

# AN EDGE IN EXPERIENCE

**With nearly 40 lettermen including 25 seniors on the roster, the 2005 Keydet football team looks to rebound from last season**

**T**ough times call for veteran leadership, and the 2005 VMI football team will count on the experience of 25 senior-eligibility players to rebound from a down-trodden campaign of a year ago.

The seniors, known in VMI vernacular as first classmen, stand at the crossroads of the final year of their respective football careers that have been both blessed with the most productive two-year win total in 25 years, and tarnished with a winless season.

Fresh off a successful and relatively injury free spring practice, the Class of '06, which matriculated as freshman in the fall of VMI's successful six-win season of 2002, seem determine to finish things the way they began - as winners.

And they'll have plenty of experienced underclassmen joining them in the fight as well. The Keydets return 39 lettermen including 18 starters on both sides of the ball as well as both punter and kicking specialists.

Offensively, the Keydets have eight players with starting experience coming back in 2005.

The return of strong-armed Jonathan Wilson (Natural Bridge, Va.) from injury will be a key for a resurgence in the offense's productivity. Wilson threw for 2260 yards and 12 TD's as a freshman two years ago, but had his sophomore campaign all but wiped out when he fractured his ankle in the fourth quarter of the season opening game at Ohio. Wilson returned to form by throwing for 110 yards on 11 of 19 passes and a touchdown in the '05 spring game, and underwent successful surgery immediately after spring drills to stabilize the ankle for the rigors of the upcoming season. With a healthy Wilson in fall camp, the quarterbacking corps will also boast and experienced backup, senior Kirk Monteleone (Wheeling, W.Va.), who started the final five games of 2004, and redshirt freshman Terrel Allen (Wilmington, N.C.), who spent a season as an understudy learning the VMI offense. Monteleone could be moved back to receiver in fall camp, but can switch back to QB if the call comes.

Three quality running backs return to the offensive backfield depth chart. All-Big South running back Sean Mizzer (Prince Frederick, Md.) hopes to regain the form that was slowed by back injuries last year and junior running back Colby Hollingsworth (Dallas, Tex.) is coming off an ACL knee injury. Perhaps the biggest plus to the running back position is the development of sophomore Nat Jackson (Fredericksburg, Va.), who at



*Senior Zohn Burden (Virginia Beach, Va.) has led the Keydets in receiving the past two years.*

times was VMI's most dependable back last year despite fighting off shoulder injuries of his own. Jackson absorbed most of the rushes in spring ball as Mizzer and Hollingsworth were held out to rehab fully from their ailments, and the Fredericksburg native relished the role of the "go-to" guy - carrying 17 times for 94 yards in the spring game.

Senior linebacker Mike Maleski (Virginia Beach, Va.) was converted to fullback in spring drills and adapted well to the new role's blocking and ball carrying responsibilities. He'll join junior Andrew Walton (Midlothian, Va.) to create a formidable tandem in the fullback slot.

The Keydets spent most of spring drills developing the running game, and the emergence of a cohesive offensive line will be paramount to VMI's ground game. Three experienced returnees will form the nucleus of the O-line- senior tackle/guard Jeremy "Big Country" Ward (6-4, 300, Sr.) Grundy, Va., senior center Matt Dowler (6-3, 260, Parkersburg, W.Va.), and sophomore tackle Robert Brown (6-6, 300, Mesquite, Tex.), who made several starts his freshman year.

The offense has phased in the tight end position back into the scheme the past two years, and both senior John Fox (Sellersville,

Pa.) and redshirt sophomore Tommy Lloyd (Fishersville, Va.) bring veteran blocking and pass-catching skills to the position.

VMI's big-play capability will focus on senior standout receivers Zohn Burden (Va. Beach, Va.) and Gary Price (Woodbridge, Va.). Burden, who is poised to have his best season yet after three productive seasons, was an All-Big South selection in 2004 and has put together 500-yard receiving seasons in back-to-back years. Price moved to wideout from slotback last season and caught 37 balls for 393 yards and two touchdowns.

The defense returns a unit that has more experience than perhaps any in recent years. Ten starters return to their positions in 2005, with linebacker Adam Brankamp (Columbus, Ohio) as the only player lost to graduation.

The entire defensive front, which had to weather a couple of knee injuries last fall returns to action, including ends Charlie Liesfeld (6-4, 235, Richmond, Va.) and Eric Hall (6-1, 230, Marion, Va.), tackles Steel Nardozzi (6-2, 240, Jr., Colonial Heights, Va.), Jack Herzog (6-2, 270, Jr. Baltimore, Md.), Terell Golden (6-3, 250, Sr., Germantown, Md.), and Chris Perry (5-11, 250, Sr., Hampton, Va.), and end Sean Moore (6-4, 245, Sr. Hedgesville, W.Va.), who missed the entire 2004 campaign

with knee injury. 2003 All-Big South tackle Vicheal Foxx (6-4 280, Sr. Ruther Glen, Va.), who had seven sacks and 19 tackles for loss in '03, returns to the team after a year's absence.

The linebacking corps is highlighted by senior Justin Huggard (Staunton, Va.), a dynamic and explosive defender who has been harassing opponent offenses the past three seasons. Huggard racked up 97 tackles in '05, including 13-for-loss and was named All-Big South. Huggard will again vie for All-Conference and possibly All-America honors in '05. Senior Todd Baldwin (W. Des Moines, Iowa) has provided tremendous leadership at linebacker over his cadetship and racked up 95 tackles and 13 stops for loss last season.

Five defensive backs with starting experience return to the secondary, so don't be surprised to see a five-back scheme used extensively in the coming season. Headlining the group is All-America candidate free safety Robert Mason (Gastonia, N.C.), who led the Big South in tackles with 120 last season. Also returning is senior safety Kamau Hull (Athens, Ga.), who missed 2004 with a knee injury, cornerbacks Grant Harris (Leesburg, Va.) and Jamaal Walton (Va. Beach, Va.), and strong safety Marcus Barnes (Elizabethtown, Ky). The defensive backfield collectively has 13 varsity letters in its arsenal, including senior Titus Green (LaPlata, Md.), who returns to the team after a year's absence. Green was the 2001 Southern Conference freshman of the year as a receiver and return specialist, but was moved to defense in spring '04 drills. He

returns to school this VMI after not being enrolled in 2004-05.

The Keydets are fortunate to have both starters returning to the kicking game. Junior punter Adam Peters (Roanoke, Va.) averaged 38.6 yards per punt last year, down slightly from his freshman season, but his hang time and get-away times have consistently improved over his first two years. Sophomore Barrett Way (Richmond, Va.), who enjoyed a banner year converting eight of 12 field goals including a school second-best 53-yarder, is poised for more success in 2005.

The Keydets have inked 19 scholarship signees and several more recruited walk-ons have joined the ranks to boost depth. The focus of this year's recruiting class was skill position players with 10 backs signing with the VMI program.

The 11-game schedule features six home games at Alumni Memorial Field, the first time since 2001 that the Keydets have hosted six contests on their home field. Featured on the home slate are Big South games against Gardner-Webb and Charleston Southern, a match-up with 2004 I-AA playoff teams William & Mary and Lehigh, and military school rival The Citadel returns to the slate after a one-year absence in the renewal of "The Military Classic of the South." VMI will open the season at home September 3 against Davidson. The Keydets travel for road dates with ACC Duke, Liberty, Coastal Carolina, Wofford, and Richmond.



*Senior free safety Robert Mason (Gastonia, N.C.) will anchor a veteran defense that returns 10 starters.*



*A healthy Jonathan Wilson (Natural Bridge, Va.) will be key for VMI at the quarterback position.*

# LETTERMEN RETURNING,

# LETTERMEN LOST

## LETTERMEN RETURNING

*Lettermen Returning by position:* 39

*Starters Returning by Position:* 20 (includes specialists)

### **OFFENSE** (17 returning, 8 starters)

**Receivers:** ZOHAN BURDEN, Chris Gilliland, Kirk Monteleone, GARY PRICE

**Tackles:** ROBERT BROWN, JEREMY WARD

**Guards:** Brian Duncan, Adam Reel

**Center:** MATT DOWLER

**Quarterback:** JONATHAN WILSON

**Running Backs:** Colby Hollingsworth, Nat Jackson, Mike Maleski, SEAN MIZZER, Drew Walton

**Tight End:** JOHN FOX, Tommy Lloyd

### **DEFENSE** (20 returning, 10 starters)

**Tackles:** Vicheal Foxx, TERRELL GOLDEN, JACK HERZOG, Steel Nardozzi, Chris Perry, Mike Watson

**Ends:** ERIC HALL, CHARLIE LIESFELD, Sean Moore, Vic Rosen

**Linebackers:** TODD BALDWIN, JUSTIN HUGGARD,

**Cornerbacks:** Marcus Brown, Titus Green, GRANT HARRIS, Matt McGonegle, JAMAAL WALTON

**Strong Safety:** Kamau Hull

**Free Safety:** ROBERT MASON

**Bandit:** MARCUS BARNES

### **SPECIALISTS**

**Punter:** ADAM PETERS

**Placekicker:** BARRETT WAY

## LETTERMEN LOST

*Lettermen Lost By Position:* 20

*Starters Lost:* 5

### **OFFENSE** (9 lost, 3 starters)

**Receivers:** LaShae McMillian, John Puvogel, R.C. Simmons

**Tackles:** ALEX CORRELL, DONNIE JOHNSTON

**Guards:** ROBERT OAKS

**Center:**

**Quarterback:** Josh Lyles, David Poldiak

**Running Backs:** Abey Malave-Lopez

**Tight End:**

### **DEFENSE** (10 lost, 1 starter)

**Tackles:**

**Ends:** Christian Johnson, Brad Miller

**Linebackers:** ADAM BRANKAMP, Adrian Cmerek, Cliff Schademan, Tripp Smith, Randy Wainman

**Cornerbacks:** Greg Harris, Ray Holloway

**Strong Safety:** Maury Pauling

**Free Safety:**

**Bandit:**

### **SPECIALISTS:**

**Long snapper :** ROSS BOOTH

Starters listed in CAPS

**2005  
Pre-  
Camp**

# TWO DEEP

**OFFENSE (MULTIPLE)**

**WR**

Burden (Sr.)  
Monteleone (Sr.)

**LT**

R. Brown (So.)  
Chetney (So.)

**LG**

Ward (Sr.)  
Duncan (Sr.)

**C**

Dowler (Sr.)  
Duane (Fr-R)

**RG**

Reel (So.)  
Duncan (Sr.)

**RT**

Marcey (Fr-R)  
Bryant (Fr-R)

**TE**

Fox (Sr.)  
Ludden (Fr-R)

**WR**

Price (Sr.)  
Gilliland (Jr.)

**QB**

Wilson (Jr.)  
Allen (Fr-R)

**RB**

Mizzer (Sr.) OR  
Jackson (So.)

**FB**

Maleski (Sr.)  
Walton (Jr.)

**K**

Way (So.)  
Peters (Jr.)

**DEFENSE (4-3)**

**RAM**

Hall (Jr.)  
Moore (Sr.)

**NT**

Herzog (Jr.)  
Nardozzi (Jr.)

**T**

Golden (Sr.)  
Foxx (Sr.)

**END**

Liesfeld (Jr.)  
Rosen (So.)

**CB**

J. Walton (Jr.)  
Green (Sr.)

**BAN**

M. Barnes (Sr.)  
M. Brown (So.)

**MLB**

Huggard (Sr.)  
Artis (So.)

**SLB**

Baldwin (Sr.)  
Keitt (So.)

**CB**

G. Harris (Sr.)  
Green (Sr.)

**FS**

Mason (Sr.)  
M. Brown (So.)

**SS**

Hull (Sr.)  
McGonegle (Jr.)

**P**

Peters (Jr.)  
Major (Jr.)

**K  
E  
Y  
D  
E  
T  
S**