

Graphic by Anika Kempe

Dear University of Virginia fans,
Greetings from Richmond! Perhaps you all are aware of a little football game that will take place this Labor Day weekend. Well, I am sure you are all very wrapped up in the reality television show frenzy about your football program and our former head coach, Mike London.

The series, "Virginia Football: The Building of a Program," airs on Comcast SportsNet and is produced by NASCAR Media Group. UVA. foots the bill as a marketing expense, in an effort to lure more unsuspecting and annoying fans to further their glorifying skills.

Why do you feel the need to document every mundane practice, training session and interview about your football team? Who's watching, anyway? Maybe Narcissus is watching, because we all know that the premise of the show is narcissistic, but that's about it. The show, in a word: excessive.

But yes, you will play host to the University of Richmond Spiders this Saturday evening. Where is Richmond, you wonder? If you travel a mere 70 miles east, you will find a championship-winning football team. Oh, you don't know what a championship is? Well, the stereotypical nature of your fandom certainly thinks it is a Bowl Championship Series contender. As cliché as it is, you may talk the talk, but until you walk the walk, rein your horses in, Cavaliers. In reality, your football team has not won an Atlantic Coast Conference title since 1995. Your BCS post-season record is dismal: 7-9. Our Spiders have been Colonial Athletic Association champions for two of the past three years ... not to mention that little Division I Football Championship Subdivision national title in 2008. No big deal.

Critics may call us "itsy bitsy," but we are unfazed. You may have stolen London from us, jealous of the success he helped create at Richmond, but we took your protégé as our new head coach. People may have their doubts about Richmond head coach Latrell Scott, simply because he is one of the youngest head coaches, but he has a tenacity for excellence and is ready to continue our winning program. Good luck winning any rings or hoisting the BCS Championship trophy, London. You had your glory



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with the FCS championship trophy, and got that bling as well. Best of luck battling to get into a mediocre bowl.

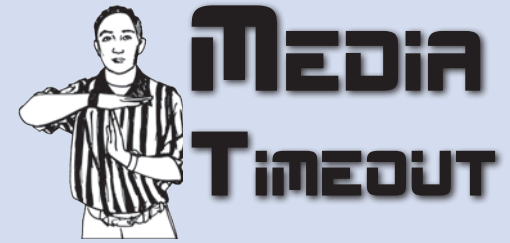
Yes, it was probably former head coach Al Groh's time to bounce, given his less-than-stellar records, but what does it say about your athletic program to go picking the best from an FCS school? Are other BCS coaches not available or willing to go to your esteemed university? Regardless of the inner workings in hiring coaches, we took a bit of revenge in hiring Scott.

An interesting fact to thicken the plot: Virginia has not won a season opener in the past four years. Really? That's not just depressing, that's just pitiful. The Spiders are 3-2 in the past five season openers. We have played BCS schools. Granted, the BCS schools for the season openers have been Vanderbilt and Duke (twice -- and we all know they should just stay inside Cameron Indoor), but Virginia lost to Duke last season, after we opened our season with a win against them. I say to the Spiders, let's continue this trend of beating an ACC school in the season opener. Meanwhile, UVA., by all means, please continue your trend of losing your season opener. Especially losing season openers to FCS schools

Cavaliers, or Wahoos since you have two mascots (which is a bit unnecessary, right?), heed this warning: FCS schools are a tribe, if you will, able to compete with not only the best in the FCS, but also with some of the worst of the BCS-league schools. Remember last year when you played the College of William & Mary in the season-opener? You don't? Oh, that's right, it has probably been blacked out of your memory because you lost 26-14. And you know what's funny? We, the itsy, bitsy Spiders, went on to beat the Tribe (or the Griffins as they're called now, but that's a whole 'nother discussion). Granted, it was a much more competitive and thrilling game, but come on! You are the elite and mighty Cavaliers! Surely you can kick the lowly FCS schools by the wayside with your high-heeled, leather, riding boots just as we have spun our web round them for the past few meetings.

So, Cavaliers, get off your high horse and keep your boots on the ground until you can put a ring on it. Which won't be any time soon, despite having London at the reins.

Lovingly,
Spider fans



By Amelia Vogler and Zak Kozuchowski

♦ Boston College linebacker Mark Herzlich has had his fair share of bang-ups and tackles, but none hit harder than his May 2009 announcement of his diagnosis with Ewing's Sarcoma cancer in his left leg. The 2008 ACC Defensive Player of the Year has been declared cancer-free by his doctors and he is ready to get back on the field. He still looks every bit of the 6-foot-4, 238 pounds at which he played two years ago, and his hair is back from vacation from chemo to cushion his helmet. Sports fans everywhere can add another inspirational leader to the list of cancer-beating athletes.

♦ An amateur golfer in Irvine, Calif., was more than hot on the course ... he sparked a fire. Forget yelling "Fore!" before an off-target swing; he should have shouted "Fire!" at the Shady Canyon Golf Course Saturday. The golfer landed a shot in the rough, but on his next swing, his club snagged a rock, which caused a spark that lit the rough ablaze and attracted 150 firefighters to the scene. Fire officials say the fire burned through the rough, into vegetation next to the course and over two dry, bushy hillsides. No charges were filed against the golfer, whose name was withheld.

♦ This year appeared to be the time for Arizona Cardinal quarterback Matt Leinart to shine. Kurt Warner's retirement left the Cardinal's QB job opened, and most assumed Leinart would be the man to land the job. Unfortunately, the former first-round pick was passed over for the start in the Cardinals' fourth preseason game in favor of Derek Anderson. Rumors are that Leinart will be traded to the NY Giants, where he and Rhett Bomar will back up Eli Manning. Now, he can continue to underachieve without the inconvenience of actually having to play.

♦ Fresh off waivers, notorious bridge burner Manny Ramirez played his first game for Chicago White Sox on Wednesday. The White Sox find themselves three-and-a-half games back of the AL Central division leading Minnesota Twins, and hope that the addition of Ramirez's bat can lead them to a division title. Even if it doesn't, they have to be comforted by the potential dugout fireworks capable to go off at any time. Manny being Manny, Ozzie being Ozzie, and post-season pressure should make for plenty of interesting moments in White Sox nation.

Misremembering: the downfall of Roger Clemens

I'd like to remember Roger Clemens' split-fingered fastballs, not the Feds fingerprinting him. I'd like to recall how he always seemed to make great pitches when he was behind in the count, not the one count of obstruction of Congress, two counts of perjury and three counts of making false statements that he now faces.

"I never took HGH or Steroids. And I did not lie to Congress. I look forward to challenging the governments accusations..." Clemens said on his Twitter account after pleading not guilty at his federal arraignment Monday. I understand challenging good hitters, but I don't know why you'd openly challenge the Feds. Their batting average hovers near one thousand.

ESPN baseball analysts have likened Clemens' dedication to clearing his name to the ultra-competitiveness he wielded during his 23-year career in the big leagues that made him one of the best right-handed pitchers of all time. Every time I hear this argument presented I cringe. That's like comparing Tiger Woods' ability to collect golf trophies to his knack for accumulating mistresses.

The saddest part of Clemens' situation is that he did not even have to testify in front of Congress in 2007. It was his choice, a personal need to clear his name that now has him facing the possibility of decades in prison. Just how large is Clemens' ego? I didn't have to go past the "Rocket Man" wallpaper on his Twitter page to find out. He's to ego what McDonald's is to hamburgers.

The strangest part of the Clemens case is the key witness, Andy Pettitte, a man who Clemens calls a great friend. Pettitte and Clemens were the staple of a rotation that won two



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World Series titles for New York Yankees, and then joined forces again in 2004 to pitch for the Houston Astros. They were both named in the infamous Mitchell Report, but the way that each man chose to handle the situation is where their similarities end.

Pettitte admitted that he used HGH to recover from an elbow injury. There was buzz about Pettitte's admission of guilt for about a day, and then he went on with his life. Pettitte has once again returned to the New York Yankees, and has an excellent chance to add to his collection of World Series rings this fall.

Clemens, on the other hand, has become a hollow shell of the hero he once was. He expects us to believe that Andy Pettitte "misremembers" hearing Clemens tell him that he used HGH, a defense that only Clemens seems to believe at this point. Even Homer couldn't have imagined this kind of hubris.

Very rarely do I feel much compassion for multi-millionaire professional athletes, but I do have some compassion for Clemens. I took so much joy as a young baseball player watching Clemens pitch, and trying to emulate his dominance on the mound. I never could throw the Rocket's fastball, but the fire inside me burned just as hot when I pitched. I still look back on the games I pitched in high school as some of the best times of my life, and I have Clemens, once my role model, partially to thank for that.

I don't care if he's guilty. Even though the spiky highlights in his hair make him look much younger, Clemens turned 48 last month. He's not a pitcher anymore, and after this self-generated debacle, he'll probably never have the opportunity to be a coach either. I just hope that he becomes enlightened, admits his mistakes and avoids prison time. Based on his approach to this situation so far, it's fair to assume Clemens has more issues than he can handle already.