

## Tech Pros: Daniel Palka

When former Tech baseball player Daniel Palka was called up to the MLB, that he started hitting and still hasn't stopped should come as little surprise – he's done nothing but hit at every level of play for his career. Even then, the former Jacket was a pleasant surprise for the Chicago White Sox after bouncing from minor league team to minor league team for most of his career, and figures to be a part of their future for years to come.

Palka was an outstanding outfielder for Tech from 2011-2013, slashing .314/.397/.581 for his career. In his last season in white and gold, Palka posted an impressive .342/.436/.637 line, crushing 17 HR and knocking in 66 runs, leading the team in most offensive categories. Palka also spent a brief time on the mound, hurling 17 innings his Tech career with a microscopic 0.52 ERA, striking out 8.83 batters per nine innings.

On the back of a strong showing in the ACC, Palka, who had previously been drafted in the 19th round of the 2010 MLB Amateur Draft, found his stock rising and was selected by the Arizona Diamondbacks with the 88th overall pick of the 2013 MLB draft. Palka signed with the D-backs and continued to display an exemplary power bat, slugging .516 in his first professional season. He was later traded in 2015 to the Minnesota Twins in exchange for catcher Chris Hermann and kept on raking while working his way up through the Twins' minor league system.

Palka was added to the Twins' 40-man roster in 2016, usually an indication that a player will eventually join the major league team, but opportunity never came knocking with the Twins, and he was placed on waivers after the 2017 season, where he slashed a disappointing .274/.329/.431, a major power-outage compared to his previous seasons. The White Sox picked up Palka off of waivers and he joined the major league team, making his debut on April 25, 2018, going 0/4 with an RBI groundout.

Playing as designated hitter for the Sox, Palka has found his power stroke once again – Palka ranks 27th in the MLB in isolated slugging among players with at least 300 plate appearances with a .235 figure, a promising rebound indeed.

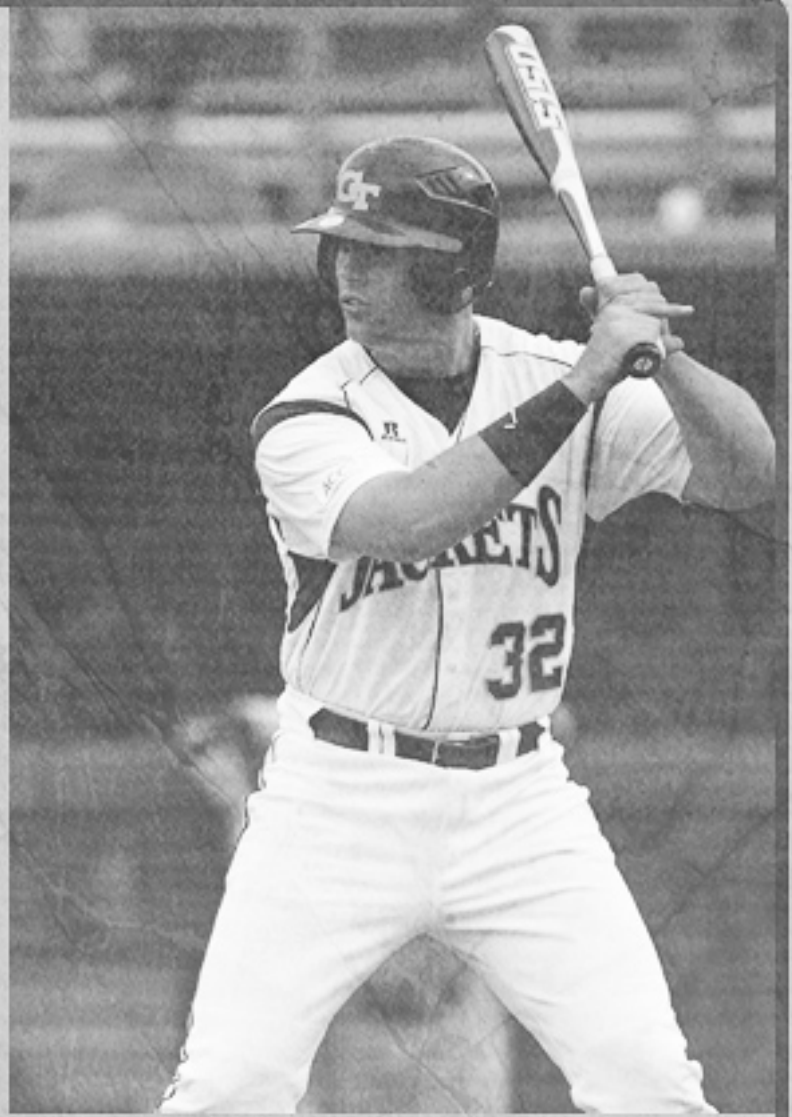


Photo by Kirsten Reynolds Student Publications

BA	OBP	SLG	wOBA	wRC+
0.239	0.281	0.474	0.318	101
PA	G	HR	R	RBI
324	91	18	39	50
H	2B	3B	BB	SO
73	12	3	18	113

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# Contested: Does CPJ deserve the hot seat?

**HARSHA SRIDHAR,  
JOHN EDWARDS**  
SPORTS EDITOR,  
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

*Editor's note: 'Contested' is the Sports section's latest feature, a dialogue between the editor and assistant editor. This week, the topic is the future of Tech football head coach Paul Johnson as he enters his eleventh season at the helm.*

**Harsha:** So John, the Alcorn State game is just over a week away, which means it's time to get back to college football season. Tech has new uniforms, a quarterback with a year of experience under his belt, and let's not forget new defensive coordinator Nate Woody from Appalachian State.

But the one constant over the last 10 seasons has been head coach Paul Johnson. I know fans blamed Ted Roof for a lot of the team's collapses over the years, and for good reason. Who could forget the fact that Miami almost exclusively threw screen passes on their game-winning drive last season? But if Tech underachieves this season — let's say they fail to get a bowl berth for the third time in the last season — should that be the end of the road for CPJ?

**John:** I've always thought that CPJ deserves a lot of leeway — seven straight bowl games should give you that. Last year was nothing short of a letdown, but beyond the scoreboard, Tech had a very strong team: they went 5-6, and lost three of those games by a combined total of six points. If the needle swung the other way, Tech would have been a Coastal contender if they had taken down Miami, and we wouldn't even be having this conversation. Tech got very unlucky last year, and I don't

think it's right to crucify Johnson for how lucky or unlucky he is.

**Harsha:** I agree that there were some bad bounces of the ball, but at the end of the day, someone has to be accountable for failures on the offensive side of the ball. That's supposed to be Johnson's calling card, right? Tech hasn't broken thirty points per game since their magical 2014-15 Orange Bowl campaign, and they have finished two straight years in the bottom half of FBS teams in scoring and points per game. We can talk about the offense be-

ing clock-management focused or whatnot, but the ball just is not getting into the end zone at the rate you would expect for a program that has traditionally hung its hat on a dominant offense and an adequate defense.

Maybe the assumption to make is that TaQuon Marshall is going to become a better passer this year, by which I mean he will not be the most statistically underwhelming passer in school history. Or should we expect the A-backs and B-backs to step up in their stead? What am I missing

when it comes to the Tech offense moving forward?

**John:** The point of the triple option is not to run up the scoreboard on your opponent, it's to steal as much time from them as possible while efficiently scoring — and Tech was 28th out of 130 FBS teams in red-zone conversion rate last season — so from my view, Johnson's offense has done exactly what has been expected of it.

Tech's main weakness last season was their defense. NC State did everyone at Tech a favor by hiring former defensive coordina-

tor Ted Roof away, saving Johnson and Tech the uncomfortable role of firing a coach, but the end result is that it allowed Johnson to improve his defensive staff, which he did with a stellar hire of Nate Woody, former DC at App State. Johnson recognized his main weakness and made the necessary moves to improve this offseason — which to me, is the hallmark of a great coach.

**Harsha:** On one hand, I do have to commend Johnson for moving on from Roof, and I think it was clear over the course of the season during press conferences and interviews that he was pretty unhappy about the defense. It's one of the things that makes covering Johnson more interesting than covering a typical football coach: he speaks his mind, even if that gets him in trouble occasionally. At the same time, hard as it may be for fans to believe, Roof's defenses had been above-average among FBS teams for a number of years prior to last year's disastrous campaign.

How about on the recruiting side? Some fans argue that Tech can't recruit well because of Paul Johnson and the triple option. Others would argue that the triple option works at Tech because the school can't recruit elite talent. Which side of this chicken-and-egg situation do you think is right?

**John:** Tech's out-of-state acceptance rate was 19 percent this year, one of the lowest rates in the country. Tech is an extremely competitive environment that places a larger emphasis on education for student athletes than many other colleges in the ACC (one cannot help but remember UNC's scandal), so it's tricky to find the right mix of student athletes who will succeed at Tech in

see CPJ, page 23



Photo by Samuel Stewart Student Publications

Paul Johnson coaches offensive players during a night game at Bobby Dodd Stadium. Johnson has completed a decade at Tech with dramatic highs and difficult lows.

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# Tech-UCF game rescheduled for 2022 season

**ROHAN KANSARA**  
STAFF WRITER

School is back in session, and with it comes a brand new season of college football. While last season's defensive woes and ultimately bowl-less season are blocked off in most Tech fans' minds, one storyline from last season remains relevant: the cancelled University of Central Florida game.

Last September, the Jackets were scheduled to travel down to Orlando, Florida to take on the UCF Knights in what was then a highly anticipated matchup. Unfortunately, Hurricane Irma hit the Caribbean and southeastern United States the week the Jackets were scheduled to play, affecting the UCF campus. As a result, after much deliberation about potential alternatives to playing in Orlando such as moving the game to Bobby Dodd Stadium or postponing the game to later in the season, the match was indefinitely postponed.

On August 17, Tech Football announced on Twitter that the game has been officially rescheduled for September 24, 2022. While the scheduled game is four years away and feature new rosters on both sides, UCF still poses an interesting matchup for the Jackets, especially considering the circumstances surrounding last year's postponed game.

Although at first glance the cancelled match does not seem to have had a significant bearing on

last season as a whole, if the game had been played, it could have been a season-changer for either team that won. The Jackets finished 5-6 last season, which left them one win shy of bowl eligibility. But had Tech faced off against the Knights and brought home a win, the resulting 6-6 record would have qualified Tech for a bowl game — a hallmark of a successful season for many programs.

On the other side of the field, UCF finished the season undefeated with a perfect 13-0 record after their Peach Bowl win over Auburn. They finished 6th in the AP rankings as the only undefeated team in the top 25. Despite their perfect record, however, they did not qualify for the College Football Playoffs due to a weak strength of schedule. Could a win over Tech have pushed them over the edge into the elite four teams that qualify to compete for a national title? No one can say for sure how the scenario where Tech and UCF did play last season would have affected the fate of either team, but it's undeniable that the game could've had major implications for the winning team.

Despite what could have been, fans still have something to look forward to in the 2022 game. Even though the Knights aren't in a "Power 5" division to which most successful D1 teams (the Power 5 divisions are the SEC, ACC, Big Ten, Big Twelve, and Pac 12), UCF boasts a high-scoring, pass-first offense that can give any de-



Photo courtesy of KnightNews.com

**UCF defender Shaqueem Griffin tackles Auburn quarterback Jarrett Stidham in the Peach Bowl, played at Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium. UCF's win capped an undefeated season.**

fense in the country a run for their money. Their offensive playstyle is a direct contrast to Tech's, as the Jackets feature a run-first style of offense through the triple option - in that sense, the matchup should at least be an entertaining one.

Even though UCF is coming off a historically successful season, they are undergoing coaching changes in both the head coach and defensive coordinator

positions. Scott Frost, who led the team to their perfect record in 2017, left the organization to coach at Nebraska this offseason, replaced by Josh Heupel, ex Heisman runner-up and former Missouri offensive coordinator. As a part of this coaching transition, Heupel is hiring Randy Shannon (Florida's defensive coordinator/interim head coach) as UCF's new defensive coordinator. With

the success that UCF enjoyed last year as an undefeated team, it is hard to imagine that these coaching changes will bring about major changes in the team's playstyle. However, after four years of personnel changes and the coaches grooming the team dynamic to their liking, the Jackets will be facing off against a new and, if they continue on their trend, exciting opponent.

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**GOLF** FROM PAGE 24

ishes in the Monroe Invitational and The Dogwood, respectively. Additionally at the Monroe Invitational in New York, Howe and red-shirt freshman Ben Smith tied for No. 31 and No. 58 in the field standings, respectively.

As many Tech students had busy summers abroad and completing internships, golf took full advantage of the break, continuing to compete and conquer over the summer months.

With the loss of a bid to the NCAA national tournament fresh in the returners' minds, they will surely be after a place in that tournament this season. Heppler will undoubtedly do his best to prepare the team, as he has over the last 23 years, but in the end, it is in the competitors' hands.

A fourth straight year left out of the cold when the NCAA Tournament rolls around would be a heavy burden for the players and coaches alike, especially given the Jackets' regular season success. With the influx of new talent and strong new members, however, it seems that this may be the year the streak is broken.

**CPJ** FROM PAGE 21

both football and academics, and so recruiting efforts can be handicapped. In that sense, I think the triple option helps with recruiting in that Tech does not need to land fifteen five-star recruits in every class to be a competitive team. For the foreseeable future, competitive football at Tech means the triple option, like it or not.

**Harsha:** I actually agree with you on this one. I do not think there are legions of four and five-star recruits who would attend Tech but have decided not to because we run the triple option. If you are looking for proof, look no further than the defense, which ran a pretty conventional scheme under Ted Roof (and had the benefit of Roof, a former college head coach, on the recruiting trail.) They were not getting top high school players left and right.

Sure, there are some head coaches who have such powerful offensive philosophies that they can convince recruits that scheme matters. Chip Kelly in his Oregon days, for example, was a visionary offensive mind. But those coaches are not coming to Tech.

And that brings me to the other issue with CPJ potentially being fired, though I absolutely think that should be on the table. In my opinion, it wouldn't be a great vacancy as Power Five head jobs go. The Jackets have had relatively recent success (the Orange Bowl season) so a new head coach doesn't get celebrated for making them nationally relevant again. Not to mention that a new coach would need at least three or four years to get his personnel into the program and developed. For example, he might need a tight end, which we don't have right now.

In fact, I would say the Nate Woody hire is pretty indicative of what we would likely get in a head coach. A relatively high-achieving non-Power Five coach who isn't courted by the big-name, blue-chip programs.

What would it take, short of an Urban Meyer/D.J. Durkin situation (let us hope it never comes close to that), for CPJ to be justifiably fired at the end of this season?

**John:** I think it would need to be a failure with the football program on all fronts. Tech loses every conference game except UVA and Louisville while the defense



Photo by Mark Russell Student Publications

**Paul Johnson grimaces after a game. Johnson's teams have failed to make bowls in two of the last three years.**

falls apart - and the Jackets pick up a few non-conference Ls along the way too. I don't think that will realistically happen though —I think Tech can go 7-5 conserva-

tively, and 10-2 generously (losses to Clemson and UGA). Even a 7-5 season with a bowl game victory should be enough to keep Johnson's seat secure.

# THE TOWER

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## Adidas, Tech football release new uniforms

**HARSHA SRIDHAR**  
SPORTS EDITOR

Nearly a year after the Georgia Tech Athletic Association finalized a deal with Adidas, making the latter the official apparel provider for Tech sports, the football team's jerseys have officially been unveiled to the public.

The debut took place on Aug. 3 in the rooftop lounge at the Hilton Garden Inn Atlanta Downtown, where invited fans mingled with Tech athletic director Todd Stansbury, head men's basketball coach Josh Pastner and a slew of football alumni, including former Tech running back and current ESPN sideline reporter Roddy Jones. Professional wrestler and former Tech defensive lineman Leati Anoa'i, also known as Roman Reigns, modeled the team's new look.

While the event was sparsely advertised, the reception has been largely positive. Surveys among high school football recruits named Russell Athletic as the least desirable outfitter, while Adidas placed second on that list. Likewise, Adidas ranked third in a 2018 survey of American consumers' go-to apparel brands, among the favorite brands for 42.14 percent of respondents. That number bodes well for the Tech bookstore as well; offerings under the Russell contract included clothing from Under Armour, Nike and a litany of others. In combination



Photo courtesy of Karl Moore GTAA

**A Tech football player models the team's new home jersey and gloves, whose interlocking pattern mimics that of a yellow jacket. Tech unveiled its new look in early August.**

with the athletic department's April decision to select a single shade of gold as its standard, the Adidas contract will likely provide greater consistency.

The uniform itself is not a marked step away from traditional Tech uniforms, perhaps a relief to some. Adidas, after all, has demonstrated no hesitation in changing the jerseys of historic programs, often to much-panned results. In 2012, Michigan foot-

ball's classic maize-and-blue jerseys saw the addition of curved stripes above the nameplate and the replacement of side numbers with the signature M. A year later, the Wolverines left for Nike. Before their departure to Under Armour, Notre Dame was similarly plagued by garish designs; they wore canary-yellow pants for their rivalry game against USC in 2007 and two-toned helmets against Miami in 2012, both far depart-

ures from their traditional navy-and-gold outfits.

But Tech's uniforms remain highly recognizable. On the home jerseys, dark blue numbering has been replaced by a gold pattern, one that Adidas says is modeled after the body pattern of actual yellow jackets. Save for stingers at the neck and shoulder levels, the uniform is remarkably clean. On the whiteout jerseys, which will also be used for road games, the

traditional dark blue numbering returns with gold trim. Adidas will also present an alternate jersey, to debut either later this year or next, per The Atlanta-Journal Constitution. That may be a navy-colored jersey, one offered by Russell but not yet by Adidas.

Athletic director Todd Stansbury's tenure is young yet, but the Adidas contract has been his best chance at a tenure-defining moment so far. While it is not an on-field decision like hiring a new coach or adding recruiting staff, Stansbury spoke of Tech athletics' brand image as a key point of concern at the time of his hire, and a new apparel partner is a significant step in that regard.

The contract is not particularly rich as Power Five athletic deals go, but for a football program that has not found itself ranked in the top 25 in the last two years and a basketball program that has a long way to go till it achieves national relevance, that was to be expected. The Jackets will not capture the interest of Nike, Under Armour or Adidas the way a national championship contender like Alabama or Clemson would.

What the new apparel deal has the potential to provide, though, is immeasurable — an increase in brand value among fans and recruits.

The early returns on that front look good for Tech. Before the first kickoff or tip-off, the athletics department seems to have scored a victory.

## Men's golf primed and ready to take final step

**EMILY DYKSTRA**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Tech men's golf team enters this season just as they entered last season — with a chip on their shoulder. After finishing out the season with its seventeenth ACC Championship win in North Carolina, the ninth title in the past 13 years and the twelfth under current head coach Bruce Heppler, the Jackets lost a spot in the national tournament by one stroke, a bit of déjà vu for the team, who the year before had also lost a spot in the event by a single stroke.

Tech will return three All-ACC members this year: Noah Norton, Luke Schniederjans and Tyler Strafaci all received the honor last season and are set to return this season under ACC Coach of the Year Heppler. Chances favor that the Jackets will progress this year to the next level with more experience under their belts and the hunger that comes with an opportunity denied.

Along with the returnees, Heppler has brought in three new athletes for the class of 2018. Connor Howe, Luka Karaulic, and Bartley Forrester all will add serious depth to the roster while learning from those that have been around a little bit longer.

Howe hails from Ogden, Utah and signed his letter of commit-

ment back in November along with Karaulic. Howe was ranked as high as No. 41 in his class and helped his high school team to two state championships. Howe consistently finished in the top 10 of multiple junior golf events in the past year and has his sights set on the PGA Tour in the future.

Karaulic ranked No. 180 in his class and No. 7 in his home state of Georgia. A Lawrenceville native, he may yet draw some local fans to Tech's matches. His last two years of high school resulted in an all-county selection, as well as showing as a Daily Post Super Six pick. While transitioning to his college career, Karaulic tied for 23rd at the Southeastern Amateur in Columbus, GA over this past summer. Karaulic's athletic nature runs in his blood — his father, Branislav Karaulic, was a 1988 Olympian for Yugoslavia in the 400-meter hurdles.

Forrester is another Georgia native, traveling down south a little further to Atlanta from Gainesville, who signed his letter of intent last April for the Jackets despite interest from some Ivy League schools. Forrester's name may sound familiar to Tech golf fans — Bartley Forrester is the nephew of Carlton Forrester, a former Jacket All-American in the same sport. In the younger Forrester's junior career, he was ranked as high as No. 76 nation-

ally and won multiple championships, including the Hall County Boys Championship, the Coal Mountain Golf Classic, and the Athens Junior Classic.

The three incoming Jackets will add fresh talent to the roster and should be sufficient in replacing the talent of Chris Petefish,

an All-American scholar, across the three of them. Although there will be growth and learning to be done, the three can expect to contribute to the team from the get go while growing accustomed to the collegiate playing field.

The Jackets were ranked among the top 10 teams in the nation in

the latest polls by Golfstat (No. 6) and the Golfweek/Sagarin Index (No. 8). Over the summer, Strafaci became the first undergraduate Jacket to compete in the U.S. Open in 20 years, while juniors Andy Ogletree and Luke Schniederjans each posted top 10 fin-

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Photo courtesy of Danny Karnik

**Members of Tech's golf team look on during a tournament at The Golf Club of Georgia. The team returns experience and talent as it aims to win a national title.**