

# Virginia

**2002-03 Record:** 16-16, 6-10 ACC, no NCAA bid

**Key Returners:** Senior guard Todd Billet, junior forward/center Elton Brown, senior guard Majestic Mapp, junior forward Devin Smith.

**Key Newcomers:** Guard T.J. Bannister, forward Jason Cain, guard/forward Gary Forbes, forward/center Donte Minter, guard J.R. Reynolds.

**Stunning Stats:** The Cavs were one of just three ACC teams to beat Wake Forest in the regular season, winning 85-75 Jan. 23. Billet made 54-of-119 three-pointers in ACC play (45.5 percent).

**Strengths:** Billet is one of the ACC's most dangerous scorers, especially from the perimeter, and fifth-year senior Mapp, who returned to action last year after missing two seasons due to injury, provides veteran leadership.

**Weaknesses:** The Cavs lost their best inside scoring threat and rebounder, Travis Watson, to graduation, and arguably their best playmaker, Keith Jenifer, who left the team.

**Best Case Scenario:** If Mapp and Billet establish themselves as a top backcourt duo and Brown and Smith step up to fill Watson's shoes in the paint, the Cavs could crack the top six in the conference. But the ACC is stacked, and unfortunately for Virginia fans, their team is one of the three teams that will most likely take a beating this season. They can look forward to the games against Clemson and Georgia Tech.



# Clemson

**2002-03 Record:** 15-13, 5-11 ACC, no NCAA bid

**Key Returners:** Junior forward Olu Babalola, senior forward Chris Hobbs, junior forward/center Sharrod Ford, junior guard Chey Christie.

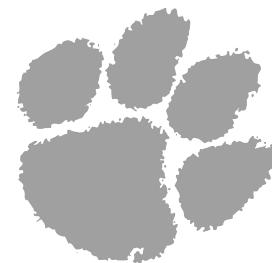
**Key Newcomers:** Head Coach Oliver Purnell, guard Vernon Hamilton, guard Jimmy Hudson, forward Lamar Rice (JC transfer).

**Stunning Stats:** The Tigers were 13-4 at home last season, but they were 2-9 away from Death Valley.

**Strengths:** Hobbs and Ford provide strong inside presence, Babalola is a gritty player and at the very least, Purnell will inject some new life into a team that has gotten used to losing in the ACC. The Tigers also have a strong home court advantage in Death Valley.

**Weaknesses:** The Tigers do not have a proven three-point threat. The only bright spot on a terrible squad the past two years was star guard Edward Scott, who graduated.

**Best Case Scenario:** If Hobbs and Ford can become formidable scorers and someone steps in to replace Scott as the point guard and sparkplug of this team, and if Georgia Tech and Virginia have poor seasons, then the Tigers could finish as high as seventh. But that's a lot of things that are not very likely to happen. The smart money says the Tigers will be lucky to win just a few games in the conference, and they will probably finish last.



# N.C. State

**2002-03 Record:** 18-13, 9-7 ACC, second round of NCAAs

**Key Returners:** Sophomore forward Ilian Evtimov, junior guard/forward Julius Hodge, senior forward Marcus Melvin, senior guard Scooter Sherrill.

**Key Newcomers:** Guard Engin Atsur and guard Mike O'Donnell.

**Stunning Stats:** Hodge (17.7), Melvin (12.9) and Sherrill (10.5) each averaged double digit scoring last season.

**Strengths:** The Wolfpack is loaded. Sherrill is a sharpshooter, Melvin can score inside and Hodge can score from anywhere. Even with the early departure of forward Josh Powell, the 'Pack won't suffer much, since Evtimov, who sat out last season with an injury after a promising freshman season, will return to the lineup.

**Weaknesses:** Someone needs to step up as a defensive stopper for the Wolfpack. Guard Clifford Crawford filled that role last year, but he graduated.

**Best Case Scenario:** Hodge is probably the best player in the conference, and if Evtimov fulfills the potential as a big man that the think he has, this team could have all the ingredients to win a conference. Unfortunately for them, the conference for whose title the Wolfpack is gunning is the stacked ACC. They will be lucky to get into the top three in the conference standings.



# Georgia Tech

**2002-03 Record:** 16-15, 7-9 ACC, no NCAA bid

**Key Returners:** Junior guard/forward B.J. Elder, sophomore guard Jarrett Jack, senior guard Marvin Lewis, junior center Luke Schenscher.

**Key Newcomers:** No significant additions.

**Stunning Stats:** The Yellow Jackets were 13-2 on their home court last year, but 3-13 away from home. Elder shot 39.6 percent from three-point range.

**Strengths:** Elder, Jack and Lewis provide clutch outside shooting. Schenscher, if nothing else, provides size as a seven-footer.

**Weaknesses:** Schenscher is the definition of soft. Tech will miss forwards Chris Bosh, who left for the NBA after one year of college, and Ed Nelson, who transferred. Not to mention the fact that with those departures, Tech has no proven go-to guy.

**Best Case Scenario:** If Schenscher suddenly learns to take advantage of his height and becomes a dominating inside player, the Yellow Jackets could finish as high as sixth in the conference. Even then it is a stretch to put them ahead of any of the ACC's top six teams this year. And if the Jackets can not find an inside scorer, then teams can focus their defense on the perimeter, especially shutting down Elder, and the Jackets will struggle mightily.

