



Monday, February 13, 2012 Vol. 52 No. 35



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NO HOLDING BACK

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BRIEFS

On the cover:

ODU head coach Blaine Taylor is restrained by a referee during VCU's 68-64 win over ODU on Saturday.
Photo by Chris Conway

Local & VCU

Komen for the Cure affiliate gives \$587,944 in grants

The Central Virginia Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure has awarded 13 community grants totaling \$587,944 for breast cancer screening, treatment and education programs for uninsured or underinsured women.

None of the central Virginia grants went to the Virginia League for Planned Parenthood, which did not apply for Komen funding, officials for Komen and Planned Parenthood confirmed.

The national Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation recently faced a firestorm of criticism with the news that Komen would pull funding from Planned Parenthood programs that offered breast cancer screening and education for low-income women.

Komen officials said a recently adopted rule prohibited Komen from funding groups under government investigation. The only group affected was Planned Parenthood, which is being investigated by Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Fla., about whether public money improperly had been spent on abortions.

Komen essentially reversed course Feb. 3, issuing a statement that disqualifying investigations must be criminal and conclusive in nature and not political. The central Virginia projects were selected by an independent grant review panel, said Linda Tiller, executive director.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Union seeks to organize at VCU, U.Va.

A union affiliated with the Communications Workers of America is seeking to organize faculty and staff at Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Virginia.

Campus Workers United has sent letters to employees to gauge interest at the two universities and so far is “getting a good response back,” said Cameron Brooks, an organizer with CWA.

The letter cites concerns about the state employee pension system and lack of raises as possible issues.

U.Va. spokeswoman Carol Wood said the university upholds the right of employees to organize, “but as a state agency we are prohibited from recognizing or negotiating with unions. This is in accordance with legislation that was passed by the General Assembly in 1993 that prohibited collective bargaining by government employees.”

VCU spokeswoman Anne Buckley said the university is aware of the group’s efforts but had no other comment.

David Fauri, president of the VCU Faculty Senate, said he personally did not receive the letter but was given a copy by a faculty member who did. The issue has not been raised in the Senate, he said.

The VCU letter, dated Jan. 5 and mailed from Bowie, Md., said CWA has successfully organized unions for faculty and staff at higher-education institutions in Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Virginia Attorney General investigating Gingrich campaign ballot signatures fraud claim

The Virginia Attorney General’s office is investigating the campaign of Republican presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich, over claims of ballot signature fraud.

At the end of December, Gingrich told CNN that the reason he did not qualify for the Virginia primary, is because one of the people his campaign hired falsified a lot of signatures.

The attorney general’s office tells WSLs that the State Board of Elections asked it to investigate the claim. A spokesman for the attorney general’s office emphasized that the investigation is not looking into Gingrich himself.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

National & International

U.S. sex abuse lawsuit against Vatican dismissed

Lawyers for a man who was sexually abused decades ago by a priest at a Wisconsin school for the deaf have asked a court to dismiss their lawsuit naming Pope Benedict XVI and other top Vatican officials as defendants.

Attorney Jeff Anderson filed the lawsuit in 2010, claiming former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and his deputies knew about allegations of sexual abuse at the school and protected the priest from punishment.

Anderson’s firm filed a motion Friday in Milwaukee to dismiss the case. He says the main thing he was seeking was information and accountability, and he’s already received 30,000 pages of revealing documents through bankruptcy proceedings of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Vatican attorney Jeffrey Lena calls the explanation “ridiculous.” He says it’s confirmation the lawsuit should never have been filed.

Brief by the Associated Press

Some Texans are feeling fenced out

Max Pons is already anticipating the anxiety he’ll feel when the heavy, steel gate shuts behind him, leaving his home isolated on a strip of land between America’s border fence and the violence raging across the Rio Grande in Mexico.

For the past year, the manager of a sprawling preserve on the southern tip of Texas has been comforted by a gap in the rust-colored fence that gave him a quick escape route north in case of emergency. Now the U.S. government is installing the first gates to fill in this part of the fence along the Southwest border, and Pons admits he’s pondering drastic scenarios.

The arrival of the gates will reveal whether the government’s solution for this border fence problem will work. Can sliding panels in the fence controlled by pass codes allow isolated workers to cross when needed while keeping intruders out?

Pons hopes the gates will open fast. “Because, when is reinforcement going to show up?”

Violence has surged in Tamaulipas, the Mexican state bordering this part of Texas, in the past two years. Last week, the State Department issued a new travel warning urging U.S. citizens against traveling there.

Gates will roll open on a metal track after a pass code is punched into a panel on or near the fence. Landowners would have permanent codes and could request temporary ones for visitors. U.S. Customs and Border Protection has begun testing its first two gates and plans to install 42 more in South Texas this year at a cost of \$10 million.

Brief by the Associated Press

University degree scandal erupts

Facing pressure to bring in more students as North Dakota’s booming oil industry made it tougher to coax new school graduates into college, Dickinson State University began looking overseas to boost its enrollment.

China, which sends more students to U.S. universities than any other nation, became one of the school’s more reliable suppliers of young people.

But as revealed by an audit made public Friday, lax record-keeping and oversight resulted in hundreds of degrees being awarded to students who didn’t finish their course work. Others enrolled who couldn’t speak English or hadn’t achieved the “C” average normally required for admission.

The report depicts Dickinson State as a diploma mill for foreign students, most of them Chinese. Of 410 foreign students who have received four-year degrees since 2003 – most of them in the past four years – 400 did not fulfill all the graduation requirements, it states.

The report raises questions about whether public universities are cutting corners to attract foreign students who typically pay full out-of-state tuition. It also comes amid an unprecedented boom in the number of Chinese students studying at U.S. universities.

Brief by the Associated Press

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ADAM STERN
Executive Editor
editor@commonwealthtimes.org
703-965-9811

MEL KOBRAN
Managing Editor
managing@commonwealthtimes.org

MECHELLE HANKERSON
News Editor
news@commonwealthtimes.org

JIM SWING
Sports Editor
sports@commonwealthtimes.org

NICK BONADIES
Spectrum Editor
spectrum@commonwealthtimes.org

SHANE WADE
Opinion Editor
opinion@commonwealthtimes.org

CHRIS CONWAY
Photography Editor
conwayc@vcu.edu

EMMA BREEDEN
Copy Editor
breedenep@vcu.edu

MARLEIGH CULVER
Graphic Designer
commonwealthtimesgraphics@gmail.com

YING CHENG
Graphic Designer
commonwealthtimesgraphics@gmail.com

HUNTER NYE
Graphic Designer
commonwealthtimesgraphics@gmail.com

HANNAH SWANN
Graphic Designer
commonwealthtimesgraphics@gmail.com

SHANNON LINFORD
Webmaster
ctonline@commonwealthtimes.org

ANDY KARSTETTER
Multimedia Editor
karstetterma@vcu.edu

JACOB MCFADDEN
Advertising Manager
ctadvertising@gmail.com
804-828-6629

NELSON W. JOHNSON
Associate Advertising Representative
ctadvertising@gmail.com
804-828-6629

PETER PAGAN and JOHN MCWHORTER
Advertising Graphics Specialists
ctadvertising@gmail.com
804-828-6629

SMC STAFF

GREG WEATHERFORD
Student Media Director
gweatherfor@vcu.edu, 827-1975

LAUREN KATCHUK
Business Manager
827-1642

MARK JEFFRIES
Production Manager
mjeffriesVCU@gmail.com

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817 W. Broad St., P.O. Box 842010
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NEWS

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The Well offers free HIV testing on Valentine's Day

Michael Pasco
Contributing Writer

Out of all the at-risk groups in the U.S., college students have the greatest chance at contracting STDs. As a result, many other college universities have started to allow for their students to be tested for STDs, including HIV, at no cost.

Following this trend, on Valentine's Day, VCU's Wellness Resource Center will allow students to receive free HIV tests.

HIV tests generally involve a blood test, but tests using saliva or urine are also available.

The Well uses blood tests for their

HIV testing.

Normally, The Well offers chlamydia/gonorrhea tests and HIV/syphilis blood tests at \$15 each.

Because this is one of the few occasions where that price tag is not a factor, students are encouraged to attend purely for their own sake.

"Students need to trust that they are safe," said The Well's director Linda Hancock.

The Well has had HIV testing for about two and a half years but has been testing for other STDs for much longer. This is the first Valentine's Day HIV test

to date.

According to Hancock, event turnouts in the past have fluctuated between 50 to 120 students.

The largest turnout has always been on Dec. 1, which is also World AIDS Day.

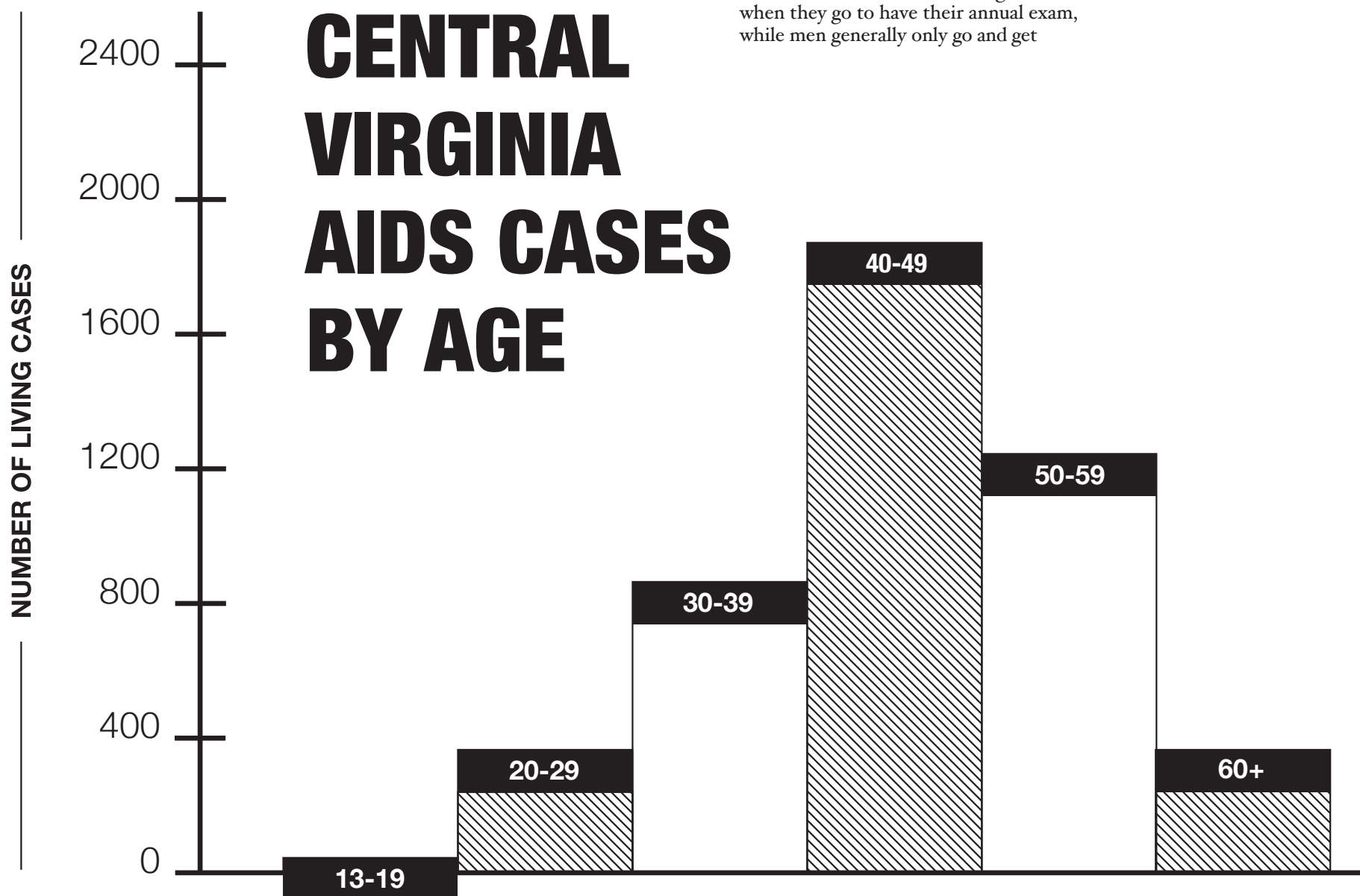
VCU's student body is about average in comparison to the rest of the nation when it comes to the prevalence of STDs, Hancock said.

Typically, more women get tested than men do because it is more convenient for females. Women can get tested when they go to have their annual exam, while men generally only go and get

tested if their partner asks them to or if they show symptoms, Hancock said.

This year's Valentine's Day tests will take place between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at The Wellness Resource Center. Any day of the week, students can call the Student Health Clinic (MPC 828-8828 or MCV 828-9220) and make an appointment for STD testing. **CT**

“Event turnouts in the past have fluctuated between 50 to 120 students. The largest turnout has always been on Dec. 1, which is also World AIDS Day.”



STATISTICS COURTESY OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
GRAPH BY HUNTER NYE



Moving off campus made simple with online resources

Eileen Mellon
Contributing Writer

With the spring semester under way, it's time for some VCU students to start thinking of housing plans for the summer and the following school year.

Off-Campus Student Services offers help and guidance on the important components related to living off-campus. They have information about seemingly easy issues, like roommate choices and lesser-known issues, like tenant rights.

The office offers online services

as well, where a student can create a profile and post sublets, find roommates and furniture and look for places to rent. Students can make a personal profile to allow someone to search roommate profiles and availability. It is designed to match students and tries to match students without housing with someone who currently has one. The database is run by a company called Off Campus Partners and works with multiple universities to set up a searchable database.

VCU student Lauren Mock said this particular feature helped her

adjust to Richmond when she first moved to the city.

"The database for housing is extremely helpful," she said. "I transferred here and found my first place through it. I was unfamiliar with the Richmond area and VCU and didn't know until the last minute that I needed a place."

The service requires landlords to pay to be a part of the service and allows students to comment on the landlords. The online system is specifically for VCU students, but guests can log on, though they are restricted from posting on the message boards.

Martha Harper, director of Off-Campus Student Services, said the main goal of the office is to inform and educate students about the proper steps they need to take when first moving off-campus. "Most students come in this time

of year about housing really unsure of where to start," Harper said. "This office is really good about sitting you down, talking to you in a counseling sense, seeing where you're coming from, what your lifestyle choices are, what your cultural barriers may be, to

different types of housing and all those types of pieces, and then we can give you the best advice possible."

Off-Campus Student Services will be holding programs on Feb. 13, March 6 and March 28, called "Moving On Moving Out," where students and parents can receive information about renting. The

program will include a panel of experts from all areas of renting including students, VCU Police, landlords, legal experts and Off-Campus Coordinators.

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"The database for housing is extremely helpful. I transferred here and found my first place through it. I was unfamiliar with the Richmond area and VCU and didn't know until the last minute that I needed a place."

VCU committee to hold open forums for diversity position

Mechelle Hankerson
News Editor

A university committee looking to fill the position of vice president for diversity and equity will be holding open forums to introduce their top four choices to the university community.

The forums will be held over a month, with one candidate presenting each week. Candidates will speak for 20 minutes at each forum and then hold a question and answer session. Videos of the presentation will be posted for each candidate on March 7, and online comments can be posted through March 14.

The vice president for diversity and equity is meant to plan, promote and advance a campus culture that fosters equity, diversity and inclusiveness.

According to the VCU Position Search website, the candidate will be knowledgeable in policies and procedures like affirmative action, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Civil Rights Act.

Candidates up for consideration are Sonia B. Mañon, Ph.D., Denise O.

Green, Ph.D., Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh, Ph.D., J.D. and Melva E.M. Newsom, Ph.D.

Mañon is currently the vice president for institutional partnerships, chief diversity officer and visiting associate professor of theater at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. Mañon's recent work, "Invisible Identity: Mujeres Dominicana en California," a video/photographic installation, was presented at the California African American Museum December 2009 through July 2010 as part of a larger exhibit, "An Idea Called Tomorrow."

Mañon will host her open forum this Thursday, Feb. 16.

Green has served as the associate vice president for institutional diversity at Central Michigan University since 2007. At the university, she oversees Multicultural Academic Student Services; the Office of Diversity Education; Native American Programs; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Services; and Pre-College Programs. Green will be presenting at VCU Tuesday, Feb. 21.



Sonia B. Mañon



Denise O. Green



Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh



Melva E.M. Newsom

Alex-Assensoh is an attorney and political scientist at Indiana University's Bloomington flagship campus. She serves as dean of the campus-wide Office for Women's Affairs and has authored or coauthored over two dozen scholarly papers, book chapters and essays as well as five books. Her latest coauthored book is titled "Immigrants and American Racial Politics in the Early 21st Century." She will be hosting an open forum on Thursday, Feb. 23.

Newsom, the last of the candidates

to present on March 6, currently serves as the director of diversity education and assessment at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research generally focuses on black women and white women's relationships, the achievement gap and blacks in higher education. CT

For complete biographies of each candidate, please visit <http://www.positionsearch.vcu.edu/vpde/finalists.html>.

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VCU Health System named a top nonprofit for executive women

Mark Robinson
Assistant News Editor

The VCU Health System was named one of the top nonprofit companies in the country for executive women by the National Association for Female Executives for the sixth time this past Friday.

According to their website, the NAFE selects companies for the honor based on female representation, hiring, attrition and promotion rates, access and usage of key retention and advancement programs within an organization.

"The nonprofit companies selected by NAFE represent what is best about the leadership of organizations who have set themselves up to move women through the pipeline," said Carol Evans, president of Working Mother Media and CEO of NAFE in a press release.

"They have given women executives the opportunity and have the women in top positions to prove it."

In order to be eligible for the NAFE award, companies must have at least two women on the boards of directors and a minimum of 500 employees in the US. Of the more than 8,600 employees at the VCU Health System, 75 percent of them are women.

Maria Curran, chief human resources officer and vice president of human resources and community benefit at the VCU Health System, said in a press release the hard work of the system's more than 6,700 female employees has led to the honor.

"Milestone achievements, such as the historical separation of conjoined twins from the Dominican Republic, are an indicator that our continued success ... is limitless," Curran said in the release.

According to the NAFE website, 80 percent of those who receive management and leadership training at VCU Health System are women.

"... We take great pride in helping our female leaders advance and in nurturing our next generation of leaders by providing the opportunities for them to further their knowledge and skills," Curran said.

A report released by the Working Mother Research Institute said that women hold 38 percent of the executive positions at the NAFE Top Nonprofit Companies. Nearly 50 percent of the VCU Health System executives are women. **CT**



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Contact Ben Burnes at
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SPORTS

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VCU/ODU rivalry the best theater in Virginia

Jim Swing
Sports Editor

NORFOLK — Even Hollywood couldn't have written a more fitting closing to this ferocious rivalry or a more suitable close to what the past month has been like.

The stage was set at the Ted Constant Convocation Center. VCU fans sprinkled into a sea of white looked to bring out the brooms for the first time since 2004. And ODU fans were looking for revenge after an all-out assault the Rams dumped on the Monarchs two weeks back.

These two teams know each other well. The small stretch of land on Interstate 64 separating the squads makes them inherent neighbors in the Colonial Athletic Association.

It could be argued that their fans are even more familiar. Minutes before the opening tip, VCU band director Ryan Kopacsi rolled by the ODU student section with his group's new album in hand. "Five dollars," he yelled as the packed crowd of student screamed and scoffed at him. The two fan bases know each other well, and the teams were their entertainment.

Loud music blaring through the speakers and a sold-out mass of 8,472 stood on their feet at the Convocation Center. The stage was set.

By no means was this game pretty. These types of matchups aren't for the weak, and certainly aren't for the faint of heart. When one team punched the other in the mouth, the other would answer with a blow right back.

In a game where VCU and ODU combined for 44 total fouls, getting up-close and aggressive became an afterthought to getting down and dirty. A three-point difference at the half meant only the best was yet to come. The Rams quickly stormed out to a 12-2

run with help from a 0-for-13 shooting drought by the Monarchs to take a seven-point lead.

The two teams went back and forth as the fouls continued to pile up for VCU. Darius Theus, the team's point guard and leading ball-handler, picked up his fourth foul with just over seven and a half minutes to go. Juvonte Reddic, Treveon Graham and DJ Haley each picked up their fourth personals as the half trudged on. For Theus, a native of Portsmouth, being relegated to the bench in the crucial moments of the second half was torture.

"It was hurting me so bad," Theus said. "Being a point guard you always want to go out there and help your team."

"Me and coach were going back and forth: 'Coach, let me get in. I'm ready.' 'No, I don't want you to foul.'"

The one lone constant — and one of few players free of foul trouble — in the Rams' lineup was lone senior Bradford Burgess, who was coming off of his best shooting night in months against Towson three days earlier. In what could potentially be his final game against ODU, Burgess took lead on the court. His 24 points on 50 percent shooting were just numbers on paper compared to his late game heroics.

With just under a minute remaining and VCU down by three, Burgess drilled a 3-pointer to tie the game at 61.

"Bradford, he just led the way the whole game," Theus said. "He was the best player on the court the whole 40 minutes."

VCU completed the first sweep between the two teams in the regular season series since 2004.

After recovering from a measly shooting slump that saw Burgess miss 53-of-76 shots, the Midlothian native has hit 14 of his last 27 shots dating two games back.

"He was phenomenal. The last two



Rob Brandenburg, who played 13 minutes against Old Dominion, defends ODU guard Marquel De Lancey on Saturday afternoon in Norfolk.

games he's had great bounce," VCU head coach Shaka Smart said.

"We would fall apart if he wasn't in the game, not just because he's our best scorer, but because he holds everything together from a communication standpoint and especially on the defensive end," he added.

As time dwindled with less than a precious minute remaining, Theus made arguably one of the biggest plays of his career, right in his own backyard. Theus took a steal from Reddic the distance and floated the ball off the backboard while getting drubbed by ODU's Donte Hill for the and-one and a three-point lead with 30 seconds to go.

Theus' father Ralph, donning a VCU jersey and a top hat behind the Rams' bench, turned around to the Monarchs crowd and flashed his classic "No. 10 is my son" sign.

Seconds later, Theus grabbed a long rebound and was fouled by Kent Bazemore before hitting two clutch free throws to put VCU up by five.

But until the final buzzer sounded, the energy never left the Convocation Center, and neither did the effort. Trian Iliadis canned a desperation 3-pointer with 6.1 seconds remaining to make it a three-point game. Briante Weber, a na-

tive of Chesapeake just minutes outside of Norfolk, stepped to the line with the chance to put his signature on the final paragraph of the rivalries newest edition.

Timeout.

ODU head coach Blaine Taylor pulled basketball's equivalent of icing the kicker by pausing the game just as Weber was about to grab the ball.

"I told him in the huddle, what a great opportunity. It's a big game, rivalry game," Burgess said. "Your home town, what better way to put us up and eventually lead us to the victory."

Weber slogged back to the line, confidence in stow. Buried the first shot with arm still hanging in the air. VCU by three. Second shot: good. The heart, soul and life completely drained out of the Convocation Center.

Rams 68, Monarchs 64.

It was 11 straight for VCU, and perhaps none were as fulfilling. Several clutch shots hit and plays made by a variety of different players gave the Rams their first sweep of the Monarchs in eight years. Burgess' 3-pointer, Reddic's steal, Theus' and-one and Weber's decisive free throws.

They all placed a fitting end to a fierce rivalry. **BT**



Top: Blaine Taylor is restrained by a referee as he gets a technical foul during the second half of Saturday's 68-64 loss to VCU.

Middle: Shaka Smart coaches inside the huddle during a timeout on Saturday afternoon.

Bottom: (left to right) Troy Daniels, Darius Theus, Juvonte Reddic and D.J. Haley look on as Bradford Burgess (not pictured) shoots free throws following Taylor's technical foul.

Blaine Taylor adds fuel to VCU-ODU rivalry with postgame comments

Quinn Casteel
Assistant Sports Editor



NORFOLK

— There's a long list of things that make the rivalry between VCU (22-5 overall, 13-2 CAA) and Old Dominion (16-11 overall, 11-4 CAA) great, but atop that list is ODU coach Blaine

ANALYSIS/OPINION

Taylor.

Following Saturday's 68-64 loss to VCU which completed a regular season sweep for the Rams, Taylor was less discouraged than he was excited for their next meeting.

"Despite the outcome and no matter what happened here today, the reality is when you go to Richmond, you're probably going to be playing for even more of the marbles," said Taylor. "They've got bragging rights for a while, but there still looms that possibility. It seems almost inevitable that we're going to have to win a road game in Richmond to try to win the championship, and that's just a fact, and we're quite comfortable with that."

During the postgame press conference following what was among the most painful losses of the season for the Monarchs, perennial all-CAA guard Kent Bazemore and teammate Donte Hill sat at the podium stoic and dejected, as any player would after losing a rivalry game of that magnitude. Taylor, however, admitted he was humbled but by no means ready to admit defeat.

"We've beaten these guys 11 times the last eight years," added Taylor. "Five of those times we beat them in Richmond, so it's almost like we've got to play two-for-one with these guys."

The ninth-year head coach, best known for his gift for recruiting big men, has been around the rivalry longer than anyone on either side and isn't afraid to add fuel to the fire, knowing his team has a history of winning in the postseason. Shaka Smart is fully aware of that as well, and said before the season at CAA media day that he thought Taylor should have been the speaker of honor instead of him, because the Monarchs were conference champions.

Although VCU and ODU both have long-standing winning cultures

which can be directly linked to their current head coaches, Smart and Taylor go about it in contrastingly different ways. Smart manages his players on and off the court with the discipline of a drill sergeant, but also the affection of a parent. During the season he bans the players from posting on Twitter and will never personally speak out, or allow one of his players to say something that might be perceived as controversial.

Taylor on the other hand, instills fire in his team and the ODU community by saying what he is really thinking. After Saturday's game, he meandered about different aspects of the rivalry while Smart only briefly addressed the X's and O's before making a subtle exit – and it is that contrast that creates even more friction between the two sides.

Several Ram players said this week that the VCU-ODU rivalry is more about the fans and the history behind the two programs than it is about the two teams personally not liking each other. That being said, the fans and other members of the programs could not be more open about personally not liking each other. The atmosphere in Norfolk on Saturday was similar to that of a UFC fight, and one woman in the front row of the student section even donned an "IH8VCU" license plate.

Smart and Taylor may not have anything against one another personally, but as competitors, they both embrace the madness of the rivalry in their own ways. Any Ram fan would praise Smart for being polite and politically correct, but every member of the Monarch faithful would back Taylor's comments – it's just a different way of going about things.

While controversial, Taylor's claims about the two teams meeting again this season are not far-fetched or even all that questionable. Having beaten the Rams in the CAA tournament each of the past two years, and being the reigning champs of the conference, he's in a position to have confidence.

He should be careful however, because right now, as even Taylor himself admitted, VCU has the marbles – and the bragging rights. **CT**



Photo Essay

Chris Conway
Photo Editor

VCU fans should take a few tips from ODU on how to execute a proper white out, because Monarch fans showed up looking as white as the snow falling outside the Ted Constant Center on Saturday afternoon. As a freshman photographer, who never said no to a chance to cover VCU basketball, I was lucky enough to travel to last year's defeat of the Monarchs on their home court, so the environment was not a new one for me. Although, I still have yet to understand the "Ice Cream and Cake" song/dance (look on YouTube) that ODU fans insist on participating in, and I am open to explanation.





Women's basketball falls short against JMU

Jim Swing
Sports Editor

For a sizable portion of the afternoon, it seemed as if the VCU women's basketball team was playing catch up.

Lost footing and fumbled passes created turnover after turnover, which allowed James Madison to grab the upper hand in nearly every aspect of the game. And when opportunities finally surfaced for the Rams, they weren't seized and eventually led to a dispiriting 65-64 loss to the Dukes in front of the Siegel Center's largest crowd of the season.

The initial setback was the first half in and of itself. VCU senior forward Courtney Hurt struggled to find her footing on the court literally and metaphorically. Hurt shot a measly 0-for-4 from the floor and turned the ball over five times in the first half.

JMU head coach Kenny Brooks said his team never sets out to shut Hurt down, but attributed success to their measure.

"I think our length bothers her, and when I say bothers her, it makes it tougher for her," he said. "She has to shoot over top of us."

The Dukes on the other hand, made the basket look like an ocean, pouring in 31 first half points on 13-of-28 shooting to take a seven-point lead into the break.

But much to the Dukes chagrin, VCU mustered up a 15-2 run to take a two-point lead midway through the second half.

Hurt got going and used it to go on a tear. She ripped off 15 second-half points to add to her tally of 19 on the day to go with 17 rebounds for her 15th double-double of the season.

"I think Courtney had a different mentality in the second half for whatever reason," VCU head coach Beth Cunningham said. "It wasn't like we

were necessarily running anything differently."

Still, it wasn't enough. JMU fired back with punches of its own, making it a tit-for-tat ball game down the final stretch. The Rams had taken the lead. They were able to limit the amount of turnovers in the second half and get Hurt rolling, and still it came down to the final few possessions.

With just over half a minute remaining and JMU holding on to a one-point lead, Chelsea Snyder tried to fight the shot clock with a turn-around jumper that clanked off the opposite side of the rim.

The Dukes had the ball with just over a four second difference between the game clock and shot clock. Defense held steady for the Rams, who forced JMU to the buzzer and got the rebound across halfcourt for a timeout, salvaging one final possession with 0.9 left on the clock.

Andrea Barbour stood at midcourt with Dukes' 6-foot-4-inch center Rachel Connely towering over her. Barbour couldn't find the look she wanted, and called timeout.

It wasn't enough.

Barbour held onto the ball for nearly every last second of the inbound before forcibly throwing a muffed pass at the feet of Robyn Hobson, who got her final shot partially blocked, falling short of the rim.

It was a tale of two halves for VCU, which fell to 14-10 on the season and 7-6 in the CAA. One that was shoddy and full of mistakes. And the other that was used trying to make up for those mistakes.

"In the second half I think there was more of a sense of urgency to do some of the things that we had talked about," Cunningham said. "A lot of these games come down to a very thin margin for error." **CT**



Top left:
Andrea Barbour scored 16 points in VCU's loss to JMU.

Middle:
Christina Carter fights for a loose ball Sunday afternoon.

Bottom:
Beth Cunningham's teams have now lost nine straight to the Dukes.

SPECTRUM

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LOOK AT THIS CT LOVE CONNECTION!

CT blind-date recipients revealed

After weeks of combing the VCU public for candidates followed by long, arduous nights of compatibility analysis and DNA testing, the work of CT loveologists has finally yielded results.

On Tuesday night, Feb. 14, the two soon-to-be lovebirds pictured and profiled below will be chauffeured away for an evening of frightfully expensive dinner and activities for two, courtesy of the Commonwealth Times. Readers can experience each exhilarating moment of their joy vicariously by tuning in to **play-by-play CT date coverage** in this Thursday's Spectrum, Feb. 16.



PHOTOS BY MEL KOBRAN

NICK FAGAN
Sophomore, sculpture

WHAT HE SENT US:

About You: I'm an art student at VCU, and I am loving it. I'm a pretty chill guy who likes to hang out with my buddies and likes to meet new people. I love music. I don't play anything. I like a lot of indie stuff and chill wave.

What You're Looking For: Cute girl who is chill and likes art. Someone who is easy to talk to and fun to be around.

NF I really like to work with my hands. ... I pretty much came here because it's a really good school for sculpture. I had a really good time with my teachers in AFO. It's like a community down there. It's really fun to just be there and work.

CT *What have you worked on recently?*

NF I work in series a lot, so the subject matter changes. But right now I'm really interested in, like, the internet and blogging. Blog stars, people who just blog a lot, and (how people) try to idolize them.

CT *Do you think Facebook is on its way out?*

NF No. ... No.

CT *Tell us about a typical week for Nick Fagan.*

NF Well, this weekend I was actually celebrating. I got into an art show in Virginia Beach.

CT *Oh, congratulations.*

Nick's interview continued on the left of page 11



PHOTOS BY AMBER-LYNN TABER

AMELIA KIRBY
Freshman, international social justice

WHAT SHE SENT US:

Hi, CT!

My name is Amelia Kirby, and I hail from Leesburg, Va. I'm a freshman here at VCU and majoring in International Social Justice. I row on the VCU Crew team, something that takes up a lot of my time but is also the best part of my everyday life. After I graduate, I plan on either doing something with my degree and working for a nonprofit or the State Dept., etc. If not, I plan on traveling to Switzerland and working on the Olympic Committee for rowing.

I'm looking for a man who's as active as I am. I run, hike, swim, rock climb and work out constantly, and I want someone I can do these things with. Outdoorsy and healthy men are very attractive to me. They also need to be well-read and able to discuss intelligent things with me, not some ding dong that doesn't even read things assigned in class (but not pretentious either). I tend to lean towards taller guys (I'm 5 feet 6 inches tall), but honestly a good personality can compensate for that. Most importantly, they just need to be really nice and have a great sense of humor. I love laughing and making other people laugh. And he must love dogs. But actually, that's not a joke.

I hope you can hook me up!

AK I have an interest in different cultures and societies and stuff, but ... it's also a little deeper than that. I look forward to helping people, but I don't have the medical skills to do Doctors Without Borders or anything or the interest really. I'm mostly interested in people's experiences and the betterment of that, and such.

CT *How did you come to sign up for the date of your life?*

AK I applied half on a whim and half "Oh, that'd be fun, actually." I didn't want to take it completely seriously because I have too much pride. I feel like I'm outgoing enough that it doesn't freak me out as much as it could.

CT *How has Richmond treated you your first year here?*

AK Actually the weird thing that I've noticed in Richmond is that ... when people make comments to you on the street, they're rarely rude. They're usually like, "Have a great day" or "bless ya" or "peace and blessin's." ... But then there's the homeless guy that meows at people on bikes. Have you seen that guy? He's like <meows>.

CT *There's a guy that quacks.*

AK Yeah. I think it's probably the same person. Looks like Cornell West? Maybe he's extended his repertory.

CT *What sticks out in your head as your greatest success in life?*

AK Greatest success would be graduating high school and then having the ambition to move to college because that wasn't always what I wanted. I didn't want

Amelia's interview continued on the right of page 11



Nick, cont'd from page 10

NF But pretty much I'm always in the studio. About 12 hours, usually, in a day. ... Just working constantly. And when the weekend rolls around, like, I usually just go out, like go buck wild. Go to parties. Nonstop. ... Until I have to get work done.

CT *Life on the edge.*

NF I'm also really into biking. I bike a lot. And also I'm into casual rock climbing.

CT *Think back over the story of your life. What would you consider your biggest success? Your proudest moment.*

NF Probably the first time selling my art for a lot of money. It was in high school. It was just this weird drawing I did, but someone bought it for like 300 bucks. I was pretty pumped about that. I didn't even know the person. So that was like ... <vocalization of amazement>. ... She was from Austin, Texas, and just like saw my stuff on Facebook and was like, "I have to have this."

CT *This might be harder. Tell us about your biggest disappointment.*

NF Hmm. That's hard.

CT *Don't think too hard. When you think "failure," what comes to mind?*

NF I guess I tried really hard with this one girl, like a year back. Like, did the whole thing. Like, dates, and all that. But never got anywhere. Just tried my ass off and nothing happened.

CT *Was there a specific moment when this realization occurred?*

NF Like, where I knew I failed?

CT *Or was it more diffuse than that?*

NF I remember I was at a party. ... It was this Christmas party, and I had a red blazer on. I asked a friend about (the girl), and he was like, "Honestly, she's just not into you." I was so pissed. And there was this blazing trash-can fire outside. And I just threw my blazer in the fire because I was so pissed.

CT *Whoa.*

NF And people were just like, "Yeah, he's just like throwing things into the fire now." I was just so pissed in a drunken ... mess.

CT *Assuming that a hypothetical young lady is, in fact, into you – what would your ideal date with her be like?*

NF You'd first go on a bike ride somewhere, like a pretty chill ride, like to some food place, like a food cart or something. Pretty mellow. ... And then keep on biking to some cool, like, spot, where you can just explore for a while. And as it gets darker you just go back to someone's house, where you like, watch a couple movies, and like ... jam out.

CT *Jam out.*

NF On like, some music. Just listen to music and go like f---ing apeshit, like in a room. ... And, I don't know, sleep and cuddle. And build a fort. That would be great.

CT *What is the most private information about yourself you'd be willing to share with the greater VCU community? ... Don't think too hard.*

NF I guess one time I like ran out of a room naked to get a condom. ... I had a flannel covering my front and the rest just buck naked, and I ran outside this house and knocked on the door next door. There were plenty of people there. I was just like, "Does anyone have a condom?"

CT *That's very responsible of you.*

NF I was like, "I don't care right now. I don't know these people."

CT *And you did get one?*

NF Yeah. I did. ... Also, I just got a rat tail. Can you put that in there? I just cut it last night. <turns around to reveal rat tail>

CT *Oh that is charming.*

NF Some lucky lady's gonna be real happy about that one. **CT**

Amelia, cont'd from page 10

to go until my senior year, I think, and I was like, "S---, wait – what else am I going to do?" ... I went through phases where I was like, "I'm just gonna do whatever, like roller blade across America" or something.

I kind of realized that I wanted to learn more, and I wanted an education. And that I wasn't going to get that from, like ... sitting around and not contributing or making myself a better person. When I realized that, it was a big thing.

CT *I'm interested to know if you have any stand-out childhood traumas.*

AK In elementary school, I actually used to wear ... dark purplish brown overalls. Every day. But this is without a shirt underneath them - until I was in, like, the fifth grade. I don't understand why my mom – I don't even know how to describe them. My mom has these pictures.

I remember I got a tutu for Christmas or something. And I'm wearing my stupid overalls, and I put on my tutu over my overalls.

CT *That sounds adorable, actually.*

AK And then ... I had a really bad habit of cutting my own hair. ... And other people's hair. And of course I was obsessed with the Spice Girls. Baby Spice was my favorite. And she was famous for having those two really blond pigtails.

At the time I guess I just didn't understand the dynamic of a pigtail, because I thought they were ... oh, this is so bad.

CT *It's okay. You can tell us.*

AK I thought they were ... two really long strands of hair on each side, and you cut the middle part short. ... I just cut off the middle chunk of my hair. Played it off like my parents weren't going to notice, and casually wandered over and was like "Hey Mom, can you put my hair in pigtails?" thinking she was going to be like, "Oh, your hair looks great!" ... I literally had a bald spot.

Maybe I should show up for the date in mauve overalls and a weird tutu.

CT *What would your ideal date be like? Aside from the tutu.*

AK Well I love food, so. A meal is key. ... I also think you can tell a lot about someone by food. Picky eaters, pet peeve.

Activity-wise, I'd like to do something ... any kind of activity where you have to put away your cool card. I think that's a big attractive thing for me, if someone is able to be silly in front of someone they've never met before. ... This is so weird, this is so weird that I'm saying this, but something like fishing would be really fun. I really like fishing. Which is weird also.

CT *This is your platform – if you had one thing you'd like to broadcast to the greater VCU community.*

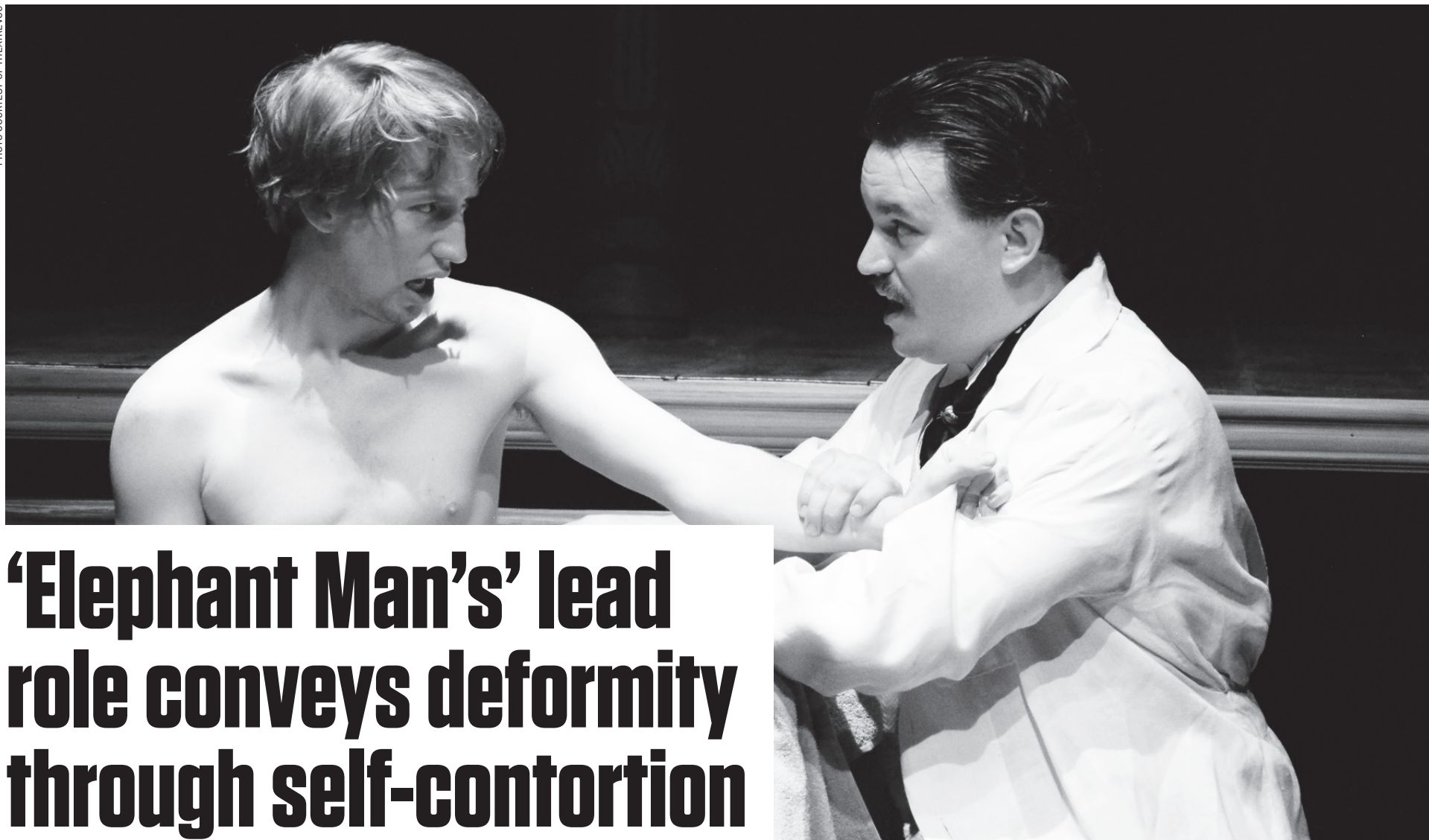
AK "Stay gold, pony boy." **CT**

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‘Elephant Man’s’ lead role conveys deformity through self-contortion

Michael Todd
Staff Writer

“The Elephant Man,” which opened this past Friday at the Singleton Center, follows the life of frighteningly deformed John Merrick and his rise from the dregs of life as an attraction in a freak show all the way to the upper class of 1880s Victorian society.

The first time the audience sees John Merrick (portrayed by Austin Seay) without a cloak obscuring his crooked form or a veil masking his mutated face, he stands with his spine erect, feet firmly planted and arms away from him, mirroring the image projected on screens above him of Leonardo da Vinci’s “Vitruvian Man,” supposedly the ideal human figure.

With the exception of a little stage makeup, Seay wears no prosthetics to manifest the horrors of his appearance as described and reacted to throughout the play. It is only as his deformities are described by Treves (portrayed by Matt Johnson) that Seay begins to embody the disfigured man.

Through the contortion of his body and the obvious effort behind every movement, as well as through his facial expressions and, later, the use of his voice, Seay brings life to his character’s deformities.

The body, Seay said, was one of the greatest challenges in communicating Merrick’s character, especially considering all the additional verbal acting he had to do on top of the imitation of bodily disfigurement.

“We found the body really early,” Seay said. “Roughly two days into rehearsal, we had an idea of what it was

going to be.”

Seay participated in a type of method acting to help him grow accustomed to and maintain the contortion of his body for the full two-hour duration of the performance.

“For a week and a half, I wore roughly 20 pounds of weights on the left side of my body – 10 pounds on my hand, 12 pounds around my ankle,” Seay said of the effort to truly understand the right side of Merrick’s body and what it would have been like to have been him. “If you (compare) pictures of John Merrick and I ... there are certain scenes where my body is contorted exactly as his (was), at least as much as possible.”

Consequently, the actor says he stretches out for 30 minutes each night.

“I’ll probably need a chiropractor after all this is done,” he said.

In the beginning of the show, Merrick is abandoned by Ross, portrayed by Bryan Hall, his previous caretaker and the keeper of all his earnings as a street attraction. Treves provides Merrick with a sanctuary at a London hospital after a crowd of pedestrians, horrified by Merrick’s looks, threatens to tear him apart.

In an attempt to socialize Merrick and introduce him into “respectable” society, Treves turns to actress Mrs. Kindal (portrayed by Liz Earnest) who puts her stage skills to the test in establishing a friendship with Merrick and later introducing him further into the society in which she plays a prominent role. It is not long, however, before this fabricated friendship takes on a depth and sincerity that promises to shock audience members as much as it surprises all characters involved.

One of the aims of each character, according to Hall, has been to simplify points and actions in the play to show power.

“How much more powerful can it be with just a gesture?” Hall said. “There’s one handshake (between Kindel and John), and it’s just a handshake, but it’s so much more powerful than that.”

Once Merrick finds himself surrounded by a more civilized society than he is accustomed to, he is discovered to not be a monster. Instead, he is a sensitive, intelligent and surprisingly spiritual man who makes his best effort not to be inconvenienced by, or to inconvenience others with, his condition. As the play progresses, however, both Treves and Merrick are brought to question ideas of humanity through their interactions with each other and through society’s interactions with Merrick.

One of the famous lines of the play, which paraphrases the Bible, is spoken by Merrick, asking, “If your mercy is so cruel, what do you have for justice?”

“I think John Merrick sees himself as this type of Job figure,” Seay said of his character, referencing a book in the Bible with which Merrick struggles to understand, “where his life is this one test, but he’s going to stay faithful and, because of that, he will still be rewarded in the end. His life is just this trial.”

If audience members observe closely, they’ll notice that the costumes of the performers, in accordance to costume designer Isabela Tavares’ main design concept, progress from darker tones to lighter tones as the play advances. This follows Merrick’s rise in society from a creature at the beginning of the play to

an enlightened person by the end.

“You see Merrick arise to the aristocracy,” Seay said of his character’s journeys, both physical and internal. “As he becomes more taken in by society, he becomes more ‘normal,’ which really means more disgusting (and) defunct. ... He was actually more human before.”

In this way, “The Elephant Man” challenges the ideas of normalcy and, overall, what it really means to be human. However, audience and cast members alike are left to question who had the hardest time with his respective journey and who left the show more enlightened by the time the stage lights dim.

“At the beginning of the play, (Treves) is bright eyed and bushy tailed,” Johnson said of his character. “Through his relationship with John, he comes to question what he believes in.”

The multi-terraced stage, constructed by students, served as a variety of settings ranging from the London streets to the hospital that would become Merrick’s first real home. With quick recoveries following the sparsely noticeable mistakes, the cast delivered a masterful performance with an obvious understanding of their respective characters that took the audience from goose bumps to, in some cases, tears.

“Anybody who comes to see this show will leave with a whole new found respect for each other,” said Alex Ireys, who played Lord John. “Because that’s really what we’re looking at – how we treat each other. (It’s about) how cruel humanity can be, even when we’re showing empathy.” **GT**

PHOTOS BY AMBERLYNN TABER



Experimental percussionist recruits VCU professors to nine-gong orchestra

Samantha Foster
Staff Writer

There was standing room only at experimental percussionist Tatsuya Nakatani's concert this past Saturday at the Ghostprint Gallery.

Nakatani utilizes drums, singing bowls, gongs and sticks to create low-frequency sound waves. The gongs are played with bows, much like a violin, to keep a constant flow of vibrations in the small gallery.

"Don't worry, it's not loud. So, if you have a mobile phone or a snack in a plastic bag, it's going to stand out, and people will look at you," Nakatani said. "If it was only by sound, you could do it by laptop, but it's about the vibrations. It's a very animal-like sound."

The Nakatani Gong Orchestra played the first set of Nakatani's concert. Six local participants work with Nakatani to play nine gongs, which themselves took up half the gallery. The participants had rehearsed with Nakatani for only two hours prior to the show, but Nakatani seemed pleased with their performance.

"Some of us had worked with the gongs before we started at 5 p.m., but most of us just rolled up on a gong and started playing," said Liz Canfield, a gender, sexuality and women's studies professor at VCU who performed with Nakatani in the Nakatani Gong Orchestra.

Two of the participants are VCU professors, including Canfield and Peter

Baldes, a media arts professor.

"Most of us are used to playing with others, but it was helpful to have a community," Canfield said. "It was wonderful to work with (Nakatani). That's his vibe."

In the Nakatani Gong Orchestra, Nakatani provided the sound of the higher frequency gong while acting as a conductor for the others at the same time.

"He's very simple and clear with instructions, but then he gave us space to do our own thing," Canfield said.

The second set was Nakatani's solo performance and was reminiscent of a one-man band. Three 40-inch gongs from the first set stayed, and a snare drum, bass drum, cymbals and roughly 10 singing bowls were added.

The sound was incredibly high-pitched at times, and the performance was a bit like organized chaos, but the audience remained completely silent throughout the show in order to hear everything clearly.

This was the third day of Nakatani's tour. Last Friday, he performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

"There were about 1,000 people, but I was very nervous about the sound," Nakatani said. The Ghostprint Gallery was the most natural environment for this type of music since it has wood floors and is a very small space, he said.

Nakatani describes his show as "unpredictable."

"It's a very interesting act," he said. "I play gong good." **CT**



Nakatani's performance utilized constant, room-engulfing vibrations produced by playing gongs with bows, like a stringed instrument.

OPINION

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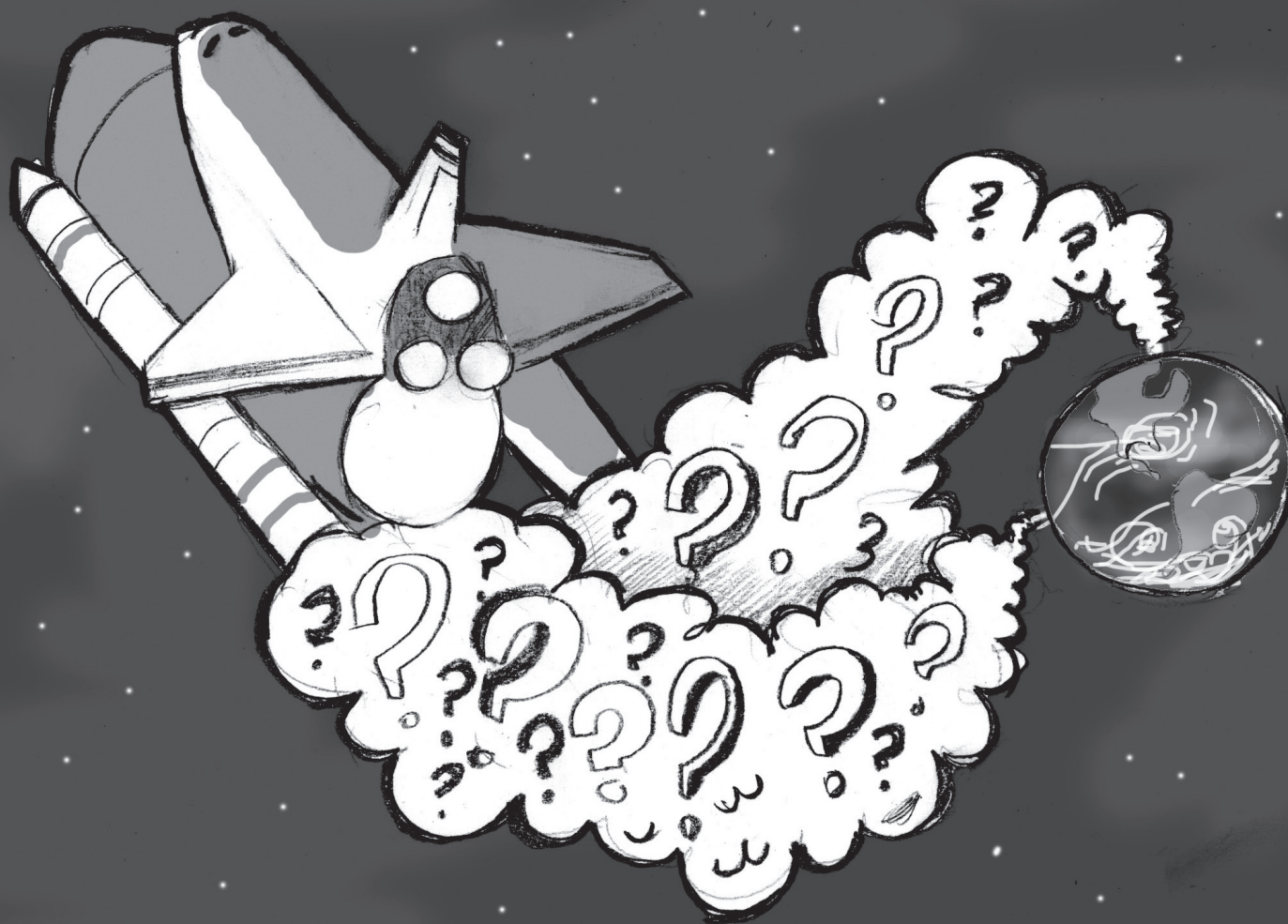


ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH SWANN

To infinity and beyond: the importance of space exploration

Colin Hannifin
Columnist

We sent a man to the moon over four decades ago. That's longer than many of us have been alive. Yet what has become of all those calculations, breakthroughs and the rocket science that got us there? They have been forgotten.

It's all locked away on age-old computers, and most of the notes and records went home with the engineers. If we wanted to go to the moon today, we'd have to recreate everything.

That, to me, is shocking, as are most things about our space program. We're relying on Russian rockets to carry us back and forth to the International Space Station, having discontinued our

own shuttle program. It will be years before NASA can send another individual up in space. It seems that we've forgotten just how important space exploration is, both to the world as a whole, the United States, and even Virginia. It's something that deserves a lot more of our time, our attention and our funds.

As I've written about before, we are perhaps just a few decades away from reaching critical mass here on earth, when we have many more humans than we have available resources. Space is one of our few safety valves.

I'm not suggesting that we'll abandon the planet and just live in space, à la the movie "Wall-E," but living off our planet is not only conceivable, it may one day be necessary. It seems far-fetched, and that's

because it is right now. Currently, we are in no shape as a species to consider space the next step, but one day we may have to.

The study of space and its exploration is huge for the United States as well. Back in the 1960s, the Space Race captured the hearts and minds of adults and children all throughout the nation. We were hooked. Despite our study of it, we still know so little about space, and everything we learn leads to thousands of more questions. It still has that ability to capture the hearts and minds, to make us think, to make us challenge what we thought we once knew.

Yet the amount of money NASA receives is shrinking.

Money has been diverted to try to help the economy, among other pro-

grams. While Newt Gingrich's plan for a moon colony may be a little off-kilter, the idea of a moon base is not. Past presidents have thrown out the idea, and it's gotten positive reception. But never enough for actual money to be put there.

It's also hugely important to us as Virginians. Though few people may know it, we are home to one of the few alternatives to the famous Florida launch pads. Out on the Eastern Shore, on Wallops Island, is MARS, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport. This is a launch pad capable of sending governmental, commercial and scientific rockets into space. If we can attract high technology and blossoming commercial space companies to Virginia,

jobs, revenue and recognition are bound to follow.

The importance of space, however, is much more than practical, it's also philosophical. Somewhere out there, light is just reaching us from the Big Bang – we've already glimpsed back billions of years by training our telescopes to the oldest regions of space. This allows us to see the history of the universe and existence and start to answer some of that old, mind-bending question: Why? Why do we exist? Why does the universe exist?

Moreover, for the first time in his-

tory, we're quickly finding whole other worlds that may support life. Sure, we find exoplanets that are either a giant diamond or essentially a massive sponge, and the search for extra-terrestrial life doesn't seem so fruitful.

But every day, we're finding smaller and smaller planets, better suited to hold life that may not be so different from our own. We're even finding out that we may not be alone in this solar system, as Mars shows signs of having once had life. Could life still be underneath the Martian surface? The idea that we're alone in this universe is start-

ing to seem like a silly notion.

Space exploration is incredibly important. Space can help us find the answers to the questions we didn't even know we had. It helps raise national esteem and pride and holds great commercial ventures for those willing to try – any scarce resource on earth is abundant somewhere in space.

I would contend that the study of space is one of the most important undertakings we can consider.

Yet, it's been pushed off the table, and we're just left to wonder why. **CT**

MCV students slighted by university services

Sylvia Wertz
Columnist

Most students know someone who lives across the city on the MCV campus. It's a little bubble of isolated quietness and medical students, only a two-block walk from the School of Dentistry and the Medical Center, complete with a gym, food-court-style cafeteria and freshman dorms.

But options in terms of student services are limited for those few who live within the MCV campus dorms.

One need not mention the hassle of planning a daily schedule around the irregularly timed Campus Commuter. But it should be noted that the commute is even worse on weekends.

Furthermore the bus doesn't start until 10 a.m., and the last bus that leaves from Monroe Park campus departs at 8:30 p.m. It's as if the residents of Cabaniss Hall have a curfew, forcing them to awkwardly cut dinners short in order to catch the bus, unless they want to take the chance of using the Security Escort, which is infamous for its waiting times on weekends.

Thankfully, the MCV gym is quiet compared to the Cary Street gym, with usually no more than a dozen people in the main gymnasium using the machines, in the pool or at the ball courts.

Unfortunately, the gym's evening hours are cut short on the weekends, slighting students that want to workout late. It hardly seems to be much of a problem for hours to be extended, especially since Cary Street stays open until midnight. The argument could be made that it's not practical to have the gym open so late since fewer students frequent it, but if there was a track and rock-climbing wall, students would undoubtedly be more attracted to it.

But the part about the MCV campus that gets undergraduate residents most upset is the food services. The Jonah L. Larrick Student Center has the best food on both of the VCU campuses and looks fantastic. Yet the only enjoyment of this comes between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. on weekdays. To add to that unfairness, students can only get food on the weekend from 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

By this time in the evening, most people are already in their rooms studying and winding down for the evening. It's hard to really use the meal plans to the extent that they're intended when our choice for meal plans are already limited. Most of the time it is not worth our time, energy or money to get food from Jonah or take a trek to the main campus.

By that time, there are three differ-

ent options – two if it's a weekend. You can either see what you have in your room, take the bus over to Shafer and hope you won't have to wait too long for the Security Escort or walk three blocks to a Wendy's and Einstein Bros. Bagels.

It's nice having the two fast-food chains so close by, but it would be better if Jonah would stay open longer so students wouldn't have to worry about standing around at night. The university should make better strides to open options for students on the MCV campus.

Recently, more and more attention has come to the Monroe Park campus with beautification projects and events. But what really needs to be done is pushing more funding for better use to the MCV undergrads, as well as the medical students that also share the campus. There would be more positive feedback and use of the facilities if there were more hours available to the undergraduate students rather than being tailored to just the medical students.

Just because we don't live on the main campus doesn't mean we should suffer even minor, inconvenient slights. We pay the same amount of tuition that the Monroe Park students do, and we expect equal services and options. **CT**

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ct

ADAM STERN SHANE WADE
Executive Editor Opinion Editor

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COMICS "Valentine's Day Comic" by Andy Kay





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