



briefs



Local and VCU

Voluntary water rules lifted for Richmond area

Richmond-area residents are no longer being asked to conserve water.

Voluntary water restrictions that went into effect Nov. 3 were lifted Tuesday. Richmond's Department of Public Utilities said recent rains increased water flow in the James River, which is the Richmond area's primary water source.

The voluntary restrictions covered the city and the counties of Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover and Henrico. They included limits on when lawns and gardens could be watered and cars could be washed.

Drought conditions earlier this year, combined with higher water-level standards effective Nov. 1 for seasonal fish migration, triggered the restrictions.

Brief by The Associated Press

Va.-based aid group loses staffer in Afghan attack

The Virginia-based Christian Children's Fund is reporting the death of a

52-year-old staffer in Kabul, Afghanistan, in a suicide bombing attack.

The fund said in a news release that Mohamad Shar was killed Sunday when a passing military vehicle was attacked.

The father of six was riding his bicycle in the area when he suffered fatal injuries from shrapnel.

Shar had worked for the humanitarian aid group for 18 months.

The Christian Children's Fund has been in northern Afghanistan since 2001 and works under the name of ChildFund Afghanistan.

Brief by The Associated Press

Wilder School presents Excellence in Virginia Government Awards

VCU's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs will honor six individuals and two organizations for contributions to government and to Virginia's communities.

The awards will be presented during the Fourth Annual Excellence in

Virginia Government Awards ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 4, 2008, from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

The following awards will be presented: The Lifetime Achievement Award to Susan Aheron Magill, former chief of staff for Sen. John Warner The Innovation in Government Award to Todd Christensen, deputy director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The Public-Private Partnership Award will be presented to the Virginia Council on Economic Education and its executive director. The Community Enhancement Award will be presented to The Hispanic Committee of Virginia. The Hill-Robinson Expansion of Freedom Award will be presented to Gov. A. Linwood Holton, Jr., who served as governor from 1970 to 1974. The Unsung Hero Award will be presented to Brenda Edwards, senior research assistant for the Division of Legislative Services.

Brief by VCU News Center

National and International

Victim's kin file suit in Wal-Mart stampede death

The family of a New York man who was trampled to death the day after Thanksgiving by a stampede of bargain-hunting Wal-Mart shoppers has filed a wrongful death lawsuit.

The family also filed notice that Nassau County, on Long Island, and its police department will be sued.

The lawsuit against Wal-Mart and the Long Island mall where it is located was filed Wednesday in state Supreme Court in the Bronx on behalf of Elsie Damour Phillippe. Phillippe is the sister of victim Jdimytai Damour and is the court-appointed administrator of his estate.

Damour, a temporary worker hired for the holiday season, was crushed to death when some 2,000 customers stormed into the Valley Stream store.

None of the defendants in the lawsuit immediately responded to requests for comment.

Brief by The Associated Press

Police arrest aunt in Calif. shackled teen case

Police have arrested the aunt of a 17-year-old boy who showed up at a

gym shackled and terrified, claiming he had just fled his captors.

Caren Ramirez is the third suspect arrested in the alleged assault against the teen.

Ramirez, 43, was arrested Tuesday night after police received a tip she was in the San Francisco suburb of Berkeley, said Tracy police spokesman Matt Robinson. Tracy is about 60 miles east of San Francisco.

Police had been looking for Ramirez after they arrested Kelly Layne Lau, 30, and Michael Schumacher, 34, earlier Tuesday.

Lau and Schumacher were in jail in lieu of bail set at nearly \$1.2 million each. They were booked for suspicion of torture, kidnapping and child abuse. They were set to appear in court Thursday. Prosecutors did not know if they had attorneys.

Brief by The Associated Press

Zimbabwe police charge into protesting doctors

Riot police charged into a group of doctors and nurses protesting Zimbabwe's deepening economic and health crisis, eyewitnesses said this past week

as deaths rose sharply from a cholera epidemic blamed on collapsing infrastructure.

The witnesses said officers in downtown Harare ran into a march of doctors and nurses – some in uniform – who fled the police charge. A few blocks away, police stopped teachers trying to join the same protest and at least six people were taken away in police trucks, according to the witnesses, who declined to give their names for fear of official retribution.

The unions are joining a mass movement to press the government to respond to the worsening crises.

Men in the blue uniforms of paramilitary police armed with rifles were seen positioned atop several high-rise bank headquarters Wednesday, Nov. 26.

On Monday, Dec. 1, soldiers went on a rampage after they were unable to withdraw wages from banks, which have been short of cash as a result of Zimbabwe's economic meltdown.

Zimbabwe's state newspaper said quoted defense minister Sydney Sekeramayi as saying that rogue elements in the country were trying to incite violence against the government.

Brief by The Associated Press

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The Commonwealth Times strives to be accurate in gathering news. If you think we have made an error, please call Executive Editor Matt Doyon at 828-1058 or e-mail him at editor@commonwealthtimes.com. Corrections will appear on the Opinion page.

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Thursday, December 4, 2008

news



(From left) Rick Pascual, James Martin, Entesar Alrubaiian, Fawaz Alobaid and (on cover) Takuma Ito study in a crowded Cabell Library Dec. 3.

Stephanie Power photo

Stress relief, tutoring available for finals week

ANNAYATES
News Co-Editor

Exam week is fast approaching and students might be stressed or in need of academic help. To provide extended services to students, the James Branch Cabell Library is open for 24 hours until the semester's end. Also, dorms are implementing all-day quiet hours to facilitate studying.

Despite these extra services, many students come across last-minute problems while studying. For these students, drop-in tutoring is available the week of exams from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"We have anywhere from five to seven tutors during any given hour covering foreign language, math and science, the humanities, social sciences," said Jennifer Lee, coordinator of tutoring at the Campus Learning Center.

Lee said the tutoring service is popular and anticipates it will be used a lot during exam week. So far this semester, the Learning Center has 1,000 more tutoring hours on record than this time last year.

"We've especially had a lot of freshmen students or new students because of their UNIV classes," Lee said. "They've been visiting us as part of their class. I don't know what percentage of those students are UNIV students, but we've had almost 4,400 hours of tutoring this semester."

Sometimes, Lee said, studying for finals can be particularly hard for freshmen who have never taken college finals.

"I think that studying in general is an acquired skill," Lee said. "A lot of time students don't learn that in high school."

Tutoring is a good resource, Lee said, because all the tutors are A/B students and earned at least 40 credit hours.

"They've had some experience in college and most of them are more than happy to share what worked for them," Lee said. "They're happy to explore other options too if certain students are tactile versus visual learners."

In addition to tutoring, Lee said it is important to remember to relax during finals week. She suggests setting goals and creating a personal reward system.

"Say tonight you're going to study and ... you're going to get through X amount of chapters; give yourself a reward," Lee said. "Going to Starbucks or going to Cold Stone or whatever it is that you have fun doing."

Karthik Murthy, a biomedical engineering major, works with Project Reach through the Wellness Resource Center. Murthy, and others at Project Reach, have been handing out stress-relief goody

FINALS continued to CT4

Mayor visits student radio show on WVCW

STEPHANIE POWER
Associate Photography Editor

Sometimes all you have to do is ask.

Political science major Bobby Showah received this advice from his mother and took heed.

On a whim, he invited Mayor L. Douglas Wilder to be a guest on his radio show, WVCW's The Bailout, and nearly two months later, found himself shaking hands with the mayor.

"I wouldn't say I was freaking out or anything like that, but for him to walk in, that's probably something I'm going to remember for the rest of my life, regardless of the field I go into," Showah said. "He's such a historic figure."

Wilder holds the title of first-elected African-American governor in United States history. He has acted as mayor to the City of Richmond since 2005 and will conclude his term January 2009.

"It's a lifetime opportunity," Showah said. "We had Barack Obama elected the first black president and this is maybe one notch down, the first black governor. I can't stress that enough."

Wilder spent nearly an hour talking with Showah, even answering questions that dated back to Wilder's early years.

"He is someone who isn't the most likely politician, when he was younger he was going into chemistry," Showah said.

"Brown vs. Board of Education passed and that turned his life around."

Despite the fact that Wilder decided not to run for another term as mayor, he plans to remain active within the community.

"I will not stop being involved in social policy and community politics," Wilder said. "I will just stop being an elected official."

Wilder was a part-time professor at VCU from 1994-2004. He plans to teach full-time in the school of government and public affairs named after him.

"We've got a really good school here," Wilder said.

As far as being an inspirational figure, Wilder said he was "merely a vehicle" and like Obama, stood "on the shoulders of numbers of people."

Showah said he hopes to learn more from Wilder by taking one of his classes.

WILDER continued to CT4

WILDER continued from CT3



Richmond Mayor L. Douglas Wilder visits the WVCW studio at 817W. Broad St. Stephanie Power photo

“It’s people like him that motivate me,” Showah said. “Regardless of race, gender, religion, political affiliation. Anyone who can do that at the stature of where he was, that’s something that will stay with me.” Wilder said, “Do all that you can with all that you have.”

FINALS continued from CT3

bags, providing free five-minute massages and providing information to students about relieving stress and staying healthy.

“We know that finals are coming up next week and people are under a lot of stress studying for them, trying to cram in that last bit for next week,” Murthy said.

He said stress can get in the way of students preparing for their finals.

“If you’re stressing out, then you’re not really focusing on what your objective is,” Murthy said. “You’re not really focusing on trying to get that A.”

Aisha Oxendine, a nationally certified therapeutic masseuse, was hired by the university to give the massage sessions that were held at the Wellness Resource Center earlier this week. She says massages are effective stress relievers for students.

“Stress is the number one problem during exams and really it’s just good for people to just take a minute for themselves and remember to breath and relax their muscles,” Oxendine said. “When they’re very much in their head, it brings them back into their body.”

There is a connection between relaxation and performing well in school, she said.

“A lot of people maybe would have test anxiety or maybe aren’t getting enough sleep,” Oxendine said. “If they can get their bodies relaxed, it helps their minds function better.”

Jennifer Barber, a graduate assistant for Project Reach, said they prepared more than 500 stress relief goody bags consisting of tea, popcorn, pens and highlighters to help students study. In addition to these resources at the Well, she says there are other ways to relax during exam week.

“VCU offers plenty of things that students can get involved in,” Barber said. “They can go to the gym. They can take the free yoga classes. (There are) places where they can go, like the Commons, and just relax.”

Barber said Project Reach is helping students simply by reminding them that exams are coming up.

“Just getting them prepared to start thinking now about next week will help them manage their time for exams,” Barber said.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

JANUARY & FEBRUARY OUTDOOR ADVENTURE TRIPS



- WINTER BREAK SKI TRIP: **JAN 4-10**
- KAYAK ROLL CLINIC: **JAN 20**
- EVENING CLIMB AT PEAK EXPERIENCES: **JAN 29**
- CROSS COUNTRY SKING ON THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY: **JAN 31**
- KAYAK ROLL CLINIC: **FEB 3**
- EVENING CLIMB AT PEAK EXPERIENCES: **FEB 12**
- WEEKEND OF CAVES: **FEB 13-15**
- KAYAK PRACTICE (POOL SESSION): **FEB 17**
- EVENING CLIMB AT PEAK EXPERIENCES: **FEB 26**
- DAY DOWNHILL SKIING: **FEB 28**

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V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

Student urges local, global change through volunteering

MARGE WEIMER
Contributing Writer

Every morning Molly Farlow wakes up with a plan to make a difference.

For Farlow, a pre-nursing and math major, each day brings her closer to the month she will spend in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Farlow hopes she will be able to advance the lives of those less fortunate and bring forth positive change in a country where many individuals are all but forgotten.

"I got tired of waiting until I graduate to do something in this world," Farlow said. "I want to do something now."

That "something" has manifested into an intern-abroad volunteer program in Guatemala City through a global organization, Cross-Cultural Solutions. Farlow will make the trek next May, when she will be abroad for four weeks working in a health-care related field.

According to the Cross-Cultural Solutions Web site, "No other short-term international volunteer program has such a global presence and community-centered approach toward volunteering abroad."

Rachael Campbell, a nursing major and friend, volunteered with the same organization and says Farlow will have an experience unlike any other.

"Molly has a very giving, generous heart and a lot of patience; all of which she will need," Campbell stated in an e-mail. "There will probably be times when things are very frustrating (in Guatemala), but she will see the good in it and keep going."

Campbell has been a good source of advice and reassurance for Farlow who said that Campbell has given her positive feedback on the organization.

"Overall, it was such an incredible experience, and I think that anyone should try it," Campbell said. "It will give them a completely different perspective on their world and what truly matters in life."

Farlow said she is no stranger to volunteering and working hard to help others.

"I've spent six summers working for Work Camp fixing up houses for people who couldn't do it themselves," Farlow said. "We worked in a lot of the poorer neighborhoods in Richmond."

Traveling abroad alone doesn't worry Farlow because she said Cross-Cultural Solutions provides its volunteers with structure.



Stephanie Power photo

Molly Farlow, pre-nursing and math major, is going to Guatemala in the spring to volunteer.

"We will all live in the same place and go out in groups to different places in Guatemala," Farlow said. "It seems like it's a safer way to put ourselves out there."

Phillip Vaughan, a biomedical engineering student and friend of Farlow, said he isn't worried about Farlow but will be glad when she makes it back safely.

"Molly shouldn't have any trouble traveling alone because she is free-spirited and strong-willed," Vaughan stated in an e-mail.

Farlow said the trip to Guatemala will be expensive. She has been able to raise \$450 toward the total of \$3,200 and has been able to pay for her plane ticket.

To help get out the word about her trip, Farlow created a Facebook.com group called "Help Molly Get to Guatemala!" She said the page has already generated conversation.

"I started this group to familiarize people with what I'm doing, and hopefully to get fundraising ideas and maybe some financial support," Farlow stated on the Facebook group Web site.

Problems within Guatemala

- During the second half of the 20th century, Guatemala experienced a variety of military and civilian governments, as well as a 36-year guerrilla war. In 1996, the government signed a peace agreement formally ending the conflict, which had left more than 100,000 people dead and had created, by some estimates, some 1 million refugees.

- The infant mortality rate is 28.79 deaths for every 1,000 live births compared to 8.27 deaths for every 1,000 live births in the United States.

- There is an intermediate risk of contracting food or waterborne diseases such as bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A and typhoid fever and vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever and malaria.

- Of Guatemalans age 15 and over, 69.1 percent can read and write, compared to 99 percent of people in the U.S.

- Fifty-six percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

- Ongoing challenges include increasing government revenues, negotiating further assistance from international donors, upgrading both government and private financial operations, curtailing drug trafficking and rampant crime and narrowing the trade deficit.

- Mexico must deal with thousands of impoverished Guatemalans and other Central Americans who cross the porous border looking for work in Mexico and the United States.

- Human trafficking is a significant and growing problem in the country. Guatemalan women and children are trafficked within the country for commercial sexual exploitation, primarily to Mexico and the United States. Guatemalan men, women and children are also trafficked within the country, to Mexico and the United States for forced labor.

- Guatemala is a major transit country for cocaine and heroin. Its proximity to Mexico makes Guatemala a major staging area for drugs (particularly for cocaine). Money laundering and corruption are serious problems.

Information Provided by the CIA World Factbook

See you January 12

happy holidays

the
ct



sports

Cold shooting, turnovers doom Rams

JONATHAN HOWARD
Sports Editor

The last time VCU stepped on the floor at The Robins Center in 2006, the Rams came away unsuccessful against cross-town Richmond. In 2008, the Spiders were once again able to send VCU home with a loss.

The Rams shot 31 percent and committed 21 turnovers in a 56-48 loss Wednesday night. The starting five was held to 26.3 percent shooting and was responsible for 71.4 percent of the turnovers.

"I don't think we came out and played with the toughness and aggressiveness that we needed to play with, really on either end of the floor," VCU head coach Beth Cunningham said.

The Spiders jumped out to a 15-4 lead early in the first half behind an 11-0 run. Two Quanitra Hollingsworth (Chesapeake/Great Bridge) free throws tied the score, 4-4, with 16:57 to play in the first half before Richmond went on its run. Back-to-back baskets by Kita Waller (Gainesville, Ga./Gainesville) gave the Rams their first points in over six minutes and cut the lead under double digits, 15-8. Richmond took a 26-15 lead into halftime behind 10 points from Brittani Shells.

"Offensively, in the first half, Shells really opened the floor up whether creating shots or getting shots for other people," Cunningham said.

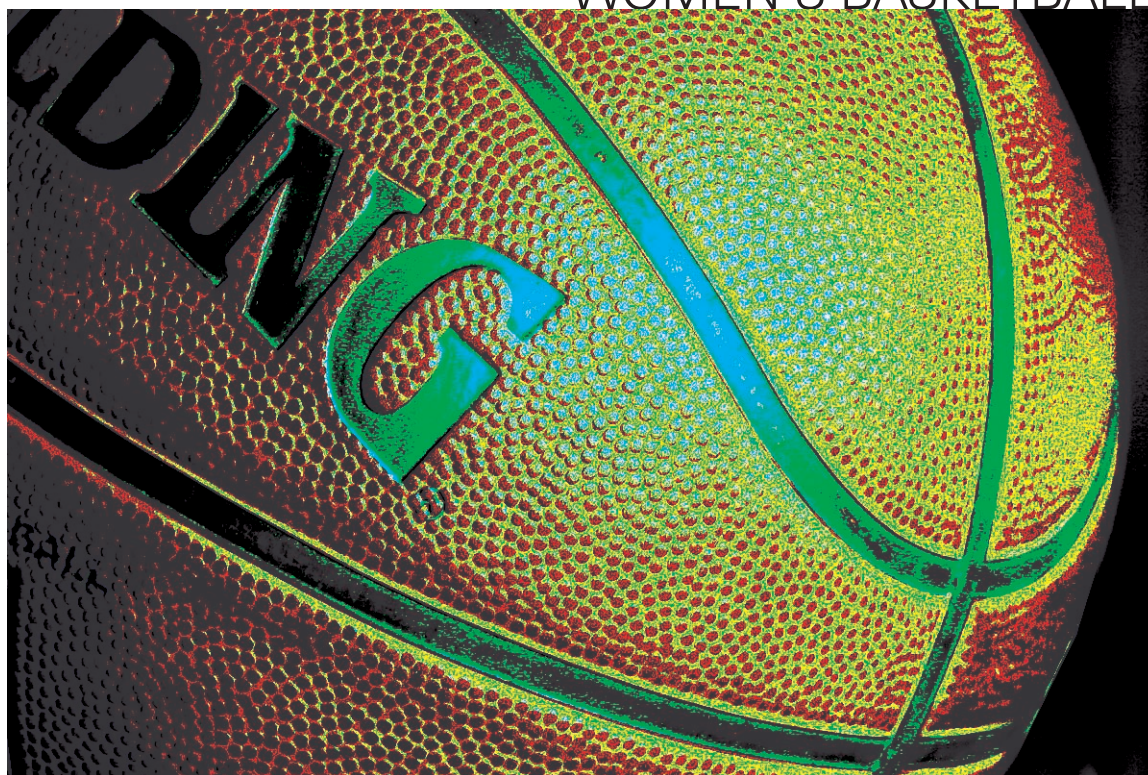
Shells and the Spiders shot 50 percent in the first half while the Rams were held to 20.8 percent. Both teams committed 13 turnovers.

Unfortunately for the Rams, there simply wasn't enough time in the second half to put together an effective comeback.

"It wasn't until the nine-minute mark that we started to play with that urgency that we needed to play with from the beginning," Cunningham said, referencing a late run made by her team.

After the Spiders stretched the lead to 17 with 13 minutes to play, VCU went on an 8-0 run to cut the lead to nine with nine

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL



minutes to play. After exchanging scores with the Spiders for a few minutes, the Rams were finally able to put together a stop and consecutive baskets to cut the deficit to 43-36 with 3:53 left in the game. However, the Rams were unable to get any closer than six the rest of the way.

Hollingsworth led VCU with 15 points and 10 rebounds while Waller had 11 points and five rebounds. Shells led all scorers with 16 points.

The Rams are back in action Sunday afternoon when the Georgetown Hoyas visit the Siegel Center. Tip-off is 2 p.m.

THE SCORE
.....
VCU 48
UR 56

By the numbers

VCU (4-2): Hollingsworth 15, Lane 2, Bachvarova 5, Rorie 0, Moss 9, Patterson 0, Waller 11, Taylor 6. Totals: 18 10-13 48. 3-pointers: Bachvarova, Waller.

Richmond (7-0): Shells 16, S. Bilney 2, Thomas 3, Bell 7, Goring 8, Tharrington 0, Oliver 4, R. Bilney 3, McKnight 13, Zygaite 0. Totals: 22 7-12 56. 3-pointers: Shells 2, Bell, R. Bilney, McKnight.

This week

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Thu., Dec. 4, vs. Western Michigan, Siegel Center, 7:30 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 6, @ William & Mary, Williamsburg, 7 p.m.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Sun., Dec. 7, vs. Georgetown, Siegel Center, 2 p.m.

MEN'S TRACK AND FIELD

Fri., Dec. 5, @ Navy Invitational, Annapolis, Md., all day

WOMEN'S TRACK AND FIELD

Sat., Dec. 6, @ CNU Holiday Open, Newport News, all day



Conference championships preview

MAC CHAMPIONSHIP

WHO: No. 12 Ball State vs. Buffalo

WHEN: Friday, 8 p.m.

WHERE: Detroit

LINE: Ball State by 14

SUMMARY: Ball State quarterback Nate Davis has thrown for 3,095 yards this season. That's 17th in country. Buffalo's defense allows 241.1 passing yards per game. Only 26 schools allow more. What that means: huge day for Davis. The secondary won't be able to stop him. Buffalo head coach Turner Gill has done a good job with the Bills, but they will have to wait at least another season for a MAC title.

WINNER: Ball State wins and covers spread.

CONFERENCE USA CHAMPIONSHIP

WHO: East Carolina vs. Tulsa

WHEN: Saturday, Noon

JEROME FOSTER

Associate Sports Editor

Conference championship weekend is upon us. Don't know who to choose in your pool or who to lay that big bet down on? Don't worry. The CT associate sports editor will tell you what you need to make those decisions.

WHERE: Tulsa, Okla.

LINE: Tulsa by 11

SUMMARY: East Carolina has the best defense in Conference USA and Tulsa has the offense. Conventional wisdom says to take a good defense to beat a good offense. In this case, though, take the offense. Tulsa's quarterback David Johnson leads the country in passing efficiency with a rating of 192.5. Johnson is also the architect of the No. 1 offense in the country. He will be the difference because he is that good and East Carolina is beat up on the defensive side of the ball.

WINNER: Tulsa wins and covers spread.

ACC CHAMPIONSHIP

WHO: No. 17 Boston College vs. No. 25 Virginia Tech

WHEN: Saturday, 1 p.m.

WHERE: Tampa, Fla.

LINE: Even

SUMMARY: This will be a game of defense. Both teams have defenses ranked in the top 10 in terms of yards per game. Boston College gives up 276.7 yards per game while Virginia Tech gives up 274.5. The offenses, which are among the worst in the country, will struggle to score points. Virginia Tech quarterback Tyrod Taylor will have to show he can throw the ball against the Eagles secondary, which ranks first in the country in interceptions. He won't and that will be the difference.

WINNER: Boston College

SEC CHAMPIONSHIP

WHO: No. 1 Alabama vs. No. 4 Florida

WHEN: Saturday, 4 p.m.

WHERE: Atlanta

LINE: Florida by 8.5

SUMMARY: This is power versus speed. Alabama has the most physical offensive and defensive lines in the country while Florida has the fastest team in the country. Alabama will try to use

their physical play to wear down the Gators while Florida will try to outrun the Crimson Tide. It looks as if Florida wide receiver Percy Harvin won't play because of a sprained ankle. It won't matter. Alabama doesn't have enough playmakers to beat Florida. Alabama's line play will keep them in the game but Florida quarterback Tim Tebow will find a way to get past the Crimson Tide and into the national title game.

WINNER: Florida, but Alabama covers the spread

BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP

WHO: No. 20 Missouri vs. No. 2 Oklahoma

WHEN: Saturday, 8 p.m.

WHERE: Kansas City, Mo.

LINE: Oklahoma by 14.5

SUMMARY: This will be a track meet. Both schools have explosive offenses. Missouri averages 509.4 yards of total offense per game while Oklahoma averages 556.7. Both defenses have shown they can be lit up like a Christmas tree. The Tigers gave up 56 points to Texas and 42 points to Illinois. The Sooners gave up 45 points to Texas and 41 points to state rival Oklahoma State. While both teams can put up points, the Sooners offense has more playmakers. Quarterback Sam Bradford, halfback DeMarco Murray, wide receiver Juquan Iglesias and tight end Jermaine Gresham will power the Sooners past the Tigers and into the national championship game to play Florida.

WINNER: Oklahoma wins and covers spread.

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Sports Briefs

MEN'S BASKETBALL

VCU fell to Vanderbilt in the finals of the Cancun Challenge in Cancun, Mexico Sunday night, 71-66. Eric Maynor (Raeford, N.C./Westover) scored 31 points in the game. Maynor also had five steals and three assists. Larry Sanders (Fort Pierce, Fla./Port St. Lucie) added 10 points, eight rebounds and five blocks. Maynor and Sanders were named to the Cancun Challenge All-Tournament Team. The loss dropped the Rams to 3-3. VCU returns to action on Thursday,

Dec. 3 at the Siegel Center against Western Michigan.

ALSO...

Maynor was named CAA Player of the Week and Mid-Majority Baller of the Week on Monday. In three games against East Carolina, New Mexico and Vanderbilt, Maynor averaged 28 points, 4.7 assists, 4.3 rebounds and 2 steals. For the season Maynor is averaging 24.5 points a game, sixth in the country, with 5.7 assists, 4 rebounds and 1.7 steals.

Good night and good luck

I was going to write something about this being my final opinion to grace the pages of The Commonwealth Times. I was going to find some strange way to compare my tenure as sports editor to that of John Elway as the quarterback of the Denver Broncos. For the sake of the few of you that put up with my writing, I decided not to. I'm going to keep it brief ... on to my final thoughts ...

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Everyone stop whining. Coaches, players and fans alike—stop whining. The Bowl Championship Series isn't necessarily a bad system. How do I know? The people who are in the lead aren't the ones complaining. Do you see Nick Saban complaining about the BCS? How about Urban Meyer? No, you don't and it's because the only people who complain are those getting the short end of the stick. So what's the solution? Win ball games and win your conference. Instead of trying to win a battle in the media, win it on the field. Yes, a playoff system would probably be better in the long run, but until a change is made, the BCS is what we have.

Until then, just win on the field and worry about the rest later.

NFL

Plaxico, Plaxico ... oh Plaxico. It seems not too long ago that I wrote something about him oversleeping a team meeting and being relegated to my dumb-athletes list. Well, consider him a lifetime member with a subscription to the monthly club magazine. I realize that in the wake of Sean Taylor's murder, athletes are trying to protect themselves in anyway possible. However, if you are going to do so by carrying a gun, at least have the proper paper work for it and the good sense to keep the safety on. If you cannot handle either of these things, at least have the good sense to keep it in a vehicle. Mr. Burrell, you fail. Shooting yourself with your own gun is slightly below making out with a relative on the "list of embarrassing things" list. Good luck getting the New York Giants to trust you enough to give you major dollars for the years to come, your suspension and getting that membership with the National Rifle Association.



Jonathan
SAYS

Student Ram Athletic Fund seeks members

JONATHAN HOWARD
Sports Editor

Are you looking for a new way to get involved with VCU athletics? The VCU athletic department has found a solution. The Student Ram Athletic Fund was officially started in late October of this year. Interested, with the help of Justin Jannuzzi, assistant director of ticketing and donor relations, we have answers to your questions.

What is the Student Ram Athletic Fund?

The Student Ram Athletic Fund is a branch of our Ram Athletic Fund. The RAF raises money to support VCU athletics, such as scholarship costs, recruiting budgets, facilities, and team travel expenses. The student Ram Athletic Fund was created as an opportunity for the staff to begin building relationships with your donors and educate them on the importance of donating to non-profit organizations. The goal for the initial start up for the fund is to have 200 members.

How much does it cost to join?

The cost to join is \$25, and that money goes towards the RAF and support of VCU athletic programs.

OK, I'm paying money, but what's in it for me?

Students who join the SRAF received a t-shirt, invitations to socials, early entrance to all men's basketball game, bus trips to select road games, and a membership card that is good for discounts at Qdoba, Village Café, Sprint Downtown VCU, Bandito's, Extreme Pizza, Bagel Çzar, Great Wraps, Jersey Mikes and 3 Monkey's Bar and Grill.

Yes, I'd like to join! Where do I sign up?

For information regarding becoming a member and payment, please contact the SRAF by email at studentraf@gmail.com or join the Facebook group, VCU Student Ram Athletic Fund.

A word from Justin Jannuzzi

"I see the SRAF as a great opportunity for any student who has passion for VCU to get involved. The plan is to one day make this more student ran, giving students more of a say. Our department will obviously lay the groundwork and oversee everything, but we want to provide students with the opportunity to get involved. The sky really is the limit with where this can go. Also considering this is our first year, this is somewhat of a learning process for our department. As we continue moving forward with the program, I am sure we will find ways to improve on this, and making it even stronger for years to come!"

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sports
Pick'em
Week
13

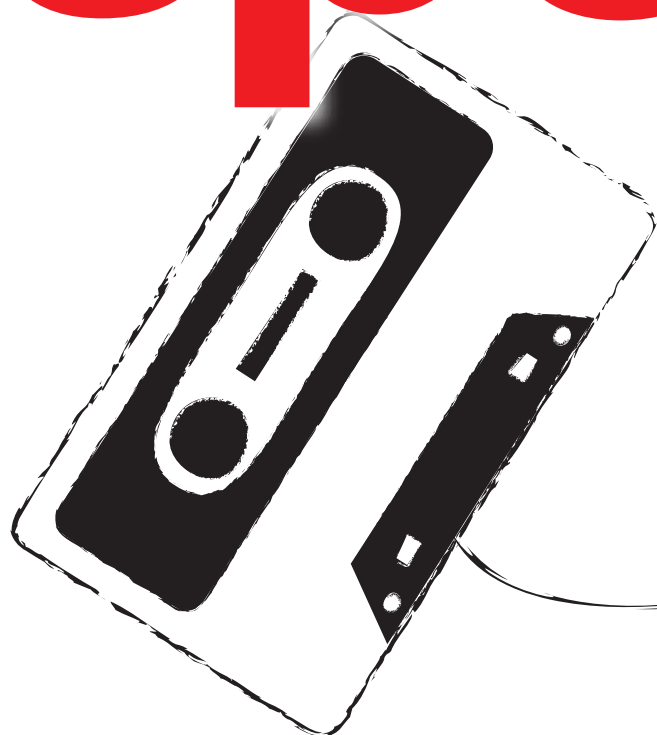
The final week ... the time for the winners to pull away and the losers to ... graduate from VCU and forget they ever involved themselves in a pick'em. After a 13-7 effort, Alex Dynan is in position to win the contest as he holds a two-game lead over Associate Sports Editor Jerome Foster and a five-game lead over Executive Editor Matt Doyon. Sports Editor Jonathan Howard is simply looking to end his career on a high note and not below .500.



THIS WEEK'S GAMES	JONATHAN HOWARD Sports Editor	JEROME FOSTER Associate Sports Editor	MATT DOYON Executive Editor	ALEX DYNAN Co-host "The Aftermath"
	(113-115)	(132-96)	(129-99)	(134-94)
COLLEGE	COLLEGE	COLLEGE	COLLEGE	COLLEGE
Ball State vs. Buffalo (MAC Title)	Ball State	Ball State	Ball State	Ball State
East Carolina vs. Tulsa (C-USA Title)	Tulsa	Tulsa	East Carolina	Tulsa
Boston College vs. Virginia Tech (ACC Title)	Virginia Tech	Boston College	Boston College	Boston College
Alabama vs. Florida (SEC Title)	Florida	Florida	Alabama	Florida
Missouri vs. Oklahoma (Big 12 Title)	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma
Pittsburgh at Connecticut	Connecticut	Pittsburgh	Connecticut	Connecticut
Arizona State at Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona State	Arizona
South Florida at West Virginia	West Virginia	West Virginia	West Virginia	West Virginia
Cincinnati at Hawaii	Cincinnati	Cincinnati	Cincinnati	Cincinnati
Louisville at Rutgers	Rutgers	Rutgers	Louisville	Rutgers
NFL	NFL	NFL	NFL	NFL
Oakland at San Diego	San Diego	San Diego	San Diego	San Diego
Jacksonville at Chicago	Chicago	Chicago	Chicago	Chicago
Houston at Green Bay	Green Bay	Green Bay	Houston	Green Bay
Atlanta at New Orleans	Atlanta	Atlanta	Atlanta	New Orleans
Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants	N.Y. Giants	N.Y. Giants	N.Y. Giants	N.Y. Giants
Miami at Buffalo	Miami	Miami	Miami	Miami
Dallas at Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Dallas
Washington at Baltimore	Washington	Baltimore	Washington	Baltimore
Tampa Bay at Carolina	Tampa Bay	Carolina	Tampa Bay	Carolina
N.Y. Jets at San Francisco	N.Y. Jets	N.Y. Jets	N.Y. Jets	N.Y. Jets

spectrum

CRITIC'S PICKS



Melissa Tablante Illustration

Holiday Mixtapes

Renditions
of classic
holiday songs

VERONICA GARABELLI
Associate Spectrum Editor

Along with endless amounts of shopping this holiday season comes another guilty pleasure—holiday music. Every savvy musician knows there's a market in seasonal cheer, leaving consumers with a wide array of music to choose from. Consider popping in this "Holiday Mixtape" on your way home for winter break and listening to these unique variations of vintage songs.

1. **'Little Drummer Boy' (Dandy Warhols):** The Dandy Warhols crank up the amps and spice up this Christmas classic with loopy, electronic guitar riffs. The low-budget 1994 video (pre-Thirteen Tales From Urban Bohemia fame) featuring a bizarre, middle-aged man running around in tighty whities and a Christmas hat is oddly amusing as well.
2. **'Silent Night' (Sinead O'Connor):** This haunting version carried by O'Connor's powerful, yet soft vocals is nothing short of spectacular. Discrete synthesizers fill in the rest, as O'Connor's peaceful voice lulls listeners into tranquility.
3. **'The Chanukah Song' (Adam Sandler):** After putting much thought as to whether or not I should include this song, I just couldn't help myself. Yes, we will hear this song approximately 10,000 times on the radio

this holiday season, but it just doesn't feel without Adam Sandler naming a boatload of Jewish (and Gentile) celebrities.

4. **'Ave Maria' (Dolores O'Riordan and Luciano Pavarotti):** Dolores O'Riordan is, without a doubt, my favorite rock vocalist of all time. However, I was unsure as to how she would fare next to "The Maestro" himself, Luciano Pavarotti. O'Riordan manages to bring unique, whispery vocals to this piece, making it her own while Pavarotti tones down his flawless voice a notch to not outshine O'Riordan. Opera experts might cringe at O'Riordan's lack of Latin pronunciation, but other audiences should give this rendition a shot.
5. **'Hallelujah' (Jeff Buckley):** Buckley's melancholy take on Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," strays from the original with impressive guitar-picking that is hard to notice below Buckley's sincere and luscious vocals. This beautiful rendition is worth a listen, if not for the last five seconds where Buckley shouts "Hallelujah" with such passion and conviction, it's hard to forget.
6. **'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' (Barenaked Ladies featuring Sarah McLachlan):** A perfect combination of God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen along with another Christmas carol "Kings of Orient." The Barenaked

Ladies provides acoustic chords and pleasant vocals, when McLachlan chimes in, making room for a sugary-sweet combination.

7. **'Panis Angelicus' (Chloe Agnew):** As a member of the successful musical ensemble Celtic Woman, Chloe Agnew delivers a spectacular rendition of this Latin hymn with her cherubic vocals.
8. **'All I Want for Christmas Is You' (Mariah Carey):** Mariah Carey's 1994 original proved to be a staple back then, and it's still bound to be played at every shopping mall across the country this holiday season. Though there's no doubt in my mind that I'll hate this song by the end of the season, I just can't start the winter without it. A bouncy beat teamed with Carey's almost-too-perfect voice, makes this song undeniably catchy ... whether you love it or hate it.
9. **'Adeste Fideles' (Enya):** Enya provides a flawless rendition of this song with the crystal clear and angelic voice for which she is famous.
10. **'Christmas Song' (Flyleaf):** The rockers of Flyleaf manage to clean up for this harmless Christmas song. Though Lacey Mosley's unique, high-pitched vocals can be too much at times, she manages to pull off this acoustic rendition quite well.

New wave for holiday dance floors

ROBERTO CURTIS

Spectrum Editor

Looking to cut out the marketable crap that saturates the airwaves and shopping mall speakers this season? The Kaiser Chiefs' latest release "Off With Their Heads" rocks so hard,

it is the perfect cure for your musical holiday blues.

While the British post-punkers' earlier releases front with a significantly harder edge, "Off With Their Heads" draws its strength from the thoughtful vocal harmonies, bearing a Dandy Warhol-ish quality. Ricky Wilson's vocals show a striking resemblance to fellow countryman Kele Okereke of Bloc Party fame.

Equally rockin', equally harmonious, the Kaiser Chiefs boasts a palette of timbres ranging from strings and hand percussion to vibraphones and synthesizers.

From start to finish, the album screams Clash, Kinks, and new wave punk in general. While some harder bopping, slower-rocking tunes like "Like It Too Much" might be a little happy for some, it does add a nice contrast to the grand scheme of the album. "You Want History," features fun electronic saw effects and fist-pumping lyrics: ("Don't stop moving/You mustn't stop moving/You can't stop moving/You must join in"). Songs like "Half The Truth" and "Never Miss A Beat" are epic enough to find their way from the headphones and stereos to a Richmond dance party near you.

Grade: B

Download (don't steal): "Spanish Metal" by the Kaiser Chiefs.



Heart-to-heart with Kanye

JUSTIN DAVIS

Contributing Writer

After a turbulent year, super producer/rapper Kanye West returns with the dark, emotionally charged and ultimately groundbreaking "808's & Heartbreak."

The album strips away the labels and braggadocio that West is known for in return for a cold, hard look at how someone in the public eye can deal with loss.

The concept of "emotional nakedness" – less of a buzz word than it seems – kept being thrown around by West during the promotion for this album. Accompanied by the Roland TR-808 drum machine and the polarizing, pitch-correction program Auto-Tune (popularized by T-Pain, who contributes to the songwriting of several tracks on the album) Kanye has developed a sound that betrays his usually sample-driven creations. The result is one that is half Portishead, and half Phil Collins—minimal, juxtaposed sounds meets strong songwriting.

And the songwriting serves as the album's best quality; such as "Welcome To Heartbreak" ("My friend showed me pictures of his kids/all I could show him was pictures of my cribs") and the Young Jeezy-assisted

"Amazing" ("I'm the only thing that I'm afraid of"), which portrays West cracking under the loneliness that fame has brought him. The ode to the cell phone/PC-password-checking girlfriend "RoboCop" stands out in particular, as well as having the distinction of being one of the album's most complex and peculiar productions.

"808's" is also particularly effective in that there is no rapping on it whatsoever, save a few verses. Armed with the pitch-correcting Auto-Tune (think T-Pain), Kanye puts caution to the wind and actually sings or harmonizes most of the tracks on the album. It's a jarring but energetic change for the album. Kanye has transformed from a mere emcee to a pop artist. As for his claim of "emotional nakedness," he is bearing his soul through a method that is of course, uncomfortable (trust me, he's no Luther Vandross).

Though dedicated to his own losses, "808's & Heartbreak" is Kanye's most down-to-earth offering yet, trading the Goyard trunks and the American Express Black Cards for a chance to sit in on his own therapy session.

Grade: A

Download (don't steal): "RoboCop" by Kanye West.





Ludacris launches best LP yet

JUSTIN DAVIS
Contributing Writer

Ludacris, or Chris Bridges to his Hollywood fans, is on the crux of a rare occurrence for most emcees. He has created a successful movie career and managed to stay relevant while still keeping his stock in hip-hop, even though he's still overlooked by many other artists in the game today.

Luda embraces this idea on "Theater of the Mind," fighting back his detrac-

tors while successfully merging the double-headed monster of movies and music into a conceptual album. Taking a page out of a musical script, Ludacris sprinkles guests (affectionately referred to as co-stars) throughout "scenes" that tell a different story, and for the most part, it works.

"Everybody Hates Chris," produced by DJ Don Cannon, features legendary comedian Chris Rock as Ludacris. Rock demonstrates his ability to be lyrically impressive and

hilarious at the same time ("rappers still talkin' [expletive] like they was rhymin' in farts"), while Luda flexes his muscle with Nas and Jay-Z on "I Do It For Hip-Hop" and stands his ground against the former foes-turned-friends.

If there is one thing the album does have against it, is that at times it feels bloated. There are only two songs where Luda rocks solo, and a few of the "co-stars" are head scratchingly random (Spike Lee?

Floyd Mayweather? OK ...) or don't accurately match up to Luda lyrically.

"Theater Of The Mind" is Luda's most enjoyable LP yet, and it stands as one of the top ten albums of the year, adequately proving that he's possibly one of the most slept-on artists in the game right now.

Grade: B

Download (don't steal): "I Do It For Hip-Hop" by Ludacris featuring Nas and Jay-Z.

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FSP : Franklin St. Pool
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Saturday

6

SC : 8am - 7pm
MCV : 9am - 7pm
TTC : 10am - 6pm
FSP : 1 - 5pm
CSF : 11am - 5pm

Sunday

7

SC : 9am - midnight
MCV : 9am - 8pm
TTC : 12 - 6pm
FSP : 4 - 8pm
CSF : 11am - 5pm

Monday

8

SC : 6am - midnight
MCV : 6am - 8pm
TTC : 9am - 9pm
FSP : 11am-2, 4-8pm
CSF : noon - 5pm

Tuesday

9

SC : 6am - midnight
MCV : 6am - 8pm
TTC : 9am - 9pm
FSP : 11am-2, 4-8pm
CSF : noon - 5pm

Wednesday

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SC : 6am - midnight
MCV : 6am - 8pm
TTC : 9am - 9pm
FSP : 11am-2, 4-8pm
CSF : noon - 5pm

Thursday

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SC : 6am - midnight
MCV : 6am - 8pm
TTC : 9am - 9pm
FSP : 11am-2, 4-8pm
CSF : noon - 5pm

Friday

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SC : 6am - 10pm
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FSP : 11am-2, 4-8pm
CSF : noon - 5pm

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MCV : 9am - 5pm
TTC : 10am - 6pm
FSP : CLOSED
CSF : noon - 5pm

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TTC : 12 - 6pm
FSP : CLOSED
CSF : noon - 5pm

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CSF : noon - 5pm

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FSP : 11am - 5pm
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TTC : 9am - 1pm
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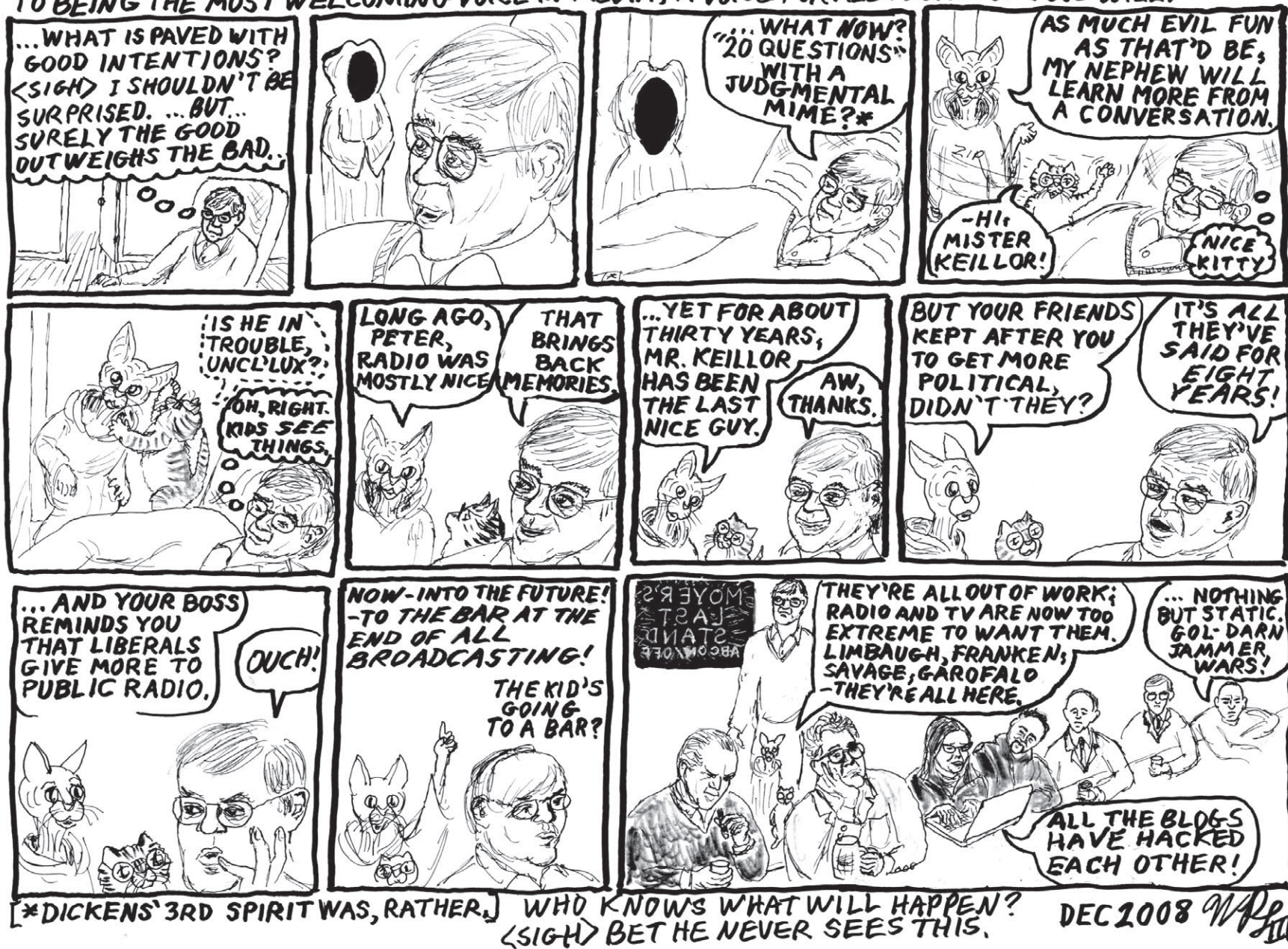
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opinion

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SARAH SONIES

Opinion Editor

Ignore anyone who ever said television is bad for you. Ignore all the rumors that television makes people dumber. Television does not make anyone dumber—bad television makes people dumber.

Remember the movie “Friday Night Lights,” released in 2004? Well, that movie has evolved into a TV show, which might actually be one television’s greatest creations in the past few years.

Ever since its premiere on NBC in 2006, “Friday Night Lights” the TV show has blown minds. Set in the fictional West Texas town of Dillon, “Friday Night Lights” looks like it is a basic football drama, but if the watcher can get over the shaky, documentary-type filming, there is an original series lurking around.

Except—nobody watches it.

According to the Nielsen ratings, “Friday Night Lights” has consistently placed below 50 in the rankings for both the first and second seasons. The lack of viewers has sadly forced the television show to scramble to find funding for a third season. DirecTV was the highest bidder, so “Friday Night Lights” third season appears commercial free Wednesday nights on DirecTV—and can also appear on a laptop if you know where to look.

However, “Friday Night Lights” will make a triumphant return to NBC in January to finish out the rest of the third season. It’s time to step up to the plate guys, and watch television gold—pure gold.

There’s Tim Riggins, the sexy running back who might have some sort of a drinking problem (but he is still sexy—if you don’t believe me, look him up), Matthew Saracen, the whiny, often misunderstood quarterback and all the rest of the pretty, pretty people. “Friday Night Lights” might be, in fact, full of coma-inducing pretty. We should be forever thankful that this TV show is in our lives.

A Sept. 30, 2008 article in The New York Times stated, “It seems especially apt that ‘Friday Night Lights’

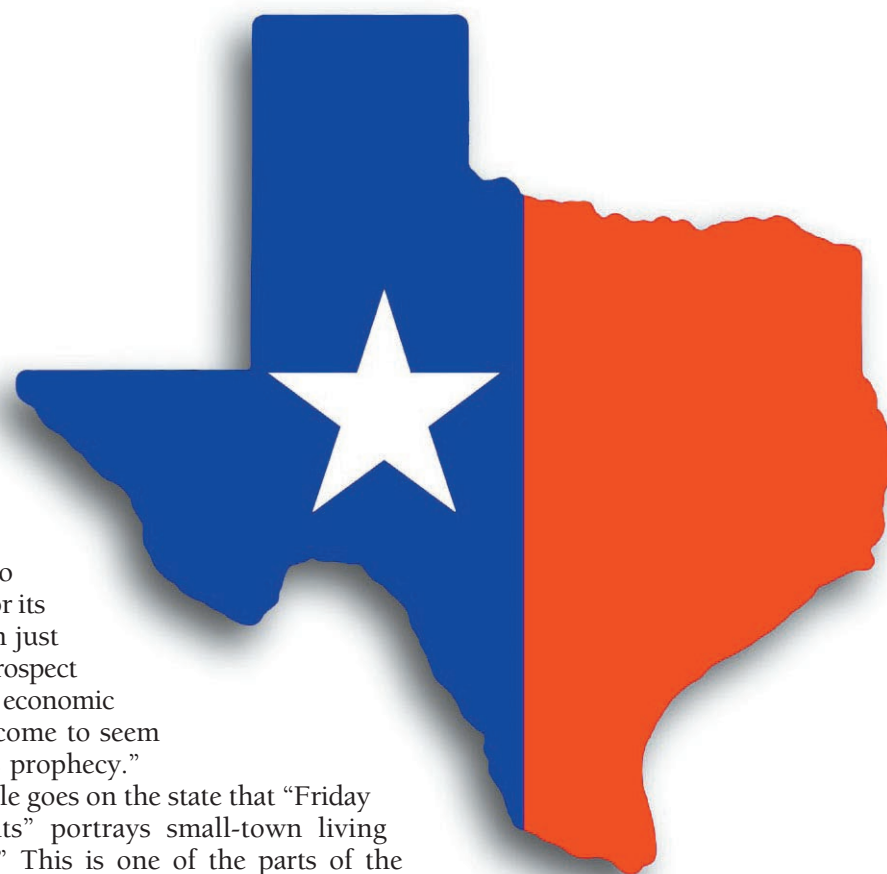
should return to television for its third season just when any prospect of a brighter economic future has come to seem like a fool’s prophecy.”

The article goes on the state that “Friday Night Lights” portrays small-town living “poetically.” This is one of the parts of the show that makes it brilliant—the power to make the viewer want to pack up and go root for the home team in a town where football is not only a way of life, but the blood that circulates through people’s veins.

Watch the first episode of Season One, and you will raise your Solo cup along with Riggins and original quarterback Jason Street when they cheer, “Texas Forever.” This sounds cheesy, but after watching the show I dare you to tell me it is actually cheesy. I dare you. If you have never expressed an interest in watching football before – real or fictional – this will convert you, but mostly just to fictional TV football. Arguably, it is the best kind of football, in all reality.

“Friday Night Lights” is in no way just a guilty pleasure. Even though the ratings are low, it is good television. For one thing, bad television is anything on MTV and “Friday Night Lights” is not on MTV—therefore, it is a good show by default. My list of guilty pleasures is about a mile long so I know a guilty pleasure when I see one.

We all must work together to keep “Friday Night Lights” on the air. The show returns to NBC this January. Turn on the TV and check it out. I promise you will not be disappointed. Winter break is coming up — a perfect time to watch the first and second season on DVD. It’s just so much pretty, mixed with epic football footage and plot lines that make “Gossip Girl” seem like “Dawson’s Creek.”



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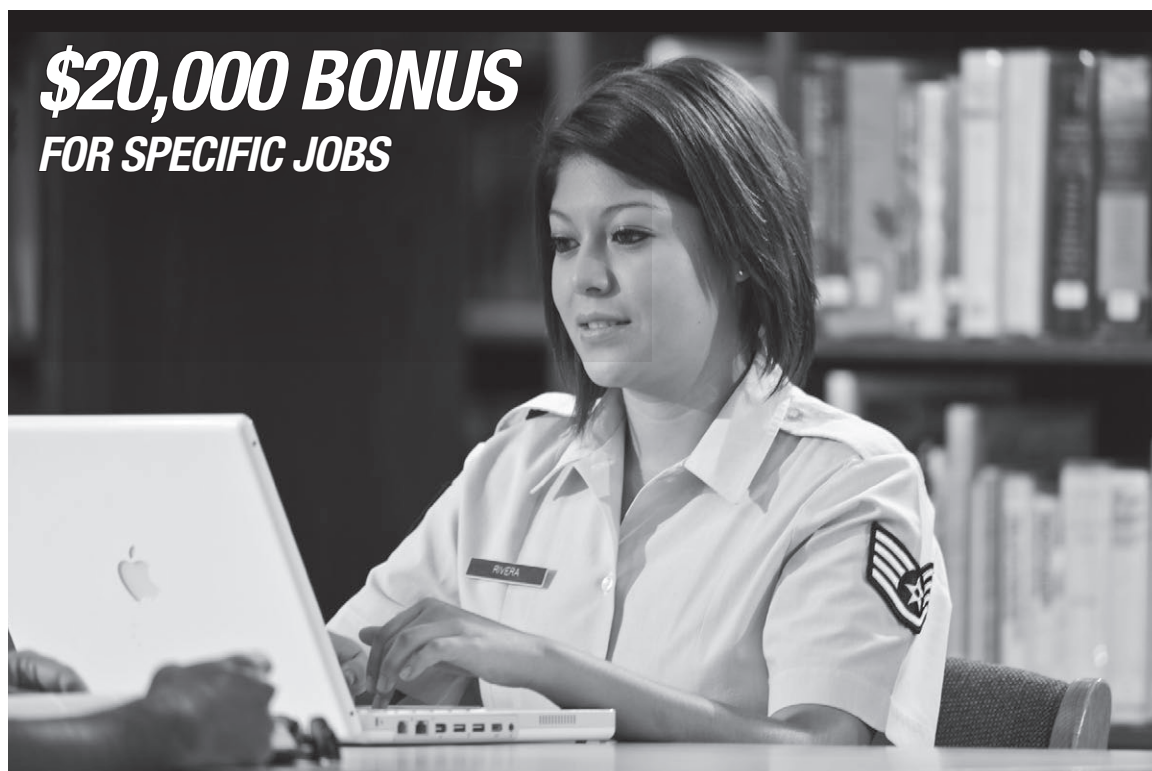
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