ben Anderson | Associate Writer

Virginia's run game will be crucial to its success against Virginia Tech, especially if Armstrong is not leading the offensive charge for the Cavaliers.

Even after a disappointing but not completely unexpected loss against Notre Dame, Virginia football still finds itself able to control its destiny on the way to an ACC Championship. If the Cavaliers (6-4, 4-2 ACC) win both of their upcoming games against Pitt and Virginia Tech, the Coastal Division crown is theirs. While it may seem like a simple task at first, the Hokies (5-5, 3-3 ACC) always serve as a roadblock Virginia can never seem to get past.

Virginia junior quarterback Brennan Armstrong

Perhaps the best thing Armstrong could have done to prove he is the best quarterback in the conference was to not play against Notre Dame. With true freshman Jay Woolfolk at the helm, the Cavalier offense simply could not get anything to work correctly, leading to a 28-7 loss with a scoreline that was generous to Virginia. Woolfolk absolutely showed promise, but no one could replace the connections Armstrong has formed throughout the season to make the Virginia offense function like a well-oiled machine. Unfortunately, Coach Bronco Mendenhall was still unable to give an update on Armstrong in the postgame press conference of the Notre Dame game, so it is still unclear whether this Davey O'Brien Award semifinalist will be able to suit up in either of the last two games. However, one thing is for certain — no player in potentially all of college football means more to the success of his team than Virginia's star quarterback, and the importance of whether or not he watches from the sidelines cannot be understated.

Virginia Tech junior running back Raheem Blackshear

On the Hokies’ side, no player has been improving as the season goes on more than Blackshear. The junior from Philadelphia was spectacular against Duke, rushing for 117 yards on 9.8 yards per carry in a blowout of the Blue Devils. Even in losses, the Rutgers transfer has been terrorizing defenses lately, averaging seven yards each time he has been handed the ball over the last three games. To make matters worse, Virginia’s run defense has been a struggle all season to say the least, most recently giving up nearly 250 yards to sophomore running back Kezuen William and Notre Dame in a loss. Blackshear has been playing his best football as of late, and if he gets going, it could be a scary sight for the Cavaliers.

Keep the passing attack at bay

The Hokies have not been known for their passing prowess over the 2021 season, averaging less than 200 yards per game. But junior quarterback Braxton Burmeister has shown the ability to extend plays and keep drives alive both with his arm and legs. In order for Virginia to have a strong day on defense, one of the units has to play well, and it could very well be easier to stop the Hokies through the air rather than on the ground. Burmeister has completed just 54 percent of his passes on the season, and the Hokies’ defense has generally struggled to put up points in that manner. Virginia may give up some yards on the ground — as noted previously, Blackshear is going to get his yards. But by winning the battle in the air, the Cavalier secondary — a unit that is already depleted due to the loss of senior safety De’Vante Cross to an injury — can keep the game winnable for the offense in the fourth quarter, no matter who is behind the center for Virginia.

Players to Watch

Virginia Tech — although coming off of a victory against Duke — is once again not living up to the standards of its fans, with yet another season close to .500 that put former Head Coach Justin Fuente squarely on the hot seat before recently parting ways with the program. The offense in particular has struggled to find its footing, scoring just over 24 points per game — good for just 13th in the conference. Everything could be forgiven, however, if the Hokies travel two hours north on Thanksgiving weekend and bring the most important trophy of the year: back home to Blacksburg.

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Keys to the Game

Should Armstrong not play against the Hokies, there is still absolutely a way to score on the Virginia Tech defense. While the run stop struggles the Cavaliers have had themselves are evident, the Hokies have not been exactly the most solid on offense either, averaging the fourth most rushing yards per game in the ACC. Although senior running back Wayne Taulapapa was also out against Notre Dame due to a head injury suffered against BYU, the rest of Virginia’s running backs have really come into their own as the season progressed. Graduate student Devin Darlington has shown his explosiveness — a trait running backs have really struggled to put up points in that manner. Virginia may give up some yards on the ground — as noted previously, Blackshear is going to get his yards. But by winning the battle in the air, the Cavalier secondary — a unit that is already depleted due to the loss of senior safety De’Vante Cross to an injury — can keep the game winnable for the offense in the fourth quarter, no matter who is behind the center for Virginia.

Feed the ball to the running back corps

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Within a five-day span in late-November and early-December of 2015, Virginia football Coach Bronco Mendenhall and Virginia Tech Coach Justin Fuente were hired to their respective programs. Both coaches were hailed for their success in bringing national attention to traditionally lesser-known programs — Mendenhall with BYU and Fuente with Memphis. However, the circumstances for their arrivals and the resulting trajectories at each school could not have been more different — a fact now made plainly obvious with Fuente parting ways with Virginia Tech Tuesday morning.

Mendenhall was brought into Charlottesville by former Athletic Director Craig Littlepage with the daunting task of reviving a dormant football program and bringing energy to a fanbase that had all but given up on its Cavaliers. Under the direction of former Head Coach Mike London, Virginia put together a disappointing record of 27-46 in six seasons. Game attendance was poor, and a program that held strong through the mid-2000s had seemingly hit rock bottom. It was Mendenhall’s job to fix it.

As it soon became evident, this process required Mendenhall to completely strip the program down to its bare bones before slowly and steadily building a foundation and culture that would lead to success on the field. It revolved around establishing a program known for developing young men off the field before their development on the field could be realized. This approach was to the dismay of those who sought an overnight turnaround, and the growing pains involved in the rebuild were on full display in Mendenhall’s first season, as the Cavaliers went 2-10 and lost to rival Virginia Tech in an embarrassing 42-point blowout.

However, little by little, Virginia clawed its way back to relevance. Mendenhall’s team put together a six-win season in 2017, earning a bowl appearance for the first time since 2005. Despite being blown out by Navy 49-7, it was evident the Cavaliers were moving in the right direction. The following season, Virginia reached bowl eligibility before the end of October, and Mendenhall recorded the program’s first bowl game win since 2005 in a 28-0 dominant performance over South Carolina. Additionally, the Cavaliers came remarkably close to ending the 15-year losing streak to Virginia Tech, falling in overtime. It just felt as if Mendenhall and his staff were on the verge of a breakthrough.

That breakthrough came back in 2019. Virginia went 9-5, defeated the Hokies for the first time since 2003, won the ACC Coastal Division and went 9-5, defeated the Hokies for the first time in his time with Virginia Tech. While it appeared Beamer’s run with the Hokies had begun to lose some steam by the end of his career, Virginia Tech remained an established name in the college football landscape, and Beamer’s replacement would not doubt face immense pressure to maintain what had already been built.

Fuente has led the Hokies in nearly an opposite trajectory than Mendenhall with the Cavaliers. Following a stellar 21-5 wins in his first two seasons — an improvement from Beamer’s last two years with Virginia Tech — that led to two bowl appearances and a Belk Bowl win in 2016, the Hokies have gradually faded. In 2016, Virginia Tech needed a win against Marshall in its last game of the season to just barely keep its incredible streak of 26 consecutive years with a bowl game appearance intact.

The Hokies showed improvement in 2019, with former quarterback Hendon Hooker taking over the starting job and leading the team to several key conference wins. However, Fuente lost an important piece of program pride when his team lost to Virginia for the first time in 16 years. Despite cruising to victory over the Cavaliers the following year, it seemed like the Virginia win, the dynamics of the rivalry had shifted.

Regardless of whoever will be Fuente’s eventual replacement — whether it be Price or, more likely, an outside hire — it is clear that the battle for the Commonwealth Cup is more competitive than ever. With Mendenhall at the helm, Virginia has ascended to what appears to be a higher baseline for success, with potential for growth in the future. Gone are the days that Virginia remained an established name in the college football landscape, and Beamer’s replacement would not doubt face immense pressure to maintain what had already been built.
Virginia and Virginia Tech football have played almost annually since 1893, battling for bragging rights in the Commonwealth and, since 1996, competing for the Commonwealth Cup. During this time, both teams have seen some of their top players continue the rivalry in the National Football League. While a few players from each school have found their way onto the same team, others have seen themselves compete against each other on opposing teams, with each player looking to secure football’s greatest prize — a Lombardi Trophy. Currently in the NFL, there are three teams that contain a pair of former Virginia Tech and Virginia players.

The first pair is linebacker Micah Kiser and cornerback Kyle Fuller, who are defensive teammates on the Denver Broncos. Kiser attended Virginia and played inside linebacker, while Fuller played cornerback at Virginia Tech.

Both players had major contributions in the Commonwealth Cup games during their college careers, each serving as anchors for their respective defenses. Kiser elevated his game recording 19 tackles in his final game of the rivalry in 2017, which was his career high. Additionally, Kiser had 14 tackles, a pass deflection and a forced fumble in 2016. On the other hand, Fuller had 17 tackles, two pass deflections and one forced fumble from the three games he participated in — though he played on the team from 2010-2014.

The two have joined forces in Denver after garnering accolades with their previous teams — Kiser won an NFC championship with the Los Angeles Rams in 2019, and Fuller earned All-Pro honors during the 2018 season when he played for the Chicago Bears. Kiser and Fuller have gone from rivals to teammates and now work in unison to help bolster a Broncos defense led by defensive mastermind Vic Fangio.

Another pair of rivals turned teammates are former Virginia tight end Tony Poljan and former Virginia Tech defensive back Chuck Clark, who now play for the Baltimore Ravens. During his time as a Cavalier in 2020, Poljan registered six touchdowns in his one season at Virginia, which ranks him eighth all-time in receiving touchdowns as a tight end at Virginia. Against Virginia Tech, Poljan recorded 66 receiving yards and one touchdown in a 33-15 loss. Alternatively, as a defensive back, Clark registered 12 tackles and one interception in the 2015 edition of the rivalry, where Virginia Tech won 23-20.

On the Ravens, Poljan has remained a tight end on the practice squad after signing as an undrafted free agent this year, while Clark has moved to safety and Virginia Tech only play once a season this season where a former Virginia Tech player and former Virginia Tech player faced off against each other in the NFL. For example, former Virginia Tech wide receiver OJ Howard and former Virginia Tech placekicker Brian Johnson, who now plays for the New Orleans Saints, faced off against each other in the NFL. For example, former Virginia Tech wide receiver Olamide Zaccheaus helped the Atlanta Falcons to a 27-25 win against former Virginia Tech placekicker Brian Johnson, who now plays for the New Orleans Saints. Zaccheaus recorded 58 receiving yards and two touchdowns, while Johnson made two field goals — one of them being a career-long 52 yards.

Furthermore, the Los Angeles Chargers have two former Cavalier players in guard Oday Aboushi and wide receiver Joe Reed — though Reed is currently on the practice squad. This season, these former Cavaliers will face off twice against the Las Vegas Raiders, who have two former Hokies in linebacker Divine Deablo and cornerback Brandon Facyson. The Chargers already defeated the Raiders 28-14 in the first meeting on Oct. 4, and the two teams will face off a second time on Jan. 9.

Along the same lines, former Virginia running back Bryce Hall and former Virginia Tech wide receiver Isaiah Ford will play each other twice this season. Hall is now a starter at the cornerback position for the New York Jets, and Ford is a key wide receiver for the Miami Dolphins. The two AFC East rivals will play each other on Nov. 21 and Dec. 19.

While some old rivals have learned to collaborate as teammates and others have reignited the flame of the Commonwealth Cup on football’s biggest stage, seeing former Cavaliers and Hokies in the NFL is a special sight and brings about a whole new meaning to the Commonwealth Cup. Although Virginia and Virginia Tech only play once a year, both schools’ stellar alumni give us the chance to witness new chapters of the rivalry every NFL Sunday.
Quin Blanding remembers exactly where he was on Nov. 29, 2019—the date of Virginia's Commonwealth Cup matchup against Virginia Tech two years ago. The Cavaliers had dropped the last 15 games in the rivalry series, but that didn't matter to Blanding. The Hampton Roads native and former star safety for Virginia was a member of the Carolina Panthers practice squad at the time, but even in Charlotte, N.C., he always made time for key matchups concerning his alma mater.

“One thing about me is that when I played Tech, wherever I was in the league, I was watching that game,” Blanding said.

Blanding was playing video games in his Charlotte apartment that day leading up to the highly anticipated matchup and when the game began, he started to live tweet. However, not everything went according to plan for the Cavaliers. A nerve-racking game down to the final seconds made for an extremely difficult viewing experience for all Virginia fans. Blanding included.

“I literally cut the game off five times,” Blanding said. “Like I cut it off saying I can’t watch this any more... It’s so hilarious to me now. I started playing Call of Duty at some points of the game, because I couldn’t watch it. Then I’d say you know what, let me watch. I can’t do it.”

Blanding’s and thousands of fans’ perseverance was rewarded when then-junior defensive end Mandy Alonso strip-sacked Hokie quarterback Hendon Hooker with a minute remaining in the game and Eli Harkback recovered the ball in the end zone for the Cavaliers to seal the streak-ending victory. It felt like a new chapter in Virginia football history. However, Blanding remembers the fallout from the win on social media vividly.

“When we won, I promise I got more hate than I’ve ever gotten my whole life,” Blanding said. “Tech fans hate me. They hate my guts. I couldn’t watch it. Then I’d say ‘You know what, let me watch. I can’t do it.”

“Yeah, [Mendenhall] softened up,” Blanding said. “We used to go through it. I don’t know if these kids could handle what we went through, but that’s all part of the culture too. Now that you guys are good you don’t gotta go through all of that because we did. He still gives them work but it wasn’t our type of work. It’s nice... I wish they still had what we had through.”

Blanding’s new role puts him in an unfamiliar position—one working from behind a desk. He scouts the areas where he grew up, including Hampton Roads as well as North and South Carolina for homegrown talent and spends most of his time analyzing film, getting information on recruits and sitting in meetings with the coaching staff to share his findings.

“I love it,” Blanding said. “I wouldn’t trade it for anything... It’s fun to watch the kids I watched play little league football in the process of getting recruited. It’s amazing that these kids have the opportunity to change their lives and I’m glad I get to help them with it.”

When asked about his role on the field or behind a desk, Blanding is proud of his home state and takes even more pride in his role at Virginia. When asked about whether he would change anything he was unequivocal.

“Don’t regret anything,” Blanding said. “Don’t regret anything I’ve done, and I don’t regret coming to the University of Virginia. If I had to do it all over again, I’m coming back to Virginia. I made a stamp that no one could ever make... I’m back home to Virginia and that’s what it’s all about.”

As for his return to the sidelines for this year’s rivalry matchup, Blanding’s nerves and excitement will be as high as they were in his Charlotte apartment in 2019, miles away from the action with Twitter and Call of Duty helping him through the game.

“I’m ready,” Blanding said. “I can’t wait to see what’s in store this year.”

“The rivalry issue”

Quin Blanding talks Virginia, the NFL and the rivalry

Former Virginia standout safety and current team scout reflects on his years since being drafted

Jacob Tisdale | Associate Writer
The 757: A breeding ground for college football prospects

An extensive talent pool has given rise to stars for both the Hokies and Cavaliers, but the battle for recruiting dominance has yet to stop

Will Smythe | Sports Writer

The "757" — the area code for the Tidewater region of Virginia — has long held a reputation for producing some of the most prolific athletes in both the Commonwealth and the nation. You might remember the names of former NBA players such as Allen Iverson and Alonzo Mourning or football legends like Michael Vick and Bruce Smith. Yes, whether it be Hampton, Norfolk or one of the other five cities that comprise the 757, all of these stars had their roots in Southeastern Virginia.

A region with such a deep talent pool has naturally pitted the state's two rivals — Virginia and Virginia Tech — against one another in a yearly clash for the new cream of the crop. Football has especially been a topic of contention between the schools, as both the Cavaliers and Hokies have landed, and missed, on highly touted recruits from the region.

If we fast forward from Vick and current Houston Texans quarterback Tyrod Taylor's commitments to Virginia Tech, the archives reveal that Virginia has had the upper hand over the Hokies in garnering commits from the 757. Coach Mike London — who coached the Cavaliers from 2010 to 2015 — started in the recruiting landscape despite not faring so well on the field.

London jumped out of the gates by landing the No. 1 cornerback in the country in his second year on the job— 4-star and No. 90 overall prospect Demorrius Nicholson. The cornerstone from Bayside High School in Virginia Beach, Va. would be the first of three high-level prospects from Bayside to commit to Virginia. Despite having a rough career for the Hokies, Nicholson avoided the journey west and ultimately earned a look from seeing the enemy — Virginia Tech's Frank Beamer — gain traction in the 757.

In 2012, London managed to nab the No. 7 defensive end in the country and No. 43 overall prospect in Virginia Beach native Eli Harold. Harold attended Ocean Lakes High School, a n d a n d a n n i s h a d s o m e s e n s e .

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The Cavaliers added an offensive weapon in 2013 after stockpiling defensive gems, landing the No. 4 all-purpose back in the nation, Taquan Mizzell. The Virginia Beach native and Bayside alum famously known as "Smoke" picked up the backfield work as an effective pass-catcher and between-the-tackles runner, helping Virginia in rushing yards in both 2015 and 2016.

The crown jewel of London's recruiting came in 2014, with two five-star prospects from Southeastern Virginia ultimately deciding to take their talents to Charlottesville. The No. 1 safety in the country — Quin Blanding from Bayside — and the No. 1 defensive tackle — Andrew Brown from Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake — spearheaded a tremendous class of recruits towards the end of London’s tenure at Virginia. Blanding remains first in career tackles by any defensive player at Virginia, while Brown struggled at times to establish his dominance as such a highly regarded recruit. However, both of these defensive mainstays continued the trend of 757 players choosing not to play for the school in Blacksburg.

While Virginia didn’t even see much of an increase in success with these recruits, London had developed a knack for amassing in-state talent that Coach Bronco Mendenhall couldn’t sustain. The change in coaching staff and style has caused Virginia to lose that battle for Tidewater recruits, even though the four and five-stars haven’t been coming in waves like they used to.

Tech — the school which boasts the likes of Norfolk native and safety Kam Chancellor along with Vick and Taylor — has a longstanding tradition of bringing out the best in 757 players. Chancellor, Bruce Smith and former corner DeAngelo Hall — a Chesapeake native — all enjoyed success in Blacksburg and later in the NFL. On the offensive side of things, Vick and Taylor perhaps were “the ones that got away” from the Cavaliers as each quarterback thrived in their new home.

The edge has now shifted to the Hokies, as the end of the London era also saw the rise of former coach Frank Beamer, former coach Justin Fuente and now-interim coach J.C. Price in the southeast part of the state. In 2015, Beamer signed two three-stars — defensive end Trevon Hill from Salem High School and running back Deshawn McClease from Oscar Smith High School — thus turning the tides on London in his last year. Hill would go on to record 46 tackles and 9.5 tackles for loss his senior season, while McClease saw plenty of work in his last two years at Virginia Tech.

With the line of 757-turned-Hokies now outnumbering those at Virginia, the No. 3 three safety in the country — Virginia Beach and Bayside product Devon Hunter — put the dagger in the coffin by choosing the Hokies in 2017. Two fellow Virginia Beach natives, defensive back Armanzi Chapman and wide receiver Tayvon Robinson, followed Fuente to Blacksburg in 2017 and 2018, respectively, with the latter continuing to excel as the Hokies’ top slot receiver.

The area may be running dry with respect to putting out talent year after year, yet the Cavaliers have clearly given up significant ground to their rivals. Only two players from the 757 have joined Virginia in the past five years — current sophomore defensive end Ben Smiley III and junior defensive back Joseph White. Even if other schools such as North Carolina have been encroaching into the Commonwealth’s football hotbed, Virginia Tech has perhaps surpassed the Cavaliers in the post-London era.

The breeding ground of the Tidewater region has given Virginia fans so many remarkable talents and names — Blanding, Harold, Mizzell and older players such as quarterback Aaron Brooks and running back Terry Kirby. Years may come and go with no recruits from the 757, but the legacy of this region will always remain at the forefront for both the Cavaliers and the Hokies.
A guide to the University for visiting Virginia Tech students

As the long-anticipated Virginia Tech versus U.Va. football game looms, here’s an insider’s guide to navigating our beautiful university.

Jia Williams | Features Writer

Despite being a student at the University for almost two-and-a-half years — one-and-a-half if you exclude the entirely remote COVID-19 year — I’d never really given much thought to what specific aspects of the University contributed to my appreciation for all it is and all it can be. Or at least, that was the case until I was given the opportunity to collaborate with Emanda Seifu, an Assistant Lifestyles Editor for Virginia Tech’s Collegiate Times. In preparation for the upcoming Commonwealth Cup, we sat down and came up with some of the key traditions and places that make us love our universities.

Center of Grounds

Before beginning the conversation about hot spots around campus, we should get one thing straight — most University students call our campus “Grounds.” Now that we’ve cleared that up, one focal point of student activity on Grounds is undoubtedly The Lawn. On any given day, students can be found lounging around on the grass doing schoolwork, eating lunch with friends, playing ultimate frisbee or petting the many fluffy companions walking around Grounds.

At the head of The Lawn is the Rotunda, the signature bulking of the University. It proudly overlooks the 54 lawn rooms inhabited by exceptional fourth-year students and the Statue of Homer at the other end of The Lawn. On the other side of the Rotunda is the Corner, another focal point of student life. Students walk the seven-block stretch of restaurants, bars, apartments and local businesses on their way to classes or to grab a bite to eat. It’s also a central location for student nightlife on weekends.

Big Events

Among some of the bigger events at the University is Rotunda Sing, which kicks off the fall semester with an a cappella showcase performed by over 15 talented a cappella groups. An a cappella showcase performed by over 15 talented a cappella groups. Another popular event at the University is the Lighting of the Lawn — a light show projected onto the Rotunda that takes place every year on the last Thursday before the end of classes. It originally began to promote unity and remembrance after the events of September 11, 2001, but has since morphed into a celebratory event that encourages unity between the University and Charlottesville communities through vibrant light displays and upbeat music.

Student Spaces on Grounds

Each study spot on Grounds has its own atmosphere. One of the primary study locations for students is Jocelyn. As one of the most desired study spots on Grounds, it’s more difficult to snag a spot on a weekday afternoon, but it’s more casual, café-like atmosphere appeals to all students. The spot also has a game and lounge area on the ground floor with a pool table and arcade games, perfect for an impromptu study break.

More central to Grounds are Clemons, commonly known as Clem, and the university’s original location in Clark Hall. Clem is the modern feeling library and is split into four floors. Each floor hosts a different feel and has something to offer every student, whether they’re looking for a silent, high-concentration zone, or a lively location to chat and catch-up while working on assignments. Clem is a more traditional library, and is the closest to first-year dorms, making it a popular spot for newer Hoos. Beyond these three locations, there are countless hidden gems, such as the Music Library hidden underneath Old Cabell Hall and the Claude Moore Health Sciences Library by the University hospital.

Aside from libraries, the University has three multicultural student centers, including the LGBTQ Center, the Latinx Student Center and the Multicultural Student Center — all located in Newcomb Hall — that students are welcome to come to. Each provides resources and a safe space for students of diverse backgrounds to connect and study.

Food

The University’s location in Charlottesville — an up and coming foodie’s dream city — makes it difficult to pinpoint just a few spots to highlight. However, there are a few locations that are pinnacle to the University Student’s experience. The first is Roost’s Natural Kitchen, which was started by University graduates in 2015 and is located on the Corner. The fast-casual style place serves customizable grain bowls and salads, with an emphasis on natural foods. On a typical day, the line for this University staple is out the door, but the wait is well worth it.

Also on the Corner is Christian’s Pizza, which sees its busiest hours after 11 p.m. on weekend nights. The pizza is warmed fresh for every order, making it the perfect late night snack to have with friends. For those less willing to trek off Grounds for a meal, the Observatory Hill dining hall, or OT Hill for short, is a great option that accommodates most dietary needs. Within the dining hall is a vegan bar, a pizza and pasta bar, a breakfast yogurt bar and salad bar, in addition to the main meal items, which vary from day to day.

The University also has many restaurants on Grounds like the Pavilion XL, which acts as a miniature food court and hosts a Subway, Chick-fil-a, Ben & Jerry’s, and a Bento Sushi.

Student Hot Spots in Charlottesville

Beyond the University bubble is the vibrant Charlottesville community. A couple of blocks down from the Corner is the Downtown Mall, where students can find a host of local businesses. Scattered among the many restaurants are used bookstores, clothing boutiques, the Paramount Theater, other concert venues, and even confectioneries. There are plenty of shops to explore with both friends and family.

Also near Grounds is the IX Art Park, where events are held dozens of times a year showcasing a range of immersive art experiences, such as Black Light body paint parties and a kaleidoscope cave.

Another favorite spot for students is Carter’s Mountain Orchard, popular among students and community members for their Sunset Series every spring through fall. At the event, students can pick apples, enjoy some fall treats and watch the sunset over Blue Ridge Mountains paired with live music or polo matches and good company makes for the perfect weekend day-trip for older students.

Game Day Brunch Spots

For those looking for a place to grab a bite to eat before the football game, a few notable brunch locations stick out from the rest. One particular location, loved among all members of the University community, is Bocks. The famous bagel place is exclusive to Charlottesville and offers cheap, yet delicious, cream cheese schmears and bagel sandwiches. The extensive menu offers something for everyone, and is perfect for large families looking for a casual meal prior to the game.

Another student favorite is FIG, located on the Corner. The quaint restaurant has a cozy outdoor alleyway that families can request to be seated in to enjoy their brunch of Southern or Mediterranean cuisine.

Further down West Main Street on the Downtown Mall is Bixie, the former diner now offers a modern take on classic American cuisine. No matter what families are looking for, Charlottesville’s foodie culture offers something for everyone.
The Cavalier Marching Band takes on Virginia Tech

The wind section is ready to ignite the stands, which are likely to be the most packed in two years

Tanner Rowe | Staff Writer

On game days the low rumble of the Cavalier Marching Band's drumline can be heard throughout Charlottesville's hilly landscape, resonating against the brick facades of the University's academic buildings.

No football game is complete without the crisp, percussive sound of the marching band. The Cavalier Marching Band’s wind section was benched from playing in the stands due to mask requirements until Oct. 23 when restrictions were lifted. With CMB unable to play stand tunes as a full unit for the majority of their season, energy has fallen flat in the stadium.

It is for this very reason that CMB members are particularly excited about the upcoming football game against Virginia Tech.

“The energy is so electric during Tech games compared to every other game,” said Rob Siebers, a fourth-year College baritone player and CMB section leader. “It just gets super loud, especially during Tech games ‘cause the stadium is absolutely packed.”

The Virginia versus Virginia Tech rivalry reaches far beyond the football field. The marching band and the football team share a similar sense of pride, family connectedness and competitive spirit.

“I think it’s always kind of like the battle of the bands — who can play louder,” Siebers said. “It’s kind of like a personal pride thing. But I don’t think it’s anything like a football rivalry, you know like, ‘We absolutely need to beat them because I think the marching band is unique in that it’s very, very cooperative.’

The sense of camaraderie in the marching band community overrides any rivalry, no matter how deep-rooted.

“I’ve known since I was a first year that my last ever game in Scott Stadium was going to be the Tech game,” Siebers said.

Not only is the Virginia versus Virginia Tech game the pinnacle of the football season for many Virginia fans, but it also serves as the culmination of the Class of 2022’s marching band career. Siebers reflected on a time when he was unaware that masking restrictions would be lifted in time for the Tech game, saying “I actually had texted my other fourth-year baritone friends and I was like, ‘I love you all, I’m so glad that we got to have this time together. I’m sorry that it’s ending like this.’

“The game will be a bittersweet moment for the Class of 2022 as they line up alongside each other for their last halftime show at Scott Stadium.

Fourth years in the CMB had the opportunity to provide input on which songs to play for the halftime show. Siebers himself pitched the song “22” by Taylor Swift to celebrate the class of ‘22, which ended up making the cut. The CMB will also be playing a rendition of “INDUSTRY BABY (feat Jack Harlow)” by Lil Nas X and a mashup of “The Gambler / Will the Circle be Broken” as a “thank you” to Hunter Smith who donated money to start the CMB.

“We play a lot of songs that students recognize, and it brings a lot of school spirit to the game,” Siebers said. “It kind of reminds us who we are as a community and why we are so excited about this game.”

The CMB often has three rehearsals on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays before games to memorize sheet music and intricate drills — the steps and positioning that make up the fluent formations performed at halftime shows. In preparation for the Tech game, however, section leaders are instructed to familiarize themselves with the music weeks in advance.

On game days, the band meets four and a half hours before kickoff at Carr’s Hill Field where they rehearse for an hour and a half. After dropping off instrument cases and hat boxes, and assembling their uniforms at Slaughter, the CMB snakes around the stadium singing chants and songs to hype up fans as they approach the game. 20 minutes before kickoff, the band gathers in the tunnel and prepares to run out onto the field for the pregame show.

“I think everybody’s really looking forward to hearing the roar of the crowd when we run out the tunnel and having it be, like, 60,000 people and engaging with them,” said Campbell Johnstone, first-year College student and trombonist. “It’s rewarding. It feels good to know that the effort that we put in is recognized and appreciated by the crowd — we’re making them happy which is a very good feeling. Just getting people fired up is a lot of fun.”

The CMB treasures its role of serving as the audible spirit of University pride, narrating the sonic energy of the stadium for such a historical rivalry. Ranging drums, crashing cymbals and blaring trumpets fuel fans with anticipation and school spirit as they enter Scott Stadium.

“That’s like the best part of marching band and why playing in the stands is so important to us,” said Siebers. “I think music really brings people together.”
Cavaliers

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Jacob Knapp, Cavalier Daily Sports Columnist: When Virginia senior football player Keytaon Thompson steps on the field, defenses must watch out for the big play. That's not a typo — the roster simply lists Thompson as "football player." As a quarterback transfer to Virginia in 2020 who, paradoxically, is second on the team in receiving yards and third in rushing yards, the listing fits Thompson perfectly. Standing at 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighing 210 pounds, Thompson is almost built more like a linebacker, presenting a nightmare to tacklers in the open field.

Thompson's collegiate football career has been far from typical to say the least. As the No. 1 quarterback prospect in Louisiana, Thompson committed to Mississippi State but failed to carve out a starting spot. After transferring to Virginia, he also lost the starting job to junior quarterback Brennan Armstrong. What might've been disheartening for most was motivation for Thompson, and he opted to stay with the Cavaliers and now serves as one of our primary offensive weapons.

On the other side of the ball, the Hokies only have four seniors, all of whom are previous transfers. Of them, the only current starter is senior placekicker John Parker Romo. While not the flashiest pick for this answer, Romo has made 100 percent of his extra point attempts and hit a 52-yard field goal, tied for the 19th longest in the nation this season. However, the Cavaliers have had a knack for throwing opposing kickers off their game. Whether through dumb luck or a genius scheme, opposing kickers have missed field goals in four of Virginia's last five games, starting with a game-losing doink in Virginia's win over Miami.

Devin Shepard, Collegiate Times Sports Editor: One of the most underrated stories of the Hokies' season has been the play of senior center Johnny Jordan when he's on the field. The Maryland transfer has been a brick wall as a pass blocker and a solid run blocker, upgrading an already very solid offensive line. Though he's only really received starting snaps in two games this year, Jordan looks like he's going to start for the rest of the season due to junior offensive lineman Brock Hoffman's injury. He will be keeping the Hokie offense rolling in Charlottesville.

For the Cavaliers, graduate student tight end Jelani Woods is a dangerous mismatch against Virginia Tech. The 6-foot-7, 265-pound tight end has been an impactful player all season and should be a handful for the Hokie defense. Between strong sophomore safety Nasir Peoples and the Virginia Tech linebackers, the Hokies really don't have a good matchup for Woods. The huge tight end is likely to have a big game for Virginia, and he may be the reason the Cavaliers take the Commonwealth Cup back to Charlottesville this year.

Andrew Cho, Cavalier Daily Associate Writer: While the Cavalier defense may not be able to stop anybody, their offense with a strong quarterback running the show will carry the team to victory. Virginia Tech has struggled on both sides of the ball, and with Virginia’s "Fourth Side" in place rocking Scott Stadium, the Cavaliers will find a way to finish near the top of the ACC Coastal Division, pending the results of the conference game against Pittsburgh the week before. The Cavaliers have too many playmakers on offense for the Hokies to keep up and will be fighting for the Coastal Division title come Thanksgiving weekend. Virginia will not only take the win but will also lock up its division in the process.

Margaret Allocca, Collegiate Times Sports Staff Writer: Strong and consistent defense is arguably more meaningful in the long run. The Hokies will put up a fight against the Cavaliers, taking home the win to Blacksburg on Thanksgiving weekend. Virginia Tech leading as a team in rushing yards is a key advantage that will help carry over the win at Scott Stadium. While the Cavaliers have had more success overall offensively, their tactics will be no match-up against Virginia Tech’s defensive play. Junior quarterback Braxton Burmeister throwing for 215 yards and three touchdowns against Duke is the momentum the Hokies need to maintain heading into match-up against the Cavaliers.
Rivalry reflections from both sides

Three Cavaliers and three Hokies answer important questions about this year’s rivalry game

Will a strong Virginia Tech defense be able to contain an electric Cavalier offense?

CD: Connor Lothrop, Cavalier Daily Associate Writer: As explosive as the Cavalier offense has been, it’s possible the Hokies can keep it under 30 points. By Football Outsiders OFEI metric, Virginia has the eighth-most efficient offense in the country — Virginia Tech’s defense is ranked 55th in DFEI, the defensive version of the same metric. The Cavaliers have also posted ridiculous traditional numbers — first in the country in total yards, second in passing yards and 12th in scoring. But those numbers have come against a lot of bad defenses. Of the teams Virginia has played in 2021, only Wake Forest and Miami have comparably ranked defenses, and those two held Virginia’s offense to 17 and 30 points, respectively. If Virginia Tech’s secondary can match up with Thompson and junior receiver Dontayvion Wicks, Virginia’s explosive passing game would be kneecapped. Very few teams have managed this effectively, but never count out a motivated Virginia Tech defense.

CT: Claire Castagno, Collegiate Times Sports Editor: Virginia Tech has shown this season that its defense is capable of making big plays and can play at a very high level. Opponents playing the Hokies have averaged 21.3 points, and as such, their defense ranks No. 4 in the ACC. Against Notre Dame, Virginia was only able to put up three points in its 25-point loss. Junior defensive back Jermaine Waller has picked off quarterbacks four times this season, and if Virginia’s quarterback is not extremely accurate with his throws, it’s likely that Waller can find himself catching the ball again. Additionally, Virginia Tech’s defensive line has recorded 23 sacks on the season, and the Cavalier’s offense must make sure they can execute plays quickly because the Hokie defensive line has no problem breaking into the pocket and stirring up trouble.

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stands on the Drillfield during the event to see clubs and organizations with games, studying or just hanging out. It is also not uncommon to see clubs and organizations with stands on the Drillfield during the day. One of the most unique things about the Drillfield is the underground waterway, Stroubles Creek, that runs throughout the field. Over the years, there have been rumors that Drillfield is slowly sinking because of the waterway. Although many don’t believe the Drillfield will ever sink, the myth still exists!

Center of Campus:
With over 200 buildings spanning 2,600 acres, an airport, a drone park and more, Virginia Tech is home to over 30,000 students and faculty.

At the center of Virginia Tech stands Burruss Hall. Built in 1953, the six-story building can be seen from almost anywhere on Virginia Tech’s campus and is a centerpiece that catches everyone’s attention. Burruss contains an auditorium that can accommodate over 3,000 people and is generally used for major events such as presidential speeches and shows. If you have ever visited Tech, chances are that you have heard the chiming bells of Burruss. This ringing sound is from an electronic carillon located in Burruss and plays five to seven times a day.

Directly in front of Burruss Hall is the famed Drillfield. Spanned across an expansive 22 acres, the Drillfield connects the residential side of campus with the academic side. This historic greenspace is a popular gathering space where you can find students playing games, studying or just hanging out. It is also not uncommon to see clubs and organizations with stands on the Drillfield during the annual snowball fight. This Hokie celebration is a competitive but playful match between cadets and civilians that started over a century ago, making this one of the college’s oldest traditions. While there is no scorekeeping, everyone’s a winner at this beloved Hokie event.

The 3.2 for 32 Run in Remembrance is arguably one of the most important events hosted at Virginia Tech. Every year, the Hokie community gathers to remember the 32 students and faculty members who were lost on April 16, 2007. Through the 3.2 for 32, Tech’s community comes together to honor the lives that were taken from the community and reminds us all that we can prevail in even the darkest hours.

Big Events:
With over 800 student organizations, Tech’s sense of community is an essential part of campus. At the start of each year, Virginia Tech’s organizations take the Drillfield by storm as they promote their unique clubs at GobblerFest. GobblerFest is a fun way to meet new people, find cool clubs and get more involved as a Hokie. Along with all these amazing opportunities, you can count on having fun with performances, free goodies and carnival rides.

On Blacksburg’s first snow day of the year, you will find students gathered at the Drillfield for the annual snowball fight. This Hokie community gathers to remember the 32 students and faculty members who were lost on April 16, 2007. Through the 3.2 for 32, Tech’s community comes together to honor the lives that were taken from the community and reminds us all that we can prevail in even the darkest hours.

Study Spots:
When midterms, finals or even just major project deadlines roll around, it’s essential to find a quiet area to work. Luckily for Hokies, with a campus as large as Tech’s, there is always a study spot somewhere.

Although the Hahn Horticulture Garden can feel a bit detached from campus due to its distance, the garden is a great outdoor study space where students can enjoy the weather and do homework in peace. The stroll to Hahn Horticulture Garden is a perfect way to destress and get in the zone to get work done.

Pamplin Hall, home to Virginia Tech’s Pamplin College of Business, is another great study space. With expansive overhead windows and amazing greenery, Pamplin Hall is one of the more modern and chic study spaces at Virginia Tech.

Newman Library is the most well-known study area and one of the most dependable. When you are looking to get a long day’s worth of studying in, Newman is the place to go. With silent floors (the odd-numbered ones) and group study floors (the even-numbered ones), Newman is a great place to find resources, get tutoring help or just get away from all the noise.

Food:
When it comes to food, no one does it like Tech. With 11 locations and over 40 dining venues, there is always something new to try. Tech’s food trucks, The Grillfield and Periodic Table, keep students on their toes with their ever-changing menus. The Grillfield features Latino-fusion meals, while the Periodic Table serves Asian-fusion foods. The food trucks can generally be found underneath Torgersen Bridge, but don’t be surprised if you spot them elsewhere.

Turner Place is one of the more popular dining halls, located just behind McBryde Hall on the academic side of campus. With eight separate restaurants, Turner offers a combination of brand names like Bruegger’s Bagels and Qdoba with others that are unique to Tech, such as Origami and 1872 Fire Grill. Regardless, there is something for everyone at Turner Place.

When you need a late-night snack or a pick-me-up after an exam, you can always count on Deet’s Place to have what you need. Located at Dietrick Hall, Deet’s Place is open until 2 a.m. most days, making it a great place to go with friends as a midnight stroll.

Student Hot Spots around Blacksburg:
Downtown Blacksburg is perfect for when you want to walk around. With countless boutiques like Hello Gorgeous and 310 Rosemont, restaurants of all cuisines, and the Lyric Theatre, downtown has it all. Just down the street from Squires Student Center is Main Street, where you can find all this and more.

The Cascade Falls Trailhead is a fun place to walk with family and friends. This waterfall includes a 4-mile hiking trail with some gorgeous views and is one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the area. Located in Pembroke, Virginia, this destination is roughly 30 minutes away from campus by car.

The Blacksburg Farmers Market on the corner of Roanoke Street and Draper Road is a great place to find fresh produce, pick out flowers, listen to live music and destress with friends. The market is open on Wednesdays from 2 to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
The Virginia Tech Hokies (5–5, 3–3 ACC) will head to Charlottesville to face off against the rival Virginia Cavaliers (6–4, 4–2) for the 102nd time on Nov. 27. Both teams had their share of ups and downs this season, but fans would agree that this game matters more than any other matchup each year. Virginia Tech diehards will hope the team can overcome the myriad of issues facing the team this season and pull out a win in a similar way to last year, where a struggling team was able to rise to the moment and take the Commonwealth Cup back to Blacksburg.

If Cavalier quarterback Brennan Armstrong is healthy, this game will likely be the toughest offensive matchup the Hokies have faced all year. UVA is a juggernaut on that side of the ball, ranking second in the nation in yards per game and scoring 34.4 points per game in their contests. Armstrong has been the catalyst for the Cavaliers’ consistently high-level performance with 395.2 passing yards per game, 27 passing touchdowns and seven rushing touchdowns. If the Cavaliers’ record was better, the junior quarterback would likely be in contention for the Heisman Trophy. Armstrong is helped out by a good offensive line and a great group of pass-catchers, headlined by big-time receiver Dontayvion Wicks (1,004 receiving yards, nine touchdowns), dynamic “football-player” Keytaon Thompson (983 scrimmage yards, four touchdowns), and talented tight end Jelani Woods (459 yards, six touchdowns). Virginia Tech’s defense should have its hands completely full with this group.

On defense, UVA is a completely different story, with one of the worst units in college football (123rd out of 130 teams). The Cavaliers have consistently struggled to stop opposing offenses, giving up 28 points or more in seven of their 10 games. They are not without talent, as “play-everywhere” corner Nick Grant has been a menace all season, with seven pass breakups, three tackles for loss and a forced fumble on the year. Safety Joey Blount also played well, with two interceptions, three pass breakups and three tackles for loss on the year.

When Virginia Tech is on offense, it should look to run the ball as much as possible. The two-headed backfield of Raheem Blackshear and Malachi Thomas, along with the rushing ability of quarterback Braxton Burmeister should be able to take advantage of what is a weak UVA defensive line. The Hokies may be able to find success through the air, but they should try to minimize Grant’s and Blount’s chances to make plays.

When the Cavaliers have the football, it seems unlikely Virginia Tech will be able to find a way to slow UVA down. While the Hokies have a solid secondary that should hold the Cavaliers’ receivers to average games, UVA can likely create mismatches in the passing game, and a light box seems dangerous against a solid Cavalier rushing attack. Virginia Tech will have to hope for an off day from Armstrong or big games from Dax Hollifield and Alan Tisdale if they want to create a problem for UVA’s offense.

Though it should be an interesting matchup, it seems the Cavaliers have the edge up in this one. Don’t be surprised if Woods has a big game going against Nasir Peoples and the Hokies’ linebackers. The 6-foot-7, 265-pound behemoth could easily go for a 100-plus-yard game with a touchdown against Virginia Tech and will likely be the X-factor in the matchup. It will be a close game, but UVA will likely pull out the win in this one.

**Prediction:** UVA 33, Virginia Tech 30

This preview was written on Nov. 14. Virginia will play Pittsburgh and Virginia Tech will play Miami on Nov. 20.

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staff members to ensure that the band performs to the best of its ability.

“I love directing students,” Middleton said. “I love everything about that part of the job. I think I am always so excited when I hear about the things that they’re doing and the internships that they get and the things they go on to do.”

The Cavalier Marching Band also prides itself on the dedication of its student musicians.

According to the Cavalier Marching Band’s website, its director created a “1% better” motto to motivate students to work hard and make their contribution to rehearsals and performances one percent better each day. The director is Elliott Tackitt, who previously worked at the University of Michigan and Arizona State University and is now making his debut as director of bands at UVA this year. Although Tackitt didn’t respond to requests for an interview, Middleton praised the Cavalier Marching Band and its leadership staff.

“I always enjoy being there (UVA) and hearing them, but I think that’s because I love watching any band — especially a college band,” Middleton said. “I always think it’s so neat to see what their traditions are and what their style is and what they do.”

Without these marching bands, sporting events and games would never be the same. The Marching Virginians are the very core of Hokie traditions, and the Cavalier Marching Band has also created numerous school spirit traditions. Regardless of this century-long rivalry, all Hokie and Cavalier fans can agree on one thing: The marching bands complete the college football game experience.
It’s that time of the year again where we face one of our biggest rival in our football schedule: the University of Virginia. This competition between UVA and Virginia Tech is well over a century old, so it’s no wonder why everyone is so invested in the competition between these two schools. However, not many people mention the marching bands in these discussions and debates.

In our regular season games, Virginia Tech’s marching band, the Marching Virginians, is a key component of the electric atmosphere in Lane Stadium. The same can be said for UVA’s Cavalier Marching Band, which was founded in 2003 as a result of multiple donations to the school, according to the band’s website. Both bands perform different halftime shows at every home game, providing new experiences to fans in Lane and Scott Stadium.

Being a member of the Marching Virginians isn’t as easy as one might think. The time commitment alone — 90 minutes every single day — is what keeps the band at peak performance; it also allows them to put together shows in just four rehearsal, which is what they did for this year’s homecoming halftime show.

“Being a part of an organization that embodies the Hokie spirit is an opportunity of a lifetime,” said Andrew Hermansen, student manager for the Marching Virginians. “As a manager for the band, I’m ecstatic to see how the band will perform and how The Spirit of Tech will rock UVA’s stands!”

The mastermind behind the Marching Virginians’ amazing talent is Polly Middleton, the marching band director of four years who holds a doctorate in music education. Middleton has directed countless other marching, symphony and concert bands throughout her career. She started teaching classes at Virginia Tech in 2011 and was the associate director of the Marching Virginians until 2016.

“I always loved marching band. I think it was where I found all my friends and I think I just always liked that atmosphere,” Middleton said. “It’s really special to get to be a part of the unique traditions that are involved with the Virginia Tech Marching Virginians.”

According to The Marching Virginians’ website, the band holds over 350 students, but each student is able to develop a sense of community within the marching band that lasts a lifetime. The day-to-day operations of the band are generally run by the student leadership staff, who work closely with Middleton and the other
“How was the UVA event?” my mom excitedly asked my little sister over the phone. Instead of accompanying the rest of our family to a wedding over the weekend, my sister was dressed up to meet with representatives from the University of Virginia, or as I had come to know it, Virginia Tech’s archival. My sister said it went well, which came as no surprise.

A wonderful candidate for any school, my sister’s a varsity athlete with strong academic motivation and a flair for the dramatic. If accepted, she will move to Charlottesville, make new friends and have an incredible time. Eventually, she may even come to love UVA in the same way I love Virginia Tech. But if I’m being honest, that idea has been a tough pill to swallow.

Few people would know my plight better than Virginia Tech computer engineering sophomore Carly Liesegang, whose twin sister Rachel Liesegang is a second-year student planning to study economics at UVA. We discussed how the schools’ rivalries affected their relationship, stereotypes and traditions they do or unofficial stereotypes each school might have. Both schools have amazing programs and produce alumni that go on to change the world.

I think normally our mom and our older brother went here, so we’ve kind of been a Hokie family our entire lives,” Carly said. “I’m studying engineering, and they have a great engineering program here. But I also love the athletics and the student community here at Tech.”

Rachel admitted that choosing UVA after coming from a Virginia Tech family was not the traditional path, but the decision made sense for her.

“Growing up being such a Hokie fan, it was definitely different for me to choose their rival school, UVA,” Rachel said. “But I always liked UVA growing up. For some reason I always felt drawn to the school, even rooting against them at Tech games, I was like, ‘I could sort of see myself going there.’ And I really resonated with the community here at UVA and just knew it would be the best place for me to go to.”

Even to most outsiders, it’s easy to see the appeal of either school. UVA has a top-ranked business program along with scores of successful, household-name alumni. Virginia Tech also boasts renowned engineering and architecture programs, just to name a few.

Athletically, both schools have top teams, such as UVA’s basketball team and Virginia Tech’s wrestling team, with each having passionate fan bases. UVA carries historical significance as President Thomas Jefferson’s passion project and Virginia’s flagship university, while UVA students also benefit from being rooted in the growing city of Charlottesville.

Virginia Tech students enjoy high-quality meals from their dining halls that are consistently ranked among the top college food in the country, as well as the beautiful mountain scenery of Blacksburg and the New River Valley. Virginia Tech’s traditions often have ties to the Corps of Cadets, such as Skipper the cannon and the game ball, but they also have the lunch pail, which is symbolic of their blue collar beginnings.

If you want a perfect descriptor of the difference between UVA and Virginia Tech, listen to UVA’s “Good Old Song” and Virginia Tech’s “Enter Sandman.” Both songs serve as unofficial fight songs. While the “Good Old Song” serenades UVA with lines like “When far away, in memory we shall still be at the dear old UVA,” “Enter Sandman” aims to warn Virginia Tech’s competition to “sleep with one eye open, gripping your pillow tight.”

Each student has their own reasons for attending their school, no matter what famed
Bill Roth believes that the Commonwealth Clash pushes both football programs to be great.

CLAIRE CASTAGNO, sports editor

Bill Roth, the former sports commentator for the Hokies from 1988 to 2015 and a current professor in the School of Communication at Virginia Tech, has seen a lot go down between the two best football programs in Virginia in his 27 years of calling Commonwealth Cup games.

“Long before I arrived at Tech, this rivalry was if it was the sons of bankers against the sons of farmers,” Roth said. “It was class warfare as much as it was football.”

Even now, during the week leading up to the rivalry game, fans talk a big game about not only their respective football teams, but their universities as well. There is so much passion from both fanbases in the Commonwealth Clash, and the rivalry goes beyond just the playing field.

“If you were a Virginia Tech student, you heard a lot about safety school jokes and farmer jokes,” Roth said.

In recent years, Virginia Tech has clearly been more successful in the Commonwealth Clash, but UVA used to be a better football program than Hokie fans give them credit for. Roth said that when he first started at Virginia Tech, most Cavalier fans thought of North Carolina as their big rival.

“Virginia was a very good football team when I first arrived at Tech, and it had a legendary Hall of Fame coach in George Welsh,” Roth said. “In the beginning, the Hokies had a hard time getting high school players from Virginia, the elite prospects, to come to Tech.”

Roth notes that the results of the rivalry started to flip more toward the Hokies when former Hall of Fame football coach Frank Beamer was able to recruit more in-state recruits to Virginia Tech that, in previous years, were going to the University of Virginia.

In 1995, No. 10 Virginia Tech came back to beat No. 13 Virginia 36–29 at Scott Stadium in Charlottesville. The Hokies then went on to secure a victory against No. 9 Texas in the Sugar Bowl.

“If the Hokies don’t come back and win that game that day, they don’t get to the Sugar Bowl to play Texas and win that game,” Roth said. “I’m not sure that if the Hokies didn’t get to the Sugar Bowl to play Texas in ’95, they would go to the Orange Bowl in ’96.”

From a recruiting standpoint, Roth believes the 1995 Commonwealth Cup was one of the most important games in Tech’s history. Legendary quarterback Michael Vick was a junior in high school when the Hokies made the Orange Bowl to play No. 6 Nebraska in 1996.

Tech has won 22 out of 26 games since 1995. But before Virginia Tech joined the Atlantic Coast Conference in 2003, it was difficult for the team to get the Bowl games, television appearances and notoriety that the University of Virginia football program had.

“The Hokies had to struggle to get any attention, because Virginia was getting all the publicity,” Roth said. “When the Hokies finally started beating them, it was important for the constituency at Tech.”

Contact Karen Drake-Whitney at kdrake@vt.edu for information and advising.

Indoor agriculture and vertical farming using hydroponic technologies for the production of food and medicinal crops is one of the most exciting and fastest growing agriculture careers in the U.S. and Virginia.
2015: Beamer's last dance
The 2015 season was set to be Frank Beamer’s last season at the helm for the Hokies, and the fans who travelled to Charlottesville for the game wanted nothing more than to see him go out with his longtime dominance over the 'Hoos left intact.
Those hopes seemed to be in jeopardy for most of the matchup as the 'Hoos proved to be an even matchup for the Hokies and entered the final 10 minutes of the game with a 7-point lead.
Unfortunately for the home team, the momentum would take a 180-degree shift as Hokie quarterback Michael Brewer sailed a 32-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver Isaiah Ford to tie the game, and Joey Slye kicked a 41-yard field goal to take the lead.
The 'Hoos had a chance to counter with roughly a minute and a half left in regulation, but a Chuck Clark interception on an errant pass to the seam from quarterback Matt Johns sealed the deal on coach Beamer’s 12th consecutive and final win over his team’s dreaded rival.

2018: The fumble touchdown
The 'Hoos traveled to Blacksburg in the 2018 season having fielded arguably their best team in a decade. Led by dual-threat quarterback Bryce Perkins, the team held a 7–4 record headed into its ACC finale against the Hokies and looked like the better team on paper.
The game was fiercely competitive throughout, but the 'Hoos had taken a 7-point advantage in the fourth after scoring 17 unanswered points. However, one of the most inexplicable plays in the history of the rivalry would occur just two minutes left in regulation when Hokie running back Steven Peoples ran for 13 yards and fumbled the ball in the end zone.
It seemed like game over for the Hokies, but luckily, wide receiver Hezekiah Grimsley fell on the ball in the end zone and secured a game-tying touchdown for the home team. Furthermore, that wouldn’t be the only dropped ball the Hokies capitalized on that game. During the overtime period, the Hokies had already scored a field goal and needed to keep the 'Hoos out of the end zone.
The 'Hoos ran an option play with Perkins and running back Jordan Ellis, but miscommunication on the handoff left the ball hitting the turf. The Hokies recovered the ball to seal a 34–31 overtime victory and the 'Hoos boarded the buses knowing they had lost their best chance yet of ending their Commonwealth Cup losing streak.

2019: Perkins’ charge
The Commonwealth Cup served a secondary purpose in 2019 as a de facto ACC Coastal championship game, as both UVA and Virginia Tech were tied for the chance to play — and most likely lose — to the juggernaut Clemson Tigers in the conference championship.
The game seriously rivaled the matchup from the previous year in terms of suspense. Neither team ever had a lead of more than 10 points and both teams broke the 30-point threshold.
The star of the game was undoubtedly Perkins, the same starting quarterback from the last matchup whose overtime fumble was arguably the biggest reason the 'Hoos lost that season. Perkins scorched the earth where the Hokies stood as he threw for 311 yards, rushed for 178 yards and scored three total touchdowns.
Eventually, the Hokies had the ball with a 3-point deficit and a minute left. However, the potential game-saving drive ended after only three plays as Hokie quarterback Hendon Hooker was sacked on three consecutive plays, the third of which led to a fumble recovery.

It’s the battle of the year for both of these teams, with all of Virginia watching to see who is the state’s best collegiate football program.
It’s time to write the next chapter in the history of the Hokies’ and ‘Hoos’ age-old rivalry. As we all anxiously await Nov. 27, let’s take a trip down memory lane and take a look at some of the most iconic games between these two storied programs.

1990: A quality first win

The Hokies’ 38–13 win over the ‘Hoos in the 1990 season marked Frank Beamer’s first win in the rivalry as head coach of the program. Up to that point, all three games Beamer had coached against the ‘Hoos were losses that came by no more than one score.

Additionally, this win stood out due to how well UVA had performed that season. For two weeks during the season, the ‘Hoos were ranked as the No. 1 team in the nation in the AP Poll. Their ranking would eventually fall after some losses to Georgia Tech and Maryland, but the team stayed in the AP Top 25 all season up until its blowout loss in Blacksburg.

2003: Wali steamrolls the Hokies

This game marked the last time UVA would get a win in the rivalry for the next 16 years. Nevertheless, the ‘Hoos made the game a memorable one for their fans as they beat the Hokies 35–21 despite trailing by more than one score.

Furthermore, this game also saw ‘Hoo quarterback Matt Schaub tie an all-time passing touchdowns record, 67, that he would go on to break in the Continental Tire Bowl.

When a news organization delivers both news and opinions, the impartiality and credibility of the news organization can be questioned. To minimize this as much as possible there needs to be a sharp and clear distinction between news and opinion, both to those providing and those consuming the news.

The pursuit of truth is a noble goal of journalism. But the truth is not always apparent or known immediately. Journalists’ role is therefore not to determine what they believe at that time to be the truth and reveal only that to their readers, but rather to report as completely and impartially as possible all verifiable facts so that readers can, based on their own knowledge and experience, determine what they believe to be the truth.

Learn which players will likely make an impact in the rivalry matchup.

AMBER WILLIAMS, sports editor

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