

# EXTRAORDINARY EMPLOYEES

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## SPIRIT OF 'UT PROSIM' DRIVES DAMIAN SALAS TO SERVE AT WORK AND IN THE COMMUNITY

by Katie Huger

In the fall of 1994, a 17-year-old Damian Salas left his home in Poquoson, Virginia, and moved to Blacksburg, Virginia, to begin this freshman year at Virginia Tech.

It wasn't long before he became immersed in the university community and found himself searching for Hokie sports information that didn't seem to exist in any one place.

For the computer science major, the need for a website dedicated to the university's athletic teams was a no-brainer. His skills and passion, combined with the emerging World Wide Web, created the perfect opportunity for Salas to "Invent the Future."

### THEN

From his room in East Ambler Johnston residence hall, the college freshman created the first website dedicated to the Virginia Tech Hokies. At the time, the site focused primarily on football and basketball and included recaps, statistics, rosters, and schedules.

Salas met with the Athletics Department to discuss the website. He said they were very receptive and encouraged him to continue to pursue his plans.

"When I first started the site, I would go to the press box after football games or call into the baseball hotline to collect stats," he said. "I would listen to and transcribe the hotline's recorded message and then upload the information to the website."

For two years, Salas devoted all of his free time and energy to keeping the site updated. In 1996, as the World Wide Web became more prevalent, the Athletics Department hired Salas as a wage employee and launched sports.vt.edu on July 1.

In February 1998, the website transformed once more into hokiesports.com, but was managed by the FANOnly Network, a company that built and maintained athletic websites around the nation.

On November 29, 1999, the management of hokiesports.com returned to the university. Just a few months later in 2000, Salas officially joined the Athletics Department full-time as the webmaster of hokiesports.com, a position he still holds today.

### NOW

Today, hokiesports.com is a comprehensive website that includes detailed information about all of the university's 22 varsity sports teams. More than 450,000 people visit the website every month to find the latest Hokie happenings.

As the senior director and webmaster, Salas is responsible for maintaining the site's servers, writing code, and assisting in the design of the site.

His innovation has created a more user-friendly experience and improved the functionality of the Athletics Department. He has created web applications that allow schedules, news releases, rosters, and statistics to be easily posted to the website from anywhere, at anytime.

In the last few months on the job, some of his projects have included creating webpages for the Nike uniform rebrand and the Hokie Scholarship Fund. The scholarship fund page includes a custom-built interactive map that allows users to view their seating options based on their donation.



Salas has helped keep the stats for men's and women's basketball since 1995 and for football since 1996. Because of his additional responsibilities, as well as being an avid Hokie fan, Salas has attended every home football game since he first came to the university in 1994. Photo Credit: Dave Knachel, Athletics Department

### SERVING VIRGINIA TECH

For nearly 22 years, Salas has embraced the Hokie Spirit through his commitment to the university. He has helped keep the stats for men's and women's basketball since 1995 and for football since 1996. He also keeps the scoreboard for wrestling matches, has been trained to do the official score sheet for volleyball, plays music for softball games, and often fills in as the public address announcer or photographer for various athletic events.

"Damian is arguably one of the hardest working individuals in the Athletics Department," said Sarah Stockwell, senior assistant coach for swimming and diving. "For a man who wears many hats, he juggles everything so well. If he agrees to do something, you can believe it will get done."

From time to time, Salas also travels with different teams, which allows him to get to know the athletes and experience once-in-a-life-time moments.

"Meeting the athletes and coaches is my favorite part of my job," he said. "In 2000 I was able to meet Michael Vick when I created his Heisman campaign website, and this past year I was able to be a part of Coach Beamer's last home, road, and bowl games."

### About this series

The Extraordinary Employee series highlights the achievements of Virginia Tech employees who go above and beyond, making a difference in the lives of others on campus and in the community.



Twenty-two years ago Damian Salas enrolled at Virginia Tech and he never left. Today, Salas, the senior director and webmaster of hokiesports.com, embarks on a 3,785-mile bike trip across the U.S. to raise awareness and funds for multiple sclerosis research.

### GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Salas' commitment to upholding the university's motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), extends far beyond Virginia Tech. Over the next 62 days, Salas will participate in a TransAmerican bike trip through Bike the US for MS, a local organization that organizes cross country cycling trips to raise awareness for multiple sclerosis research.

Beginning in Yorktown, Virginia, Salas, 15 other cyclists, and four route leaders, will complete a 3,785-mile journey across nine states. The cross country journey will end in San Francisco on August 1.

While Salas does not have a personal connection to multiple sclerosis, he said he was inspired to join the cause after a friend completed the trip.

"It is a unique way to travel across the country while raising awareness for a great cause," he said. "I get to combine my love of travel with helping others."

Throughout the trip, the cyclists will complete six service projects for individuals with multiple sclerosis, the first of which will take place in Blacksburg on June 7. Service projects range from planting a garden to building an accessible ramp.

To participate in the trip, Salas needed to raise \$1 per mile; a goal he not only met but exceeded. To date he has raised nearly \$4,000.

Salas said he is both nervous and excited for the trip.

"I am most excited about traveling through Virginia," he said "It will take 11 days and is challenging because it has more total elevation than any other state."

Throughout the journey he will update his personal website with photos, videos, and a blog. His website also includes a map with up-to-date information regarding his location, speed, distance traveled, and altitude.

When he isn't biking across the country, working, or helping at athletic events, Salas shares his passion for music by DJing for his friends. He has even served as the DJ for the Athletics Department's annual holiday party.

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[www.vtnews.vt.edu/email/pages/extraordinary-salas-rdr.html](http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/email/pages/extraordinary-salas-rdr.html)

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