TSL Extra

Issue 6, April 18, 2001

Please replace this sheet with the downloadable cover.

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TSL EXTRA

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ON THE COVER
This month's stark cover depicting a dollar sign was created by Will Stewart using Adobe PhotoShop.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers:

Have you seen the commercial where the 20 or so employees of a company are getting ready to launch their on-line ordering system? They're all gathered around a computer, and when their web site goes live, a counter starts to count orders. When the first few orders go up, the company employees start to cheer enthusiastically.

But the order totals continue to climb, and the counter starts to spin at a blur, and the happy faces quickly turn into expressions of dread. The message is clear: there is *no way* the handful of employees at that tiny company can fill all those orders. Another case of "Be careful what you wish for, because you may get it."

I experienced a similar feeling after the release of the last issue of the TSL Extra. TSLX #5 hit like a bomb and finally generated the word-of-mouth I had been looking for, and subscriptions to the TSLX spiked in the last month. Issue #5 brought in over 225 new subscribers, and as I write this, the total list of subscribers is now over 700, thanks mostly to issue #5.

But now I have to produce a worthy follow-up to that issue. *Gulp*. After that home run, I'm just hoping to eke out an infield single. Anything less, and last month's spike in sales will be this month's chasm in non-sales.

So it is with a little trepidation that I present to you issue #6 of the TSL Extra. As I prepared this issue for release and read over the articles one more time, I realized that this issue has a more "global" view than previous issues of the TSLX. Sure, the emphasis is still on Virginia Tech, but many of the articles hinge more on the goings-on that surround Virginia Tech and define Virginia Tech's place in the world of college athletics.

The centerpiece of this issue, and the next few issues actually, is a series of articles on finances in college athletics. I was fortunate enough to receive spreadsheets containing some detailed financial data for approximately 250 Division 1 athletic programs. The figures, which are from 1998-99, are a bit dated, but they are nonetheless fascinating to peruse, and they say a lot about the financial state of college athletics. This issue brings you the first of a series of articles that analyze the data, break it down, and identify the trends and truths that lurk within the data. It's very interesting stuff.

Beyond that, there's a hodge-podge of articles that I can't even begin to describe in thirty words or less, except to say that they cover everything from agents and athletes to conference realignment to — get this — Rutgers recruiting (don't worry, it's an interesting piece, and if you don't agree, at least it's short).

So you'll just have to sift through this issue and decide if it's a hit or a miss. Hopefully, if you thought last issue was a home run, you'll at least think this one is a double. As always, drop me a line and let me know what you think. The TSL Extra has made great strides since issue #1, and the only way it can continue to get better is with your feedback and suggestions … and oh, yes, story ideas. I get lots of *great* story ideas from the TSLX readers.

As always, folks, thanks for supporting the site by subscribing to the TSLX. Please wrestle your non-subscribing friends forcefully to the ground, and don't let them up until they agree to subscribe to the TSL Extra. Don't forget to take advantage of your 10% TechLocker.com discount (particularly if you need to buy a graduation gift for someone) … and enjoy issue #6.

Will

P.S. – As we do our best to earn an honest living, we greatly appreciate your unwillingness to share your TSL Extra password with others, as well as your discretion in not posting any of TLSX's articles on any websites, including our own.

The Money-Makers, Part 1

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

In part 1 of this fascinating multi-part series, the TSL Extra takes a look at the financial side of college athletics, including reams of data on revenue and expenses for the major Division 1 athletic programs. The numbers reveal some interesting and often surprising facts about the haves and the have-nots of college athletics.

Recently, TechSideline.com came into possession of some detailed data showing revenue and expenses for approximately 250 Division 1 athletic programs. The data include:

- · Total revenue and expenses
- · Football revenue and expenses
- · Basketball revenue and expenses
- · Men's sports vs. women's sports revenue and expenses

In this issue and future issues of the TSL Extra, we'll break down this data for you and highlight the trends that it points out. We'll sort out the big money-makers and money-losers in college athletics, we'll break it down by conference, and we'll highlight the Big East schools, and of course, Virginia Tech.

There is one caveat: the data is from the 98-99 academic year. But while the data may be two years old, the numbers point out major trends and facts that will not change drastically from year to year. So much of what you learn here will still apply today, despite the fact that college athletics, including the financial aspects, can change quickly from year to year.

Also worth noting is that TechSideline.com did not receive any explanation of the data, just the spreadsheets that contain it. So you may have questions about the data that are unanswerable. We'll make our best effort to explain things to you as we go along, but since we received no explanation ourselves, our explanations of the origin of the data may not be totally accurate.

This is part 1 of a multi-part series, and this part will focus on total revenue and expenses of Division 1 programs around the country. We'll show you who made the most money in 98-99, who spent the most, and who lost the most. We'll then sort the data by conference to show you how the conferences rank as money machines.

The Data

First of all, let's go over the format of the data and how to interpret it. It's pretty simple, and it won't take long. And as usual, I'll give you a link to an Excel spreadsheet where you can download the data yourself.

The data covered in this part of the series consist of three numbers for each school: revenue, expenses, and profit/loss.

Revenue: this figure is the total revenue made by all varsity athletic programs at a university. This figure includes ticket revenue, TV contract revenue, football bowl money, NCAA championship money (such as payouts from the NCAA basketball tournament), and money contributed to a school's athletic fund (i.e., Virginia Tech's Hokie Club).

It probably also includes money from apparel and shoe deals, such as Nike's contract with Virginia Tech, in which Nike outfits some of Virginia Tech's teams with uniforms and shoes, in exchange for being able to place their logo on the uniforms. These contracts have a certain cash value, and that value is included in the revenue figures.

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There are probably other sources of revenue that I'm neglecting to mention, but the major ones are listed above.

Expenses: this figure is the total expenses incurred by all varsity athletic programs at a university. This figure includes salaries for administrators and coaches, travel expenses, scholarships, equipment, promotional costs, etc.

I'm not sure whether it includes expenses for capital projects, such as stadium construction, practice field construction, etc. It probably includes cash expenditures for capital items (for example, Frank Beamer's new football practice fields that were just built, at a cost of about $1 million, might show up as a line item under expenses), but it probably does not include capital projects that were funded by taking on debt (for example, if Tech took out a $15 million loan to finance stadium expansion, the portion that was paid for by the loan would probably not appear as an expense). Not being an accounting type, I'm not sure what is and isn't included in reports like this.

Profit/Loss: this figure is revenue minus expenses. If the number is in parentheses, then it's a loss, not a profit.

Virginia Tech's Data

Here's a typical example — take a look at Virginia Tech's line of data (remember, this is for 98-99):

School	Revenue	Expenses	Profit/Loss
Virginia Tech	$20,845,889	$20,319,646	$526,343

So, for the 98-99 academic year, Virginia Tech's athletic department turned a profit of over $500,000. That was during a year in which the Hokies went to the Music City Bowl, which pays about $2 million after Big East revenue sharing is added in. The Hokie Club also brought in about $8.9 million in donations that year.

Since then, bowl revenue has gone up and down, and Hokie Club revenue has exploded. Let's take a look at both figures for 98-99, 99-00, and 2000-2001:

Year	Bowl Revenue	Hokie Club Revenue	Total
98-99	$2 million	$8.9 million	$10.9 million
99-00	$5 million	$10.0 million	$15.0 million
00-01	$2.2 million	$13.5 million? (est.)	$15.7 million

Note: bowl revenue figures are approximate and include VT's direct share of bowl money plus their portion of Big East bowl revenue sharing.

So, you can see what while Tech's revenue in 98-99 was $20.8 million, their revenue in 2000-2001 could be as high as $26 million or more. Probably more, because the Hokie football team enjoyed increased ticket revenue and TV appearance revenue.

The Big East's Data

Now let's expand and take a look at the Big East Conference as a whole. I'll break it up into football schools and non-football schools. Football schools are listed first (beginning with BC and ending with West Virginia), and basketball schools are listed second (beginning with Connecticut and ending with Villanova:

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Big East Conference Revenue/Expenses, 1998-1999

School	Revenue	Expenses	Profit/Loss
Boston College	$22,339,561	$27,331,158	($4,991,597)
Miami	$23,581,713	$27,890,899	($4,309,186)
Pittsburgh	$12,323,000	$20,045,000	($7,722,000)
Rutgers	$23,938,578	$23,938,578	$0
Syracuse	$36,376,607	$38,214,074	($1,837,467)
Temple	$5,427,711	$11,711,551	($6,283,840)
Virginia Tech	$20,845,889	$20,319,646	$526,343
West Virginia	$24,016,068	$24,831,971	($815,903)
Connecticut	$24,440,099	$23,733,840	$706,259
Georgetown	$8,644,696	$11,149,364	($2,504,668)
Providence	$4,791,753	$10,786,530	($5,994,777)
Seton Hall	$6,017,932	$6,788,209	($770,277)
St. John's	$5,777,013	$11,655,446	($5,878,433)
Villanova	$6,373,852	$13,409,343	($7,035,491)

If you're a Big East fan, that's alarming. Out of fourteen schools, a whopping *three* didn't lose money in 98-99: Rutgers, Virginia Tech, and Connecticut. And a number of schools bled major bucks: Pittsburgh, Temple, Providence, St. John's, and Villanova all lost over $5 million, and Boston College and Miami lost nearly that much.

What's most alarming in the data is the amount of money that the football schools lost. Their revenue was routinely over $20,000,000, and yet, they managed to lose exorbitant amounts of money.

Not surprisingly, Temple and Pittsburgh were the big money-losers among the football schools. You might think that Rutgers would be, too, but the Scarlet Knights, despite their losing ways, have a loyal core of fans who support the school financially. Pittsburgh and Temple suffer from major disinterest in their fund-raising and football programs (obviously, Temple is much worse off than Pitt).

In 1998-99, Pittsburgh was still playing in old Panther Stadium, which has since been torn down. It's possible and likely that their new football stadium, the one they will share with the Steelers and start playing in this fall, will help the football program contribute much more to their bottom line than Panther Stadium did (think seat licenses and luxury boxes, which Panther Stadium didn't have).

A future article in this series will delve more deeply into how much each school earns and spends on their football programs, so you'll be able to see the detailed breakdown there.

Among the basketball schools in the Big East, only Connecticut brought in over $10 million, and they brought in *way* over $10 million — $24,440,099 to be exact. UConn is a very impressive athletic program, and their past performance in sports such as men's basketball, women's basketball, and non-revenue sports bodes well for their long-term prospects as a Division 1-A football team playing in the Big East Conference.

Do not underestimate Connecticut. With their brand new football stadium, their fundraising ability (that's where a large chunk of that $24 million in revenue came from — less than $10 million of it came from their signature sports, men's and women's basketball), and their commitment to excellence, they are primed to succeed in 1-A football. That's why they voted to make the jump to 1-A, and they are slated to join the Big East football conference in 2005. Welcome them with open arms and give them some time to impress you.

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Once you get beyond the football schools and Connecticut, the remaining basketball-only schools are enough to make you wince. Villanova lost $7 million, Providence lost $6 million (now you know why they dropped baseball last year), St. John's lost nearly $6 million, and Georgetown lost $2.5 million. Only Seton Hall showed any financial responsibility, keeping their expenses down and losing a mere $770,000.

The champion of Big East money-making is Syracuse. At $36 million in revenue, they're $12 million ahead of the $24 million posted by second-place WVU and UConn. In 98-99, Syracuse's football and men's basketball programs alone brought in $29 million of that $36 million. They are the kings of the Big East when it comes to making money. During that year, they were the Big East's representative to the BCS, so they made some good money from that.

Unfortunately for them, they're the kings at spending it, too. They spent $38 million, resulting in a loss of nearly $2 million. No other school in the Big East spent over $28 million.

Comparing the BCS Conferences

Among the BCS conferences — the ACC, Big 12, Big East, Big Ten, PAC 10, and SEC — the Big East teams are unique in their ability to lose money. On average, the Big 12 teams each lost money in 1998-99, but not nearly as much as the Big East teams. And on average, the teams from all the other BCS conferences made money.

Take a look at the following two tables, which show total and per-team revenue and expenses for each of the BCS conferences.

Total Revenue and Expenses by Conference, 1998-99
(Sorted by Revenue)

Conference	Revenue	Expenses	Net
BIG TEN	$415,624,664	$390,344,592	$25,280,072
SEC	$373,318,030	$364,558,615	$8,759,415
BIG 12	$306,710,344	$309,871,721	$(3,161,377)
PAC 10*	$269,579,656	$265,761,865	$3,817,791
ACC	$226,996,942	$222,907,003	$4,089,939
BIG EAST	$224,894,472	$271,805,609	$(46,911,137)

Note: the PAC 10 data only represent 9 of the 10 teams. Data were not available for Oregon.

The Big East's total loss of $46 million is staggering when compared to the other conferences. Big East teams spent 21% more than they made. That's not even close to breaking even. By comparison, Big 12 teams spent 1% more than they made, and all other conferences made money.

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Per-team Revenue and Expenses by Conference, 1998-99
(Sorted by Per-team Revenue)

Conference	Per-team Rev.	Per-team Exp.:	Per-team Net
BIG TEN	$37,784,060	$35,485,872	$2,298,188
SEC	$31,109,836	$30,379,885	$729,951
PAC 10*	$29,953,295	$29,529,096	$424,199
BIG 12	$25,559,195	$25,822,643	$(263,448)
ACC	$25,221,882	$24,767,445	$454,438
BIG EAST	$16,063,891	$19,414,686	$(3,350,796)

Note: the PAC 10 data only represents 9 of the 10 teams. Data were not available for Oregon.

On a per team basis, the money lost by the Big East teams is laughable. Your first reaction might be to draw the conclusion that the non-football teams (i.e., the "basketball-only" schools) drag down the conference, and in a way, you're correct. They greatly reduce the per-team revenue, but they don't drag down the per-team net. Take a look at this table comparing the Big East overall with the Big East Football schools:

Revenue and Expenses for BE Schools, 1998-99

Classification	Per-team Rev.	Per-team Exp.	Per-team Net
All 14 Schools	$16,063,891	$19,414,686	$(3,350,796)
8 Football Schools	$21,106,141	$24,285,360	$(3,179,219)

Interesting. Big East per-team net is still a $3 million loss, whether you include the basketball schools or not.

All this data, which I'll admit takes some concentration and some time to sift through, points out in no uncertain terms that the Big East Conference is far below the other BCS conferences in its ability to generate revenue for its teams, both in total and on a per-team basis.

When conference expansion and realignment discussions start up, this is one reason why they always center around the Big East losing teams to other conferences. As recently as 98-99, the Big East was hemorrhaging money like no other BCS conference, and things probably haven't gotten any better, and may have gotten worse.

The Big East has taken great steps to eliminate its split membership problem, by bringing in UConn for football, bringing in Virginia Tech for all sports, and expelling Temple. Next up is repairing the dire financial problems the league faces, but unfortunately for the Big East, those problems are largely up to the schools to solve.

The conference can help by signing more lucrative TV contracts, but it failed to do that when the football conference signed a new TV deal with ABC that actually pays $200,000 per year less than the old deal with CBS (source: The Miami Herald, March 2000). The new football TV contract starts with the 2001 season.

The conference can help with bowl tie-ins, and there are now five of those. Unfortunately, the bowl tie-ins are not relatively lucrative. There is a tie-in with one BCS bowl, one second-tier bowl (the Gator), and three $750,000 bowls (the minimum payouts — the Insight.com Bowl, the Music City Bowl, and Jeep Christmas Classics). And as a Vick-led VT team proved last year, the Big East will likely never get more than one team in a BCS bowl in any given year.

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The one upside for the Big East is that they can potentially place more of their teams percentage-wise into bowls than many other conferences.

The Non-BCS Conferences

Once you get beyond the BCS conferences, the data that TechSideline.com received get very sporadic, and most of the second-tier conferences like the MAC and Conference USA are poorly represented in the data.

Here's the per-team revenue and expenses table again, this time with the MAC, C-USA, and (just for fun) the Atlantic 10 added:

Per-team Revenue and Expenses by Conference, 1998-99
(Sorted by Per-team Revenue)

Conference	Per-team Rev.	Per-team Exp.	Per-team Net
BIG TEN	$37,784,060	$35,485,872	$2,298,188
SEC	$31,109,836	$30,379,885	$729,951
PAC 10	$29,953,295	$29,529,096	$424,199
BIG 12	$25,559,195	$25,822,643	$(263,448)
ACC	$25,221,882	$24,767,445	$454,438
BIG EAST	$16,063,891	$19,414,686	$(3,350,796)
CUSA	$13,562,152	$14,208,863	$(646,711)
MAC	$9,231,334	$9,994,775	$(763,441)
A-10	$7,457,768	$7,422,564	$35,205

Number of teams for which data were available: CUSA: 9 of 11; MAC: 10 of 13; A-10: 10 of 10.

What About Notre Dame? What About Virginia?

I knew you would ask that, so here are the numbers for those two schools:

Team	Revenue	Expenses	Net
Notre Dame	$38,014,825	$34,245,459	$3,769,366
Virginia	$24,945,114	$25,076,514	($131,400)

A lot of people seem to think that Notre Dame would be a good fit for the Big Ten, and from a budget standpoint, these figures support that notion. The Golden Domers' budget totals are right in line with a typical Big Ten school.

Virginia, meanwhile, is right in line with the average ACC school's figures. UVa's revenue and expenses in 98-99 each ran about $4-$5 million higher than Virginia Tech's. The Wahoos received more money from the ACC TV contracts than Virginia Tech received from the Big East TV contracts, and their expenses were higher due to the fact that they fully fund more varsity sports than Tech.

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The Top 10 Money-Makers and Money-Losers

To wrap this article up, let's list the top ten schools in revenue, the top ten schools in net income, and the bottom ten schools in net income. Since space is limited, I'll let these tables stand without comment — VT's standing in the first two rankings is included for reference (they are *not* in the top 10 in either list).

Top 10 Schools in Total Revenue, 1998-99

Team	Revenue	Expenses	Net
1. Ohio State	$73,017,116	$72,959,563	$57,553
2. Texas	$56,112,081	$56,204,679	($92,598)
3. Tennessee	$51,649,323	$50,777,457	$871,866
4. Florida	$50,100,930	$50,900,580	($799,650)
5. Stanford	$48,721,082	$33,474,361	$15,246,721
6. Michigan	$43,427,000	$47,313,000	($3,886,000)
7. Wisconsin	$42,614,237	$43,707,509	($1,093,272)
8. Penn State	$41,789,114	$41,539,467	$249,647
9. Nebraska	$39,618,936	$39,170,335	$448,601
10. Minnesota	$39,300,450	$38,753,005	$547,445
52. Virginia Tech	$20,845,889	$20,319,646	$526,343

Top 10 Schools in Net Income, 1998-99

Team	Revenue	Expenses	Net
1. Stanford	$48,721,082	$33,474,361	$15,246,721
2. Rhode Island	$14,815,916	$9,662,403	$5,153,513
3. U. of Wyoming	$12,601,560	$8,206,585	$4,394,975
4. Notre Dame	$38,014,825	$34,245,459	$3,769,366
5. Louisiana State	$31,821,340	$28,445,681	$3,375,659
6. Maine	$10,163,177	$7,146,064	$3,017,113
7. Dayton	$8,769,505	$6,227,847	$2,541,658
8. Oregon State	$21,476,445	$19,404,293	$2,072,152
9. Auburn	$28,566,739	$26,503,634	$2,063,105
10. West. Kentucky	$6,242,412	$4,201,203	$2,041,209
38. Virginia Tech	$20,845,889	$20,319,646	$526,343

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Bottom 10 Schools in Net Income, 1998-99

Team	Revenue	Expenses	Net
1. Colgate	$1,139,327	$9,867,790	($8,728,463)
2. Boston Univ.	$3,149,957	$11,660,332	($8,510,375)
3. Lehigh	$1,460,653	$9,849,428	($8,388,775)
4. Holy Cross	$893,360	$9,106,341	($8,212,981)
5. Pittsburgh	$12,323,000	$20,045,000	($7,722,000)
6. Bucknell	$1,316,225	$8,812,837	($7,496,612)
7. Central Michigan	$3,560,052	$10,703,554	($7,143,502)
8. Villanova	$6,373,852	$13,409,343	($7,035,491)
9. Washington	$34,364,563	$41,293,663	($6,929,100)
10. Lafayette	$1,021,830	$7,928,823	($6,906,993)

Worth noting: out of the bottom 23 schools in net income in 98-99, the Big East had 7 of them. The MAC, PAC 10, Big 12, and A-10 all placed one team in the bottom 23. The other 12 schools were from minor conferences.

The Data

If you want to see the complete set of data for total revenue and expenses, you can access the data as a web page, or you can download the Microsoft Excel 97 file.

Web Page link — note that this is a large file, but it still loads fairly quickly:

http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue006/revenue9899.htm

MS Excel File (Excel 97 compatible):

http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue006/revenue9899.xls

(Right-click the link and do a "Save Link As" or "Save Target As" to save the Excel file to disk.)

The Big East/ACC Merger
by Jim Alderson

The first shots have been fired in the widely anticipated and much-discussed realignment of the college athletic landscape and, not so surprisingly, they came from our own Big East Conference, in the decision by BE presidents to jettison Temple from its tenuous perch as the last football-only member. The booting of Temple has caused serious howls of anguish from the Owls, replete with promises to do better. It is a little late in the game. Temple's problems stem from money, or lack thereof, and represent the tip of college athletics' financial iceberg.

Big East athletic budget numbers for the 1998-99 academic year show the Owls dead last in the BE for both football revenues and expenditures. In a future TSL Extra article, Will Stewart is going to disclose football revenue and expenses for the Big East teams, and he gave me a sneak peek at those numbers for this article.

It is a grim picture for the Owls. Temple spent $3.8 million on football, realizing revenues of slightly over $3 million, the bulk provided by the conference's nearly $2 million check cut for Temple's share of BE television and bowl revenues. These are ludicrously low numbers. Temple's football expenditure was by far the lowest in the conference, over $2 million less than the $5.9 million spent by the next lowest, Rutgers, and closer to the $3.1 million spent by Connecticut to field an I-AA program.

In the decade since the advent of Big East football, despite numerous warnings from their conference brethren, the Owls have demonstrated no commitment to big-time football and instead received their annual television and bowl revenue sharing checks and contributed nothing in return. Think about what Virginia Tech has done over the same decade with the same opportunity. Temple is finally paying the price, and they have richly earned it.

The money spent subsidizing Temple's lousy football program will now be redirected to the remaining seven members, at least until 2005 when UConn, which has demonstrated a commitment to football far greater than Temple's, comes on board. The rest of us need it, because the Big East financial numbers are not a pretty picture.

Big East athletic programs are, on the whole, losing serious money. The amount of red ink is staggering. Total conference losses for all fifteen Big East teams for 98-99 were $43 million, an incredible amount, especially when the fat conference television contracts are considered. Notre Dame, with its huge football television deal, Connecticut and Tech were the only ones to end up in the black overall. Rutgers broke even.

In total athletic expenditures, Pittsburgh dropped $7.7 million, Boston College almost $5 mil, and Miami over $4 mil, which certainly provides evidence as to why Canes coaches avail themselves of the first opportunity to find employment elsewhere. The money thrown at Temple for generally serving as conference whipping boy will come in handy, because one thing is sure apparent, the Big East is not a financially stable group.

And for most of the Big East schools it will get worse. It would seem the last thing the basketball-only schools (counting UConn now as a football school) need is another mouth to feed from the basketball television trough. Big East financial basket case Providence (which, quite frankly, has no

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business being anywhere near a major Division I conference), Seton Hall, St, John's, Villanova and Georgetown all are not only losing millions on athletics but are also staring at a reduction in revenues when Tech begins receiving its fair share, as they did previously when Rutgers and West Virginia joined the fold. It is why they were opposed to expansion, in a couple of cases (Providence and Seton Hall), vehemently.

None of us is going to raise the value of the basketball contract by an amount greater than what we will receive, at least not any time soon. Too bad for them. Unlike Temple, which only received and contributed nothing, Virginia Tech earned their way into the conference through the value added by their football program. The Hokies may not have appeared on CBS as much as we would have liked, but rare is the ESPN Big East game that does not feature Tech. It must be particularly galling for the basketball schools that VT's performance in a sport, football, whose contract generates nothing for them has led to a reduction in their basketball take. Tough.

What has been created is a collection of schools with a rather large divergence of interest, with the voting power now residing in the hands of the full (read: those that play football) members. It would seem the logical conclusion for such a situation would be a disconnection into two conferences of like-minded institutions. Indeed, the only reason I could see for keeping Temple around was for the day when we would need John Cheney's strong basketball program to join with Syracuse and UConn in providing the base for a strong basketball contract that did not include the basketball crowd. It would appear that is not going to happen anytime soon. But what about down the road?

A glance around the country at athletic budgets shows the biggest ones belong to the guys with the biggest football stadiums, led by Ohio State's whopping $73 million (one has to wonder exactly what the Buckeyes are getting for that kind of coin), $56 mil at Texas (ditto), Tennessee's $51 and Florida's $50. This kind of money means more of everything: recruiting, coaches salaries, luxurious digs for the players, you name it (in the Vols case, a higher quality of term paper writer). The future is going to belong to the richer, and the future, to an increasing degree, is football.

Missing from the list of big athletic spenders are representatives from the ACC, where the top budgets are North Carolina's $29.6 and the $29.4 spent by Florida State. FSU operates pretty much on a break-even basis, but since the 98-99 academic year, North Carolina has gone from $483,000 in the black to over $300,000 in the red, primarily due to declining ticket revenues from football (Adios, Carl). Throw in the alarms recently raised by Virginia AD Terry Holland over Hooville athletic department losses, and it would seem that things are not all that rosy in John Swofford's domain.

The ACC, like the Big East, has their problems, which, while not nearly as severe as those facing the BE, are very real nonetheless. Florida State with their $30 mil budget has to contend and compete with the much higher one ($50 mil) at arch-rival Florida. The overall numbers are smaller, but Georgia Tech and their $20.2 million budget is dwarfed by one almost one-half as big in the $30 million one at Georgia. Among the ACC's so-called 'Southern Tier,' only Clemson with a $28.2 million budget is on a par with its in-state rival, South Carolina. Given Roy Kramer's ability to fill the coffers of SEC schools, close to $100 million now being shared among the twelve schools from the conference's lucrative CBS contract and football championship, the advantage here is with the

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Gamecocks. It is not hard to see why these three ACC schools, FSU, GT, and Clemson, are calling for a football-based expansion.

For the most part, ACC basketball revenues have been maxed out. Increases in television money, or the amounts that can be gouged from wealthy contributors for tournament tickets, will increase only incrementally. ACC basketball is a cash cow, to be sure, but it is a mature cash cow. They may screw around with moving the tournament to a bigger arena like the Georgia Dome in order to pack in more paying customers, but the howls from the four North Carolina schools at moving what they consider their birthright means it will only happen occasionally. The only way the ACC is going to tap the new revenue sources that would allow the Southern Tier to get on a more equal footing with their SEC rivals is an expansion that would allow for a football playoff. And therein lies the rub.

Few conferences have a bigger divergence of interest than the ACC has between its Southern Tier and its North Carolina-based schools, more specifically, between Florida State and Duke. The Seminoles have made a mockery of ACC football, winning or sharing (twice in nine years) every conference football title. That the ACC even has a football TV contract is due to FSU's dominance.

Likewise, Duke has dominated ACC basketball with five straight conference titles. While several schools, such as Duke's bitter rival North Carolina, Maryland and an improving Virginia program are closer to Duke than anybody is to FSU football, the Blue Devils aren't going to start losing anytime soon.

Each school also dominates its respective television time. You very rarely see an ACC football game presented to a national audience that does not include Florida State, while Duke in basketball, due in large part to its national OOC schedule, gets more network time than the entire rest of the ACC combined. This is not conducive to conference harmony in the long run.

The view of FSU AD Dave Hart is that any new revenue must be brought in from a football championship, while Duke, a school which, despite an impressive athletic endowment that enables it to spend on a level much higher than fellow ACC private school Wake Forest, still depends heavily on its basketball revenue from television and its auctioning of ACC Tournament tickets. Duke is most definitely not interested in expanding and sharing that revenue or precious and valuable tickets with football powers that would bring nothing to the basketball table. Just as the differing agendas in the Big East threaten to one day fracture the conference, the ACC has its problems among members, too.

Many reading this are aware that in 1999 the ACC came very close to an expansion that would have added three teams, and even closer to a short-term compromise that would have added only Miami. Primarily Duke shot it down, with assistance from the other three North Carolina 'Gang of Four.' ACC expansion is not a dead issue and will continue to be on the table, pushed by the network that now holds right to both BE and ACC football, ABC.

Last November 4, the attention of the college football world was riveted to the Orange Bowl as #2 Virginia Tech took on #3 Miami in a game that carried enormous national importance. CBS carried

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that game, and the same day, ABC's ACC game was NC State at Maryland. Big deal.

The only conference game the ACC has ever had of similar magnitude to last year's Tech-Canes clash was in 1997 between Florida State and a North Carolina program that has slipped considerably since. The ACC needs better football games, and despite all of the attention given to improving ACC football these days, nobody is making much of a dent in the lead FSU has over the rest of the conference.

To get the better games that will keep ABC televising ACC football to something more than the same area covered by the regional television contract, the conference is going to have to expand. Very soon, Florida State, Georgia Tech and Clemson will be right back at the table demanding expansion, only to find Duke already sitting in the Greensboro conference offices adamantly opposing it. The Big East has its football-basketball split, and so does the ACC.

Wouldn't it be nice if conferences could exist where everybody was on, if not exactly the same page, at least the same book? While the BE is jettisoning Temple and its woefully under-funded football program, ACC football weak sisters Duke and Wake Forest continue to hang around mostly serving as fodder. Florida State always seems to be playing Duke and Wake while Florida is tangling with Georgia or Auburn or some traditional SEC power, a situation not conducive to high television ratings.

Wake Forest actually lucked into a bowl a couple of years ago, but that had much to do with the collapse of large numbers of other ACC programs and little to do with greatness in a Wake program that spends only $4.7 million on football, smallest in the ACC and less than any surviving BE football member. They have no chance of ever amounting to anything in football, a fact recognized by Deacon administrators who have often brought up at ACC meetings the possibilities of dropping football and competing in the conference in all other sports, and have always been told no.

Wake is the ACC's weak sister, carrying the ACC's smallest budget at $19.6 million, which is padded by about $3 mil annually from tobacco company RJ Reynolds, about the last remnant from the days when RJ himself bought the small struggling Baptist school and moved it from Wake Forest to Winston-Salem, and one that changing political climates will not allow to continue forever. Wake has serious money problems on the horizon, certainly a factor in Dave Odom's bolting for South Carolina.

At $6.5 million, Duke spends more on football than Wake, but few schools have ever thrown away money on football like Duke has, with two recent 0-11 seasons to show for their cash. The Blue Devils have virtually no chance of ever challenging FSU, or even NC State and North Carolina in the middle of the pack. A committee has been meeting at Duke studying the university's role in 21st century athletics, and what they are being told is that the football losses and red ink will continue for as far as the eye can see.

Football at Duke or Wake do not carry bright futures, just as in the BE, Villanova, which operates I-AA football at a $2.4 million deficit, must be waking up to the futility of affording a scholarship-based

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program. Money-losing enterprises do not continue indefinitely.

There are those at Duke observing the writing on the wall and advocating the exploring of the possibility of getting together a grouping of schools with similar athletic philosophies, mainly the one that states that Basketball Rules. A conference of Duke, Wake, Georgetown, Villanova, Seton Hall, St. John's, Providence, and maybe a couple of others, say, for geographic continuity, Richmond, another school with forward-thinking administrators who have re-positioned the Spiders for what-ever lies ahead, could be a monster basketball conference that paid the same lip service to football as the non-scholarship I-AA programs currently in operation at Georgetown and St. John's. The basketball television contract they could command would be huge, providing each member with more than they are receiving from their current arrangements.

And, while the above grouping could actually conduct conference meetings where everybody was not constantly griping about expansion or football-basketball rifts, a re-conditioned 12-team ACC could begin play with a Southern Division of Florida State, Miami, Georgia Tech, Clemson, North Carolina and NC State, and a Northern one of Virginia Tech, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Syracuse and one of either UConn or Rutgers. I am excluding Boston College from that group, because I don't think their $5 million deficit bodes well for the long term, either, and I am sending Pitt(sburgh) off to link back up with Penn Sate in the Big 10, making that a 12-team conference, as well. With Carolina, Maryland, Syracuse and maybe UConn, this 12-team ACC could present enough basketball firepower for a rather substantial hoops TV contract also. These would also be twelve teams basically thinking alike when it came to athletics.

Will any of this speculation ever become reality? Given current situations and rivalries, it is certainly doubtful. But ABC is now the dominant player in both ACC and BE football and will get what it wants, which is better games, eventually, one way or another. And who thought the day would finally come when Temple was actually booted out of the BE?

Spring Football Thoughts
by Neal Williams

Easter comes at a terrific time of year and this year was no exception.

The weather was perfect, the temperature comfortable. The sky was crystal clear and blue. The grass was greening up nicely. Leaves were making an appearance, azaleas were blooming to rival those at Augusta National. Dogwoods woke up and said a colorful hello.

The view from the deck was exceptional. A variety of birds skittered to and fro, gathering the necessary material for their first nests. Bluebirds scanned the yard for competition, then went about their business of selecting the perfect box from among the many scattered around.

What a great time to sit back and think of … Hokie football?

Sure, why not? Is there a bad time to think of Hokie football? What better time than a glorious Easter, the faithful mutt by your side, a cool drink – water, thank you – nearby, the grill getting hotter and hotter, to sit and wonder about the many aspects of the upcoming season.

Yes, spring just got here. So let's think about fall and what we might have learned during Tech's spring practice.

These are just a few of the thoughts that crossed this mind. Not all of them are positive, however. If you're one-a them who gets bothered by a worried thought or two, skip those parts. Most of it is good. Some of this is opinion, some of it is based on observation (we're sneaky) and some of it is based on conversation with people who know a lot more (which is almost everybody).

Veteran quarterbacks: I'm OK with Grant Noel.

Let's remember that no one knew much about Lee Suggs a year ago when he was called on to fill in for Shyrone Stith. He had impressive credentials in high school indeed, but who doesn't? He hadn't shown a lot in limited duty.

Seem to recall ol' Lee did just fine thanks, set a few records along the way and made himself into a legitimate candidate for Mr. Heisman's trophy.

That said, there's no reason to think Noel will turn out like Suggs. There's no reason he has to be *that* good. He may not be as good as Miami's Ken Dorsey or Pitt's David Priestley. That's OK. You don't have to have the all-conference quarterback to win the conference championship (though it sure don't hurt).

The best thing about Noel is his attitude. He didn't go into spring ball thinking, "Oh, man, oh man, I have to prove I can be the quarterback." He went in thinking, "I *am* the quarterback. I've waited for this, I've worked toward this and now it is MY turn."

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Forget the scrimmage numbers that have trickled out. This ol' memory seems to recall that one Michael Vick had some seriously butt-ugly numbers from scrimmages and spring games and no one minded. You just don't know the situations.

Noel is showing leadership qualities. The coaches are loving that.

Noel is taking command. Coaches are loving that, too.

Noel will be fine.

As for Jason Davis, I sure wish I could be as positive. It seems every newspaper story that appeared about him – quarterbacks after all were *the* story of the spring – had him saying he needed to improve his reading of defenses. Yeah, that's a good trait for a quarterback to have. The strongest arm in the world won't do you a lick of good if you don't have a clue what those dudes in the other jerseys are doing. They are the enemy. They want to hurt you. You better be a step ahead.

He may make a fine backup, at least for a year. Because that brings us to:

Freshman quarterbacks: It would be so ideal not to have to use a year's eligibility on one of the three new guys coming in, would be so outstanding to get through the year with Bryan Randall, Will Hunt and Chris Clifton all holding on to four more years in their backpacks.

The Hokies start practice Aug. 11. First game is Sept. 1. It is unrealistic to expect even the smartest freshman to absorb enough in that time frame. Normally, their heads haven't stopped spinning by then.

This is just plain exciting. Three guys, all of them reputed to be excellent. I can't wait to see how it all shakes out.

One will emerge as the No. 3 quarterback this season, to play only in case of emergency. If Noel goes down short-term, Davis will need to handle the load. If Noel is out long term, all bets may be off with the freshmen unless Davis figures out those defenses in a hurry.

Someone told me when Michael Robinson jumped onto the Penn State bus that he may one day down the road be a better quarterback than Randall. The same someone said Randall was much more likely to be ready to play immediately. That doesn't mean he can't use the extra year.

Clifton is the wild card in the whole picture, a guy who was recruited as an athlete and then had a monster senior year as a quarterback. He comes in without the hype of Randall and Will Hunt. That, too, may work in his favor.

Eventually, one of these dudes will be No. 1.

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Here's a guess as to how it will work and it is only that, a guess: Randall, Clifton, Hunt.

But that's a couple years away.

Noel will be fine.

Remember that.

The best development of the spring?: Keith Burnell. He's a tailback who will be a junior and he's changed some thinking.

The conventional wisdom since national letter-of-intent day has been that Suggs would be the No. 1 tailback (like, duh) and Kevin Jones would be No. 2 (which means plenty of action in Tech's system).

Jones was the universally-regarded top recruit in the country. If most of those rating services agree on that, he must indeed be special.

Well, how about Suggs at No. 1, Burnell at No. 2 and Jones joining the quarterbacks with a redshirt?

The rule of redshirting: If Michael Vick can do it, anybody can do it. There's no one out there who wouldn't benefit from an extra year of strength and conditioning – not to mention the extra football knowledge – gained from a redshirt season.

Heck, yeah, Jones is good enough to play right now. Well, he's not going to get worse. A redshirt year could help him as much as it helps the team.

I know I said to ignore scrimmage stats, but Burnell's 100-yard-plus effort in one of them bears at least a little attention. He's running like he means business. It shouldn't be that much of a surprise. The guy did average 6.5 yards for 17 carries last season (those numbers are a bit skewed because he had 59 of his yards on one carry). That long jaunt against Rutgers was the best by a Tech tailback all season.

Jones may come in and be just so darn good that he absolutely has to play. If so, PLAY HIM!   If not, Burnell can more than ably handle being the second head on that two-headed tailback monster Billy Hite loves so much.

Wonder if Suggs will head on out early if he has another big year?

I can't wait to see Richard Johnson in action: Santana Moss comes to Blacksburg? This redshirt freshman receiver has tongues hanging out, has receivers coach Tony Ball so excited he can barely stand it.

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Johnson was Bryan Randall before Randall was Randall. As a prep junior, Randall became the first prep player in Virginia history to rush and pass for 1,000 yards in a single season. Johnson did that, too. And, yes, he's a receiver. Seems they didn't have anyone good enough to get him the ball consistently, so they let Johnson get the ball to others and run with it. Sometimes they'd line him up at receiver and let someone chuck it up and he'd go get it. He also played defense, returned kicks, drove the bus, washed the uniforms and maybe repaired them, too. The guy is versatile.

Ball saw receiver, big-time receiver. Johnson had an 89-yard touchdown catch in a spring scrimmage that witnesses said was 1/3 catch and 2/3 run. Johnson is still learning things like proper running of routes. He has the hands, the speed and the "shake and bake" to handle the job. It's said the real show starts once he catches the ball.

He still has to show his stuff when it counts and the Moss/Peter Warrick comparisons that people are making are a lot for a young guy to handle. But no one who has seen him has said it's too much.

Frank Beamer has been on record as saying this is potentially the best crop of receivers at Tech in a long, long time. Andre Davis and Emmett Johnson are back, Ernest Wilford (we hope) has gotten a bit better. Now there's R. Johnson along with guys like Ron Moody, Shawn Witten and Terrell Parham.

Noel won't be without options.

As for Emmett Johnson, let's say this: The guy did have the dropsies sometimes. A few touchdowns slipped out of his grasp. But he did end up as the leading receiver thanks to Davis' injury. And the single biggest catch of the season belonged to him.

Surely you remember. Pitt game? Long drive late? Good ol' Deep Ball Dave didn't get it quite deep enough on third-and-long and Emmett reversed direction and made a terrific sliding catch for a 29-yard gain and first down. Monster catch, just monster.

The defensive line ought to be nothing short of excellent: Can six players go into four starting slots? That's about the only way to look at it, with solid starters David Pugh and Chad Beasley at tackle and the four young dudes at end. Nathaniel Adibi and Lamar Cobb remain the starters, but Jim Davis and Cols Colas are at least as good.

Colas has had a head-turner of a spring and may end up a starter. Either way, he's going to play a whole, whole lot. Colas, Adibi and Davis are sophomores. Yow.

Getting our kicks: This back thing with Carter Warley is a worry. He had a terrific freshman year with a bum back and keeping him out this spring may be nothing more than a precaution. Why risk anything?

But those backs are funny (and not ha-ha funny) and you just never know. Jon Mollerup and Matt

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Felber haven't knocked anybody down with their spring numbers. Maybe they can do the job, but if they were as good as Warley they would have kicked last year. Mollerup did hit a 50-plus kick in a scrimmage. That's good. What's needed is a guy who almost never misses inside 40 and makes a good percentage of the longer ones.

This is going to be one of those keep-your-fingers-crossed kind of things.

As for punting, I wouldn't know Bobby Peaslee if he walked onto the deck and did a Three Stooges Moe thing on my eyes. Nyuk nyuk nyuk. He may be the world's nicest guy and hardest worker. This is not a knock on him personally.

He was not effective last season. This should be the year when Vinnie Burns replaces him and shows why he earned a scholarship out of high school. If that doesn't happen, then it's safe to say someone missed the boat on Mr. Burns. Peaslee's 35.3 average of a year ago just won't cut it, and the Hokies are fortunate it didn't end up hurting them too badly. You sure can't blame the one loss on the punting.

Beamer hates low, line-drive punts, and that's been the knock on Burns. Word is he looks much better this spring, but still needs to get 'em up there more consistently. He's a strong, impressive kid who surely put his year off to good use.

We could go on (and on and on and on) but the coals are ready and dinner needs to be cooked. After dessert, we may try to figure out that offensive line.

Agents and Athletes
by Jeff Ouellet, Esq.

For the last two seasons, Virginia Tech football fans have truly been blessed. Through the hard work of the coaching staff and the efforts of the student-athletes, the Hokies have reached levels of success that even the most avid fans couldn't have foreseen only a decade ago. Look at the recent accomplishments of the football program:

1) a second straight 11-1 finish, with the only losses to Florida State in the national championship game and on the road at Miami;
2) retaining Frank Beamer and his entire staff despite overtures from Alabama and North Carolina, among others;
3) signing the greatest football recruiting class (admittedly a subjective determination) in school history, headlined by a young man that many talent evaluators consider the best player in the country, running back Kevin Jones of Cardinal O'Hara in Springfield, Pennsylvania; and
4) not to be underestimated, having the nation's most exciting player and one of its best at quarter-back which, in many respects, helped to make the first three points on this list possible.

However, the early departure of Michael Vick for the professional ranks has engendered a range of emotions in the Hokie faithful, and led many to ask questions of his departure that center primarily around the role of sports agents in the realm of college football. My hope is that this piece will help to answer some of your questions about sports agents and their practices, so you will understand a little better the choices, both good and bad, facing some of Virginia Tech's best student-athletes.

The Rules Governing Agents

First, it should be noted that agents "recruiting" college players is far different than college coaches recruiting high school players, because agents do not fall under NCAA jurisdiction like student-athletes and coaches. Consequently, the NCAA regulations on the issue focus on the conduct of the student-athletes and the coaches, with only a minimal amount of attention being paid to the agents.

There is no NCAA regulation prohibiting contact by an agent with a student-athlete presently en-rolled in either high school or college, as long as that contact is limited to conversation without any benefit being conferred on the student-athlete. However, it should be noted that the NCAA does not "turn the other cheek" with respect to ANY gift, no matter how small. If an agent or his/her repre-sentative buys a student-athlete a soda, technically the student-athlete has taken an improper benefit and is ineligible to participate.

Even non-monetary gifts, such as free legal advice, are an improper benefit if the agent would typically charge a non-athlete for that advice. In the case of unintentional *de minimus* violations, the NCAA often only requires the student-athlete to pay the cost of the improper benefit, and then eligibility is immediately restored.

Because the NCAA does not have the time or authority to appropriately discipline agents, individual states started enacting agent laws that prohibit certain conduct within their borders and often re-

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quire registration and/or the posting of a bond. In some cases, these laws not only provide for civil penalties, but also permit criminal penalties, including jail time.

As with many laws, a high profile case in which an athlete is declared ineligible for State U often is the impetus for the legislation. Nothing gets an alumnus of State U. in the legislature angrier than when a sports agent does something to jeopardize a high profile student-athlete at his or her alma mater.

For example, the Pennsylvania Agent Law didn't get passed until Penn State had Curtis Enis declared ineligible for a bowl game a couple of years ago due to contact with an agent. After SMU got the death penalty for their football program, the agent law in Texas became one of the toughest in the country. Another agent that was a friend of mine jokingly said, when referencing the Texas law, "I was going to offer the kid a glass of water at our meeting, but I know I'd probably get the electric chair for it down there."

In my view, these agent laws are in theory a great idea, but haven't helped solve the problem as a practical matter. It gives individual states enforcement mechanisms, which clearly is beneficial, but many states do not have the resources to properly enforce the existing laws. Also, the differing rules and registration requirements make it extremely difficult on agents. Agents have to register in each state in which they do business, and that can be both costly and time-consuming.

Ironically, these requirements are most beneficial to many of the more prominent agents that necessitated the enactment of the law. Only the most successful agents have the resources to become licensed all across the country, and consequently, the state agent laws have deterred competition and scared away many of the smaller, and I would argue more ethical, agents from soliciting clients.

Not all states have agent laws on the books, but the number is increasing constantly. And the Uniform Athlete Agents Act was approved by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws and has been introduced in either the House or Senate or both of 20 states (Virginia is not one of those states as of last week). Measure such as this should help alleviate some of the inconsistencies in the law and keep costs down for the smaller agents.

The NFL Players Association (NFLPA) also regulates the conduct of agents. Agents are required to file an application and pass a test. In truth, the test is very easy, so passing really is not a measure of competency.

The NFLPA has the authority to revoke an agent's certification for improper conduct, but the NFLPA has not been extremely aggressive in pursuing agents. Most of the time the NFLPA only gets involved after the individual state has started an investigation. Additionally, there have been some systemic problems with enforcement.

For example, assume an agency has five partners that are all NFL licensed and all share equally in the profits under the partnership agreement. Also assume that partner 1 gets his license revoked by the NFLPA for improperly recruiting an athlete. If the contract has been negotiated with the NFL

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team, the partnership is still entitled to receive their fee for the contract regardless of whether the athlete was initially improperly solicited. Because the partnership receives the income, partner 1 would still receive a share of the contract even though he doesn't have a license anymore and may even be in jail.

There are reforms that have attempted to resolve this problem and require disgorgement of profits, but this illustrates one of the problems with the business: as long as you have individuals willing to be "sacrificial lambs," you can still profit from illegal activity.

The Recruiting Process - College

More college institutions are trying to get a grip on the agent problem by having specific days in which licensed agents can visit the campus after receiving approval from the compliance department. The format of these "agent days" differs from school to school. Often, each agent or corporation is given a table in a large indoor facility (like Virginia Tech's Rector Field House) and the student-athletes are free to go from table to table to obtain information from registered agents and to speak briefly with them.

Some schools also request that agents not mail anything directly to a student-athlete without either directing it generally to the attention of the athletic department first, or, at the very least, sending the department a carbon copy of the letter. As a practical matter, most agents ignore those rules and mail information directly to the athletes. Agents also try to establish, as early as possible, a relationship with the prospect, frequently by calling them on the phone.

Many agents also use "runners."   Runners are individuals, typically students, that are close enough to a football player or a football program to come into contact with a prospect. Through runners, some agents try to funnel money and/or other illegal benefits to an athlete. This is a game of Russian Roulette for the student-athlete. Once a benefit is consciously accepted, eligibility ends.

I've heard more than one story about a student-athlete being "forced out" of school early by an agent because the agent has given improper benefits and has threatened to expose the student-athlete. The agent tries to insulate himself with the runner (admittedly, this rarely works), but many student-athletes feel like they have to leave school because they don't want to receive the public ridicule associated with taking benefits (or, alternatively, the student-athlete doesn't have the resources to pay back the loan).

Runners can take many forms. Sometimes they room with an athlete or are a close friend. I've even heard of people within the football program serving as runners, such as equipment managers. Cases in which coaches become runners are extremely rare, but a few years ago there were some serious allegations of an SEC assistant "steering" players he recruited to a specific agent for a kickback.

Generally, the less money an individual has, the more likely they are to be subject to influence. Someone like Peyton Manning likely was not offered money in college not because he wasn't

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talented enough, but rather because agents knew that he didn't have any need for it. Moreover, Peyton understood the process well enough because of his father (former NFL QB Archie Manning), and he seemed like the type of individual that would report any suspect activity to the appropriate state agency and the NFL Players Association. He is one of the few recent college superstars that had "Do Not Touch" stamped all over him during his college days.

The Recruiting Process – After Eligibility is Completed

Once a player has completed his eligibility or declared early for the draft, you would think that recruiting would begin in earnest. Instead, in many cases, blue-chip student-athletes already have an agent in mind because the agent: (1) has helped to push them to go pro (if they are an underclassman); and/or (2) has already established ties through a runner or gifts to the student-athlete or his immediate family.

Assume for a moment, however, that a student-athlete has no ties and is going to interview agents. The first step in the process is for the agent to call the student-athlete, or the family member coordinating the recruiting, and set up a meeting time. I like to see a parent or parents involved because adults usually understand that there are no free lunches in this world, especially in the business of sports agency. If an agent offers a student-athlete something that is too good to be true, you can rest assured that a price will be exacted later.

Many people ask me how athletes get cars, homes, etc. before they sign their first pro contract. This happens in a number of ways. In certain rare instances, agents will simply pay blue-chip athletes money out of their own pocket in order to get their signature on a standard agent contract.

A more prominent method is for the agent to arrange for a bank to give the athlete a credit line commensurate with the athlete's anticipated contract. The bank typically requires the agent to provide a guaranty. You may wonder why an agent would serve as a guarantor, but the reason is simple. Suppose an athlete gets a $100,000 credit line and then turns around and spends $80,000 before signing a contract. If the athlete has second thoughts about his agent and wants to terminate the representation contract (and the contract is terminable at either party's option) prior to negotiation of the NFL contract, the agent can threaten to pull the guaranty Now the athlete is stuck. He either needs to come up with $80,000, find another agent willing to step into the guarantor's shoes, or he will stay with the first agent until negotiation of the first contract is completed.

Just to give you an idea of how crazy the process is, the signing terms for one of the top picks a few drafts ago was as follows: a $500,000 credit line within a week of execution of the standard agent agreement; a guarantee of $1,000,000 annually in endorsement revenue to the athlete, and if there was a shortfall it would get paid by the agency; a $90,000 a year desk job for his brother; and certain other significant perks, including but not limited to a date with a supermodel to be named later (also represented, not so ironically, by the same agency).

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The agency could afford to make these concessions though, because of the enormous money generated not by the athlete's anticipated contract, although that was substantial, but instead because the athlete was likely to be a marketing superstar. Some agents charge up to a 25% commission on marketing and endorsement deals (the terms are not regulated anywhere), while agent fees on a player's contract with his team are capped at 3% by the NFLPA.

Ethics

There are many, many ethical issues associated with sports agents. For example, as a licensed attorney, I am prohibited from soliciting business in person, and that includes phone calls. I believe that my legal ethical obligations prohibit me from soliciting athletes in person. Most agents who are attorneys rationalize in-person solicitation by saying that they are acting only as an agent then, not as an attorney, so they no longer are bound by legal ethics. Such an interpretation is, in my mind, playing fast and loose with the rules, but it has yet to be challenged and is regularly ignored.

Also, as a matter of practice, I don't contact underclassmen about representation until after they have declared for the draft. There is no surer way for an agent to irreparably harm his or her reputation with colleges than by "pushing" a prospect to turn professional early, especially when the player is not ready for the next level (and most underclassmen are not ready when they go pro).

I suspect at this point in the article you have a pretty dim view of the ethics of sports agents. I wouldn't necessarily disagree with that assessment. However, there are some agents who really do try to follow the rules and keep the athlete's best interest in mind when making decisions.

I would also remind you that college football is a big business, and ethics are a two way street. I've had the opportunity to work with a number of really bright, intelligent, outstanding young men. I also have faced situations in which prospects have made certain demands of an agent before the player would sign with that agent.

One young man I encountered from a Big Ten school was highly rated, but he suffered a knee injury in the last game of his senior year, thus clouding his pro future. I visited him, and he told me that I would have to provide a credit line of $100,000 to sign him. I then asked him why he needed a credit line of that magnitude to survive from February until May of his senior season. He didn't provide an answer.

I also asked him why he would spend that type of money because, realistically, his pro future was uncertain with the injury. Again, no response. I think that the unspoken answer was that he wanted the nice car and the flashy jewelry because his roommate was going to be a first round draft choice, and he wanted to keep up with the Jones.

Unfortunately, the young man I visited was going to be a 5th to 7th round type of player, but he wanted a 1st-round lifestyle without any guarantee he would play professionally. I guess my point is

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that, unfortunately, there seems to be a growing sense of entitlement in athletics today, and nowhere is that more evident than in the field of sports agency.

I guess if I had to briefly summarize my experience as a sports agent, I could do it with a couple of Jerry Maguire references. For most agents and prospective professional football players, there really isn't anything quite as important as showing them the money. But, just for the record, it's rare for an agent to get them at hello.

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Short Takes

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Watch out for the Scarlet Knights?

I had been hearing bits and pieces here and there about what a great job new Rutgers Coach Greg Schiano did in recruiting this year, and I finally got some time to take a closer look and see what everyone was talking about.

Before I share some of the facts of the Scarlet Knights' recruiting class with you, let me take a second to share that I'm a closet Rutgers fan. Not in a big way, mind you, I would just like to see them improve. Rutgers is the ultimate underdog, in my opinion, and if they could string together a couple of winning seasons and actually go to a bowl, I think it would be a great story. Not to mention that it would be great for the Big East.

In some ways, Rutgers and Virginia Tech are kindred spirits. Like VT, Rutgers has a core group of solid fans. In the last few years, Tech's group has gotten much larger than Rutgers', but still, there is a group of never-say-die fans at Rutgers who support the Scarlet Knights and *expect* them to do better. Rutgers has very good facilities and a good home state for football recruiting, at least on par with the state of Virginia in high school football talent. In short, much like Virginia Tech was in 1992-93, Rutgers is a football powder keg waiting for someone to light the fuse.

Schiano might just be the guy. Young, dynamic, handsome, and (best of all for Rutgers) a New Jersey native, the 34-year-old Schiano served as the defensive coordinator for the Miami Hurricanes in 1999 and 2000. From 1996-1998, he was with the Chicago Bears as a defensive assistant and defensive backfield coach, and from 1990-1996, he was a defensive backfield coach for Penn State.

When he was hired on December 1, 2000, Schiano vowed to "recruit the State of Rutgers. That's New Jersey and anything you had to drive through New Jersey to get to - and we're going to recruit Florida."

On December 13th, just 12 days later, he had an on-campus meeting with 34 of the top high school players in the state of New Jersey. Most of the recruits he talked to were impressed, and the meeting led to a landslide of New Jersey recruits just a few days later. According to Rivals.com records for Rutgers recruiting, on December 18th and 19th, *eight* players from the state of New Jersey committed to Rutgers.

The rush of NJ recruits was led by the commitment of Rikki Cook, ranked as the #3 player in the state by SuperPrep. The 6-1, 235 pound Cook was the Gatorade Player of the Year in New Jersey and is the crown jewel of Schiano's first Rutgers recruiting class.

Rutgers signed 20 players: 13 from the state of New Jersey, 7 from Florida, and 1 from Missouri. The number of in-state players was nothing new — Rutgers signed 12 last year — but the quality was unprecedented, at least in recent years. The Scarlet Knights landed 11 of the top 34 players in

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the state of New Jersey according to SuperPrep. To give you some perspective, SuperPrep rated 38 players in the state of New Jersey and 28 in the state of Virginia this year, so landing 11 of the top 34 is roughly equivalent to landing 9 or 10 of Virginia's top 25.

The class of New Jersey kids that Schiano signed looks like the classes of Virginia kids that Frank Beamer built his program on in the early/mid-90's. First of all, he's got a couple of studs. In addition to Cook, Rutgers signed defensive lineman Davon Clark, a 6-3, 260-pounder that SuperPrep rated at #7 in New Jersey.

Think of Cook and Clark as the potential Ken Oxendine and Cornell Brown of this Rutgers recruiting class. Beyond Cook and Clark, Schiano landed the players ranked #20, 21, 23, 24, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34 in New Jersey. Think of that group of guys as the players ranked 15-25 in the state of Virginia that Beamer always fills out his roster with.

If, like Beamer, Schiano can bring along his star recruits and develop some gems among the second-tier guys, he has, for the first time in years at Rutgers, a solid nucleus of guys around which to build a good team.

None of the 7 players that Rutgers signed from Florida were in SuperPrep's top 91 for the state of Florida, but the one player they signed from Missouri, QB Ryan Cubit (6-3, 195), is a real catch. Both SuperPrep and Tom Lemming rated him as the #18 QB in the country, and Rivals.com had him listed as a 3-star player and the #38 QB in the nation.

SuperPrep rated the Rutgers class as the #41 class in the country (#5 in the Big East), PrepStar rated them #49 in the country (#5 in the Big East), and Tom Lemming rated them as the #50 class in the country. Not earth-shattering numbers, but certainly *much* higher than where Rutgers has been landing the last few years.

But perhaps the most interesting thing about the Rutgers recruiting class is how many players Schiano got to decommit from other schools, and how many players he got that didn't even list Rutgers as a favorite until late in the recruiting process.

The biggest example is Cook. Rikki Cook is the brother of former Tech defensive end Ron Cook. Rikki committed to Virginia but backed out of his commitment when Cavaliers' head coach George Welsh retired. Cook attended Schiano's Rutgers meeting and became the first high-profile recruit to commit to the Scarlet Knights. Cook led the wave of December 18-19 recruits that got the Rutgers class off to a rousing start.

Davon Clark, the highly regarded DL, cancelled trips to Ohio State on January 5th and Notre Dame on January 19th and scheduled a trip to Rutgers on January 19th, instead. He must have been impressed, because he committed to Rutgers on January 22nd, the Monday after his trip to Rutgers.

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But the story of QB Ryan Cubit is perhaps the most interesting. Cubit is from Hickman, Missouri, and his father Bill was the offensive coordinator for Missouri during the 2000 season. On December 6th, Bill Cubit was named by Schiano as the offensive coordinator at Rutgers.

Four days later, on December 10th, Ryan Cubit committed to Clemson over Purdue and Illinois, without even mentioning Rutgers as being an option. Five weeks later, in the January 15th All-America issue of SuperPrep, Cubit was quoted as saying, "I was trying to be open-minded in the recruiting process, and that's why I took those other trips (to Purdue and Illinois). But no one really had chance against Clemson."

Just ten days after that issue came out, on January 25th, a Cubit decommit was widely rumored, and on January 28th, it was confirmed that he had backed out of his Clemson commitment and was going to follow his father to Rutgers.

I could tell some more stories, but this is TechSideline.com, not RutgersSideline.com. And you get the idea: Greg Schiano is off to a rollicking start at Rutgers. With the Temple Owls getting booted out of the Big East, Rutgers is now the lone weak sister the conference has. UConn enters the league in 2005 and will take over that honor, at least for a while. And if Schiano, who has gotten off to a hot start in recruiting, can follow through in other areas, he will make sure that the Rutgers Scarlet Knights won't be the bottom feeder in the Big East for a long while.

Speaking of Recruiting…

Let's take the SuperPrep, PrepStar and Rivals.com national recruiting rankings for the teams in the Big East football conference and see how they faired.

National Recruiting Rankings for 2001

Team	SuperPrep	PrepStar Rank	Rivals Rank
Miami	9	3	2
VT	8	18	22
BC	32	43	32
Rutgers	41	49	61
Pitt	44	22	28
Syracuse	50	54	62
WVU	Not in top 50	Not in top 60	69
Temple	Not in top 50	Not in top 60	79

Sources: SuperPrep's Letter of Intent issue (3/9/01), PrepStar's web site (4/13/01), and Rivals.com's web site (4/13/01).

Things did not go well for the Syracuse Orangemen in recruiting this year. The Cuse usually does pretty well in recruiting, but this year, they suffered the indignity of being ranked #6 in the Big East in recruiting by SuperPrep, PrepStar, and Rivals.com, ahead of only West Virginia and Temple. They failed to get higher than #50 nationally in any of the three recruiting services shown, a rarity for them.

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Nationally, Syracuse was ranked #50 by SuperPrep, #54 by PrepStar, and #62 by Rivals.com. The Orangemen are used to sometimes being ranked behind Miami, VT, Boston College, and even Pittsburgh, but to have one of their recruiting classes be unanimously ranked behind that of *Rutgers* is new and unsettling to the often-vocal Syracuse fans.

Also interesting to note is the disparity in opinion of how Pittsburgh did. Whereas PrepStar and Rivals both list Pitt as having the third-best recruiting class in the Big East, SuperPrep's Allen Wallace doesn't appear to think much of them, ranking them #44 in the country, or fifth in the Big East.

But that's with a caveat. Those are SP's *national* rankings, which are the sole opinion of Allen Wallace. Later on in the same issue (SuperPrep's March 9th "Letter of Intent" issue), writer Mike White lists the Big East rankings, and he flip-flops Rutgers and Pitt, ranking Pitt as the #4 class in the Big East, behind Miami, VT, and BC.

I'm not sure what kind of message that sends to have two different rankings in the magazine, but hey, that's Wallace's call. At least the magazine has disclaimers saying the in-conference rankings (by White) may vary from the national rankings (by Wallace).

The Impact of Vick

I continue to be amazed at how big of a star Michael Vick is. Recently, Vick was on the cover of ESPN the Magazine yet again. It was ESPN the Magazine's NFL Draft issue, and it featured a stylized picture of Vick, in his VT uniform, streaking through the air like a bullet, with the notation "Michael 2: Ready or not, here comes Vick."

Inside the magazine are two articles: one about Vick and one about how Virginia Tech is picking up the pieces in the aftermath of his departure.

Someone linked to the cover picture on the message board, and another poster sighed wistfully, "I like seeing Mike still decked in the VT gear." True, and the amount of exposure that Vick's exploits have given to the old "square-root-of-one" logo can never, ever be measured.

Occasionally, I see Vick's likeness appear somewhere, and for a moment, it strikes me just how incredibly huge he is. It's hard to grasp, because he is one of our own, at least as much as a star that big can be "one of us."

But every once in a while, it hits me. Like the other day, when I was cleaning up the "General Interest Sites" section of the Links Page on TSL (man, was that thing horribly out of date!). That section contains links to the big sites like ESPN.com, CBS Sportsline, etc.

As I updated the links, I checked them to make sure they worked. Out of the five links contained there, two of them — ESPN.com and CNNSI.com — had pictures of Vick on the home page of their

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web sites. I'm not talking about their "College Football" or "NFL Draft" subpages. I'm talking about their *home* pages.

A Virginia Tech athlete on the home page of some of the biggest web sites in existence. It reached out and slapped me for a moment, once again, how big Vick has become, and how much exposure he has given Virginia Tech in the process.

It's almost over. He'll be drafted soon, and not long after that, he'll don a uniform for his new team, and from that point on, that's what uniform people will start to associate him with, not his old maroon and orange Virginia Tech uniform.

As sad as that is, MV has already done way more for promoting the orange and maroon than we ever could have hoped, in just two short years.

Rivals No More

The announcement on April 9, 2001 that Rivals.com was going out of business and would be closing up shop filled me with many emotions. None of my reactions were what you would call gleeful, or joyful, or even positive. While most people considered Rivals.com, specifically Screaming Lizard's TechSportsOnline.com web site, to be a competitor to TechSideline.com, I don't think I ever really pictured it that way.

TSL always had much, much more traffic than what Screaming Lizard (SL) had on his Rivals.com site, and SL rarely wrote articles of the length and scope of what you would see on TechSideline.com, written by yours truly or others. He did a better job of covering day-to-day Virginia Tech sports news (I rarely update News and Notes anymore, it seems), and the recruiting database that Rivals provided on his site was pretty awesome, but there wasn't a lot of comparison between the two sites. I didn't think so, anyway.

But let's back up a little bit first. Rivals.com, for those of you who don't know, was a network of hundreds of web sites devoted to college, pro, and even high school sports. From roughly 1998 to 2001, Rivals.com pulled together hundreds of independently run web sites (like HokieCentral.com) into one vast, uniform "network" of web sites. The idea was one-stop shopping for any pro or college team you might want to check up on, or find a message board for.

It worked like this: Rivals.com would sign a webmaster to an "affiliate agreement." Affiliate agreements were two or three years in length, and in exchange for ad revenue sharing, Rivals.com would host the site for free. When you moved your site over to Rivals.com, you would have to fit your site into their standard template or format.

Every Rivals.com web site looked the same — only the colors and a key home page graphic were different from site to site. That's because Rivals.com is a database-driven network with a standard format, and all you have to do to create a new web site is to specify colors, a name, and a graphic, among other things, and you're ready to go. When it came time to post a new article, webmasters

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wouldn't manipulate the site itself. They would just enter their new article into a database, set some key parameters, and the article would appear on their web site.

Different webmasters had different deals with Rivals. In the case of their heavy-hitting recruiting analysts like Jeremy Crabtree or Bobby Burton of Rivals100.com, Rivals actually bought out their web sites and signed them to an employment contract.

But most webmasters just signed the affiliate agreement described above, without actually selling their web sites to Rivals. The webmaster would get free hosting and a database-driven article entry system, and in exchange, Rivals.com would share with the webmaster whatever advertising revenue was received. It was a no-cost solution for the webmaster that would hopefully bring in some cash.

Rivals.com contacted me, of course (it seems they contacted *everyone* who had an independent web site), and wanted me to sign an affiliate agreement with them. This was back in the spring/summer of 1999, back when TSL was called HokieCentral.com. Their offer was pretty simple: they were offering me a $20,000 signing bonus and something like half of the ad revenue received on the site in exchange for agreeing to be a Rivals.com site for three years.

I remember they were very nice. I heard many stories about them *not* being so nice, saying things to prospective webmasters like, "You better sign up with us, because if you don't, we're just going to bury you," but they never said anything like that to me.

I don't remember the sales guy who was recruiting me for Rivals, but I do remember having extensive conversations with Bobby Burton, one of Rivals' top recruiting coverage guys, who worked on Rivals100.com. Bobby had the annoying habit of saying, "You know what I'm saying?" over and over in his conversations, but other than that, he was an okay guy and was very excited about being onboard with Rivals. I doubt he's excited now.

To be honest, I didn't think about it very long. The $20k sounded nice, but I did not care for the standardized Rivals.com format one bit, and I knew that my readers didn't either. Devotees of HC/TSL are a fickle lot, particularly those that use the message board heavily. They like the site the way it is, and changes are not well-received. Especially changes that would move the site to an inferior format.

Not that I'm snobby about it. TSL is a pretty good-looking site these days, but it's nothing that will knock your socks off, and that was especially true back in mid-1999. I've always been a substance-over-style type of guy. But even though HC wasn't the world's most beautiful web site, it was still superior to the standard Rivals.com format, and the message board system was superior, too. Not to mention a million times faster, which is a big key when you're trying to sift through the messages on the ultra-busy TSL board.

I knew that if I switched to Rivals, my users would revolt. And I liked the creative control I had over the look of my web site. So, $20,000 signing bonus or not, I politely told Rivals.com no. Several

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times. They finally got the message and went away.

Shortly after my final "no," they signed up Screaming Lizard, and he opened up shop at virginiatech.rivals.com. I always thought SL was Rivals.com's backup plan for a VT web site, but in a recent article he wrote, SL talked about being contacted by Rivals as far back as 1998, long before they ever called me for the first time. It doesn't really matter to me whether I was option A or option B.

Rivals.com went on to grow and grow and grow. They threw many, many, many $20,000-type signing bonuses at many webmasters, and their fiscal irresponsibility, along with a bad advertising-based business plan, finally did them in.

Over the course of their existence, Rivals.com received approximately $75 million in enthusiastic venture capital, and they once had a plan for taking their network public and selling stock. But they bled money badly. In the year 2000 alone, they spent $21 million of the cash they had received, while bringing in just $1 million in revenue. They had a big office in Seattle, and their payroll alone was $7 million. So their failure and bankruptcy is no surprise.

I never had a good feeling about them, their web site format, or their business plan, but nonetheless, their demise fills me with a tinge of sadness. Another major player on the Internet has fallen, and this one isn't an on-line toy store or an on-line pet supply store. It's a sports content provider, just like me. That hits a little too close to home for me to take any joy in it.

Plus, I had gotten used to Rivals. They were well-known and provided a lot of stability in Internet sports coverage. Their web sites always provided easy-to-find links for any opponents the Hokies might be getting ready to tee it up with. Looking for an Akron Zips web site? Try akron.rivals.com. Western Michigan? Go to westernmichigan.rivals.com. They weren't the best sites in the world, but you could always find them.

And their recruiting coverage was killer. We relied heavily on the seemingly endless parade of Rivals.com recruiting "gurus" during the past year to help us keep our TSL football recruiting database up to date and well-supplied with information. Their recruiting rankings were great food for thought, and their on-line database was far above what anyone else had ever offered on the web.

Now they're gone. Anarchy reigns again on the Internet, and the shakeout continues. Many of the webmasters will quit, a lot of them will start up new sites that will be harder to find, no doubt, and the rest will piddle around trying to find direction. Many of the Rivals.com webmasters who have been cut loose have contacted us to ask about hosting opportunities. Sorry folks, we're in a scramble to get profitable ourselves, so we can't help.

The devil we knew has been replaced with a devil we don't know. Part of me is pleased for having the wisdom and foresight to turn them down when they made their tempting five-figure offer, but

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another part of me shudders at the thought that I might have made a mistake and gone with them, had I been in a different mood when I was dealing with them.

So while I'm satisfied with the course of action I chose, I'm sad because Rivals.com has flamed out. A lot of people put a lot of time, effort, and money into that ill-fated venture. But the people I feel for the most are the webmasters who have suddenly been cut loose and have to figure out where they go from here. I wish them all the best.

Inside the Numbers: Power Ratings

by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

Recently, message board poster "Technocrat" emailed me a spreadsheet he had been working on that was pretty interesting. Technocrat had devised a way to calculate power ratings for Virginia Tech football players based on their height, weight, and 40-yard dash times. I took a look at his spreadsheet, gussied it up, and the next thing you know … voila! Another "Inside the Numbers" article was well under way.

When you say "power rating" to your typical football fan, it will bring up many different connotations in everyone's minds. You can build a power rating formula that is as simple or as complex as you want it to be. Technocrat's power rating is pretty simple, from the standpoint that it only requires three points of data as input: height, weight, and 40 time.

I suppose you could complicate this thing massively by taking into account weightlifting numbers, vertical leap, shuttle times, etc., but with the deadline pressures facing each issue of the TSL Extra, I took Technocrat's basic formulas and ran with them. He and I both freely admit that you may or may not agree with his system of measurement and calculation, but "Inside the Numbers" was never really intended to be the definitive answer to statistical measurements. I prefer to think of "Inside the Numbers" as being a statistical jumping-off point and a conversation starter more than anything else.

What follows is an explanation of Technocrat's formulas, and then I'll give the results so you can find out which players scored highest in his power rating system. As always, those of you who want the executive summary can skip ahead to the results (see the paragraph titled "The Numbers") to see how the players rank. The engineering and scientific types out there can muddle through the next paragraph (titled "The Formulas") on your way to "The Numbers."

As is always the case with "Inside the Numbers," the results are interesting and illuminating, and you can learn a lot about the VT football players just from examining the numbers.

The Formulas

Okay, try not to glaze over here…if the technical stuff puts you to sleep, you can jump right ahead to the next section ("The Numbers").

Technocrat's power rating formula is simple. He calculates a mass component and divides it by a speed component to give his final power rating. So if a player's mass component is 180.0 and their speed component is 60.0, their final power rating is 180/60 = 3.000.

The speed component is created by squaring a player's 40-yard dash time and then multiplying by a "speed weighting" factor, which I'll describe later:

Speed Component = $[(40\text{-time})^2]$ * Speed Weighting Factor

To derive the mass component of the power ratings equation, you must first calculate a player's Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is calculated by converting the player's weight to kilograms (divide

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pounds by 2.2 kilos/pound) and their height to meters (divide total inches in height by 39.37 inches/meter). You then divide weight (in kilos) by height (in meters) squared, and this gives you the player's BMI:

BMI = Body Mass Index = Weight in kilos / (Height in meters)^2

By the way, Technocrat didn't just make BMI up. Go to yahoo.com or your favorite search engine and do a search on "body mass index" and you'll get at least one link to the formula shown above.

To get the mass component of the power rating, you multiply the BMI by a "mass weighting factor."

Mass Component = BMI * Mass Weighting Factor

Lastly, to get the final power rating for the player, you divide the mass component by the speed component:

Power Rating = Mass Component / Speed Component

So what are the "speed weighting factor" and the "mass weighting factor"? They are numbers that you use to assign more "weight" to either the mass part of the equation or the speed part of the equation.

So if your mass weighting factor is 2 and your speed weighting factor is 1, that doubles a player's power rating over a 1:1 ratio. Likewise, a mass weighting factor of 1 and a speed weighting factor of 2 cuts the player's power rating into half that of a 1:1 ratio.

Note that changing the weighting factors does *not* alter how the players rank relative to one another, because they're just multipliers. If you change them, they affect all players' ratings proportionately. So if player A has a higher power rating than player B, his rating will remain higher no matter what you do with the weighting numbers.

The original spreadsheet that Technocrat sent to me had a mass-to-speed ratio of 5 to 3, so he chose to give more weight to the mass portion of the equation. That's fine with me, and as I mentioned, it doesn't affect how they rank with respect to one another.

So let's start crunching some numbers!

The Numbers

Again, this formula only has three input variables: height, weight, and 40 time. All of the data for the spreadsheet that Technocrat sent to me were taken from "Gentry's Iron Palace" on BeamerBall.com, and the numbers are from the most recent winter/spring testing sessions.

Of course, some players were out with injuries and were not able to test, so the figures entered for

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those players were the most recent ones available (in most cases, fall of 2000). This information is also available on BeamerBall.com.

Technocrat did all the research and entered all of the data into the spreadsheet before sending it to me, so any errors in data entry can be attributed to him (I love being able to blame it on the other guy).

Having said all that (drum roll, please), here are the power ratings for the top 15 players on Virginia Tech's spring football roster:

Top 15 Power Ratings for Spring 2001

Rank	Player	Posn	Ht (ins.)	Wt (lbs.)	40 Time	Power Rating
1	Colas, Cols	DE	71.5	240	4.41	2.835
2	Briggs, Wayne	FB	69.25	247	4.63	2.821
3	Ferguson, Jarrett	FB	68.25	222	4.46	2.813
4	Robinson, Vegas	LB	71.5	234	4.46	2.702
5	*Pugh, David*	*DT*	*73.5*	*271*	*4.69*	*2.678*
6	Lewis, Kevin	DT	73	281	4.86	2.621
7	Burnell, Keith	RB	71	203	4.28	2.581
8	*Austin, Larry*	*CB*	*68.5*	*187*	*4.26*	*2.579*
9	Suggs, Lee	RB	71.5	204	4.28	2.558
10	Wilson, Joe	FB	72.75	261	4.78	2.534
11	Adibi, Nathaniel	DE	75.5	254	4.55	2.527
12	Urquhart, Marvin	FB	70.5	265	5.00	2.504
13	Reed, Channing	DT	73.5	311	5.20	2.500
14	Wilkinson, Dan	DT	71.5	258	4.87	2.499
15	*Beasley, Chad*	*DT*	*77*	*292*	*4.82*	*2.489*

Note: all height/weight/40 time data taken from winter/spring 2001 testing. Players displayed in italics were injured during the most recent testing period, and their data are the most recent data available. All data came from BeamerBall.com.

Cols Colas's appearance at the top of the list is no surprise to anyone who has been following Tech football closely this spring. Colas was, in my opinion, the weakest of Tech's four primary defensive ends last year (Colas, Lamar Cobb, Nathaniel Adibi, and Jim Davis).

But from the comments the Virginia Tech coaches are making to the press, Colas has been a madman this spring. He posted great numbers in the weight room (he is the only Super Iron Hokie amongst the defensive ends) and has really come on strong on the field and in practice, seriously threatening starter Lamar Cobb at the "Stud End" defensive end spot, which is Corey Moore's old position.

To explain the "Super Iron Hokie" classification for those not familiar with Mike Gentry's strength and conditioning program at Virginia Tech, this is one of six classifications that Gentry gives his athletes according to their weightlifting capabilities. Depending upon a player's overall weightlifting performance, Gentry will classify a player in increasing levels of achievement as a Maroon Hokie, Orange Hokie, Hokie, Iron Hokie, or Super Iron Hokie. The weightlifting requirements for reaching

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each level are different for each position, but they are clearly defined.

The classification of Super Iron Hokie is very hard to achieve. There are only 13 Super Iron Hokies among the players who were able to lift this spring, including walk-ons. But beyond the Super Iron Hokie classification, there is another level, the Super Iron Elite Hokie, also known simply as the "Elite" Hokie. There is only one of these: fullback Jarrett Ferguson, who lands at #3 on our list.

At #2, fullback Wayne Briggs heads up a list of six running backs that reside in the top 15 of the power ratings, including four fullbacks. Tech's tailbacks and fullbacks are phenomenal athletes, with 6 of the 10 running backs reaching Super Iron Hokie status, and one of them (Ferguson), attaining the coveted "Super Iron Elite Hokie" status. The ratio of 7 out of 10 athletes at a position being Super Iron or above is a remarkable percentage, and fully *half* of the Tech's 14 athletes at those two classifications are running backs. It is therefore no surprise to see so many tailbacks and fullbacks on this power rating list.

At #4 is Vegas Robinson, who has also made a name for himself in Mike Gentry's strength and conditioning program. Vegas is one of only 3 Super Iron Hokies among Tech's 13 linebackers.

#5 and #6 in the power ratings are David Pugh and Kevin Lewis. They are 2 of the 5 defensive tackles to appear in the top 15 of the power ratings. Pugh and Lewis are great athletes, but the key is, they can move their big bodies (271 and 281 pounds) fast (4.69 and 4.89 seconds in the forty). Anyone who is 6-1, like Pugh and Lewis, over 270 pounds, and who runs a sub-5.0 forty time will make this list.

#7 is Keith Burnell, and then at #8 is Larry Austin, the only defensive back in the top 15. Larry's presence here is due mostly to his blazingly fast 40 time of 4.26, recorded in the preseason last fall. If you drop Austin's 40-time to a still-fast 4.35, his power rating falls to 2.473, and he drops out of the top 15.

Beyond Austin, in slots 9-15, are a collection of running backs and defensive linemen, including defensive end Nathaniel Adibi, the only DE other than Colas to make the top 15.

Comparison with Historical Athletes

Let's throw into the mix three recent football players who are generally regarded as some of most powerful athletes ever to see the football field for Tech: Michael Vick, Corey Moore, and Cory Bird.

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Using their numbers from the media guides for their final seasons at Tech (1999 for Moore, 2000 for Bird and Vick), all three players crack the top 15:

Top 15 Power Ratings With Vick, Moore, and Bird

Rank	Player	Posn	Ht (ins.)	Wt (lbs.)	40 Time	Power Rating
1	Colas, Cols	DE	71.5	240	4.41	2.835
2	Briggs, Wayne	FB	69.25	247	4.63	2.821
3	Ferguson, Jarrett	FB	68.25	222	4.46	2.813
4	Robinson, Vegas	LB	71.5	234	4.46	2.702
5	*Pugh, David*	*DT*	*73.5*	*271*	*4.69*	*2.678*
6	**Bird, Cory (2000)**	S	70	218	4.42	2.674
7	Lewis, Kevin	DT	73	281	4.86	2.621
8	**Vick, Michael (2000)**	QB	73	212	4.25	2.586
9	Burnell, Keith	RB	71	203	4.28	2.581
10	*Austin, Larry*	*CB*	*68.5*	*187*	*4.26*	*2.579*
11	Suggs, Lee	RB	71.5	204	4.28	2.558
12	Wilson, Joe	FB	72.75	261	4.78	2.534
13	Adibi, Nathaniel	DE	75.5	254	4.55	2.527
14	Urquhart, Marvin	FB	70.5	265	5.00	2.504
15	**Moore, Corey (1999)**	DE	72	212	4.38	2.503
16	Reed, Channing	DT	73.5	311	5.20	2.500
17	Wilkinson, Dan	DT	71.5	258	4.87	2.499
18	*Beasley, Chad*	*DT*	*77*	*292*	*4.82*	*2.489*

Note: all height/weight/40 time data taken from winter/spring 2001 testing. Bird, Vick, and Moore data is taken from applicable media guides. Players displayed in italics were injured during the most recent testing period, and their data are the most recent data available. All data came from BeamerBall.com.

Michael Vick tops the QB's that are currently on the roster, of course, and Cory Bird tops the safeties that are currently on the roster. No big surprise there.

The big surprise is Corey Moore finishing third in the defensive end slot, behind Colas and Adibi. Here is where the weight advantage that Colas and Adibi have over Moore really comes into play. Colas outweighs Moore by 28 pounds, and Adibi outweighs Moore by 42 pounds. Colas is nearly as fast as Moore (4.41 compared to 4.38), and Adibi is fast enough (4.55) that his weight advantage overtakes Moore's speed advantage in the power ratings.

This should excite you about the potential of Colas and Adibi. If both players can continue to get stronger, learn their positions, and play with the intensity of Moore (good luck there!), they both have the chance to be very good defensive ends.

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Comparing Positions

With the number of running backs and defensive tackles making the top 15, it naturally begs the question: how do the position averages rank in the power ratings? Here they are, from top to bottom:

Posn	# of Players	Ave. Power Rating
TB	3	2.497
FB	7	2.421
DT	7	2.415
DE	7	2.388
CB	4	2.324
LB	13	2.303
OL	16	2.246
All	*90*	*2.233*
TE	5	2.197
WR	10	2.171
S	8	2.150
QB	2	2.102
P	3	1.992
K	5	1.853

This ranking of the positions by average power rating bears out what we saw in the top 15: running backs (comprised of fullbacks and tailbacks) are the top group, followed by defensive tackles and defensive ends.

Closing Comments

The top 15 is interesting because it includes many players who are established Hokie stars (Ferguson, Pugh, Austin, Lee Suggs, Adibi and Chad Beasley), some players who have come on strong lately (Colas, Robinson, and Burnell), and some players who have never made their mark and may never get the chance to (most notably, fullbacks Briggs, Joe Wilson, and Marvin Urquhart).

So what does the power rating say? Well, it tells you who among the current players is short, heavy, and can run fast.

Take a look at Channing Reed and Chad Beasley. No one is saying Reed is one of the best athletes on Tech's team (according to BeamerBall.com, he hasn't even earned Maroon Hokie honors), but because he is short (6-1-1/2), weighs 311 pounds, and can run a 5.2 forty, he comes in at #13. He's two spots ahead of #15 Chad Beasley, who is only 19 pounds lighter but nearly 0.4 seconds faster. But since Beasley is significantly taller at 6-5, he lands below Reed in the power ratings.

In the case of some of the players, you can look at the power ratings and get excited. The comparison of Moore to Colas and Adibi is particularly interesting. But in the case of other players who have

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yet to bloom and may never, it might not mean much.

But that's the fun of "Inside the Numbers," isn't it? Sometimes it's an exact analysis that proves a point, yet other times, it just makes you think. Next month, we'll do it all again with a different topic.

The Data

To see the full list of players ranked by power rating, check out this web page:

http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue006/powerratings.htm

To download the data yourself in Microsoft Excel 97 spreadsheet format, head to this link:

http://www.techsideline.com/tslextra/issue006/powerratings.xls

(Right-click the link and do a "Save Link As" or "Save Target As" to save the Excel file to disk.)

Inside TSL: What TechLocker.com Has Taught Us
by Will Stewart, TechSideline.com

A couple of weeks ago, we got together and held our quasi-quarterly company meeting to go over business plans and strategies for TechSideline.com. When I say "we," I'm talking about four people: TSL's owner, its company president, its chief technical officer, and me.

That sounds really heavy-duty, but really, it was four guys who don't look like anything special sitting around and talking about what we've learned about running a web site, and where we can go from here to continue to turn TechSideline.com into a profitable (i.e., long-term) business. There's no doubt that the web site has been a ball for all parties involved, but we've got to continue to nurture it as a business, too.

One of the things we talked about in detail, as you can imagine, is TechLocker.com. TechLocker is one of the three "revenue streams" that we're hanging our hat on as being vital to the success of TechSideline.com. Advertising and the TSL Extra are the other two.

It has been interesting to watch sales wax and wane at TechLocker.com in the 18 or so months it has been open, since November 1999. As you can imagine, the euphoria over Tech's undefeated 1999 season got TechLocker off to a great start. We sold a ton of Sugar Bowl apparel, of course, even though I didn't think much of our designs (the recent Gator Bowl stuff that we carried in TechLocker was much better, I thought).

After tailing off in early-mid 2000, sales picked up again during the 2000 football season, and then TechLocker blew the doors off in December of 2000, as the Christmas season led to a boom in sales.

But the first three months of 2001, when compared with the first three months of 2000, reveal something disturbing for a young business that must increase sales in order to become profitable: namely, sales were not increasing. In fact, they were down. Sales of TechLocker.com merchandise for the January-March time period of 2001 fell 9.5% from the same time period in 2000.

Thanks to the advent of the TSL Extra and some meager income from banner ads, total revenue for TechSideline.com as a whole is up significantly over this time last year. Yes, we still have quite a bit of ground to cover if we want to become profitable, but we're on the right track. But still, the fact that TechLocker.com merchandise sales are flat is a cause for concern.

It's not as if we don't understand why, though. TechLocker's case is symptomatic of some problems that are unique to TechLocker.com, as well as some problems that plague e-commerce as an industry. Here's a laundry list of things we have learned about e-commerce, and TechLocker.com's individual situation, that I thought you might find of interest.

The On-Line Shopping Experience

First of all, let's be honest: as a shopping experience, e-shopping can't hold a candle to a trip to the mall, or in our case, Tech Bookstore.

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It's funny. Everyone thought that e-commerce was going to take over the world. Many pundits thought the strip malls, stores, and malls of the world were on their way to becoming the dinosaurs of shopping, soon to be crumbling graveyards of storefronts that once thrived but would soon have tumbleweeds blowing across their landscape.

Not so. People like shopping, we have discovered. They like getting out of the house and heading down to the mall. They like taking the kids with them, getting a bite to eat at the food court, and running into friends they know while they're out.

What people *don't* necessarily like is sitting down in front of their computer to "go shopping." Sure, you can do it in your underwear, but it's just not the social experience that true physical shopping is.

Now granted, some things are easier to find and buy on-line. You can find a lot of stuff at Ebay and specialty on-line stores that you would never find at your local mall. But in general, the on-line shopping experience isn't as fulfilling as the physical shopping experience.

And when you're talking about Tech apparel, it's no contest: Hokie fans love to walk into Tech Bookstore, University Bookstore, or Volume II and just walk around amidst all the orange and maroon stuff. It's a sensory experience that is completely different and more fulfilling than sitting at your computer waiting for thirteen tiny pictures of T-shirts to download. There's no way that beats staring at a wall full of 25 T-shirts and taking them in visually all at once, with no waiting.

So yeah, going to one of the Tech bookstores is more fun than e-shopping. But e-shopping definitely has its time and its place.

Where On-Line Shopping Excels

Yes, Tech Bookstore is great, if you can get to it. But if you're a displaced Hokie living in Arizona, California, Texas, or Florida, then it's not just a question of driving a few minutes to downtown Blacksburg.

This is where e-shopping fills a void. For Hokies who are far away, TechLocker.com is their Tech Bookstore. They log onto it, and to them, the thirteen tiny pictures of Tech t-shirts are indeed their own little heaven. They could sit at TechLocker.com all day, pulling up first the t-shirts, then the polo shirts, then the outerwear, then the glassware … you get the idea.

E-commerce does what physical shopping could never do, similar to what catalog shopping does: extend the physical storefront far beyond its ordinary reach.

There's one other place where e-shopping excels: at Christmas time and gift-giving times. Most people like to shop at a physical store when shopping for themselves, but they often loathe shopping for other people, and making a trip to the mall in late November and December can be a maddening experience.

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It's times like those when e-shopping is a godsend. It's times like those when you *want* to be able to just sit in front of your computer and wipe out your Christmas list, without having to leave the house. Last Christmas, I bought gifts for my nephew from Amazon.com and for my brother (a UVa grad) from TheSabreShop.com, and it was quick and easy. To say that I was thrilled to get the job of Christmas shopping for them done in just half an hour is vastly understating it. I went around the rest of the day humming "I Love the Internet" under my breath.

(Don't bother trying to find the words and music — I made it up myself, right there on the spot.)

And TechLocker.com's year-2000 sales statistics support that theory. Fully one-third of TechLocker.com's business was done in the month of December last year. *One-third*. Sure, the Christmas shopping season is big for retailers, but one-third? That says something about our business.

"All Bought Out"

There's one more factor that has flattened TechLocker.com's sales: the success of the Hokie football team.

Say what? Shouldn't that increase sales?

Yes and no. The 1999 Sugar Bowl season led to a great increase in the sale of Virginia Tech-related items, but the problem is, it created a glut in the market place. Every johnny-come-lately who wanted to get rich quick threw together every bauble and t-shirt they could think of, and Hokie fans sucked the goods up at unprecedented rates.

Now what have you got? Thousands of Hokie fans with plenty of shirts, hats, pants, and jackets who don't really need anything else with a VT on it right now.

The fact that first quarter 2001 sales are down a slight bit from first quarter 2000 sales is not sur-prising. January through March of 2000 was the tail-end of the Sugar Bowl boom, so those months were probably a peak in sales for Tech-related items for that time of year. Had the Hokies not gone undefeated in 1999, sales in early 2000 probably would have been much lower, and therefore, the sales figures we're seeing in early 2001 would be higher, and would represent normal growth.

But instead, sales are down in 2001 because (a) they were abnormally high in 2000, and (b) last year's buying spree flooded the market with product, further decreasing this year's sales.

I have been told lately by some of TechSideline.com's best supporters, "Will, I would buy something from TechLocker, but to be honest, I don't need anything right now. I've got all the Tech stuff I want."

As one TSL supporter phrased it, "I'm all bought out."

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So, those are the reasons why our merchandise sales are flat, despite the fact that our traffic figures for early 2001 are up more than 2-to-1 over our traffic figures for early 2000.

The Next Steps

That's a very interesting analysis, to me, anyway. You may not care, and may have tuned out by now to read the rest of this issue or go watch TV. But it begs the question: knowing those things, now what do we do?

To help bring TechSideline.com to profitability, we need to do three things:

- · Land some corporate sponsorship/advertising;
- · Boost the TSLX subscription numbers from their current level of just over 700 to the 2500-3000 range; and
- · Double TechLocker.com sales (at least).

Items 1 and 2 are something that may or may not be discussed some other time. The remainder of this article deals with how we're planning to achieve objective #3, despite the roadblocks I've outlined here.

Here's what we're going to do:

1.) Do a better job of marketing TechLocker.com as a gift fulfillment center.

As I noted above, people may or may not be interested in shopping on-line for themselves, but they love shopping on-line for someone else, particularly around Christmas time. The convenience of on-line shopping can't be beat during the holiday season.

So we're taking some steps to make people think of TechLocker.com not just as a place to buy Hokie stuff, but as a place to buy Hokie *gifts* for other people.

We're going to add gift certificate capability, which will enable you to buy a gift certificate worth any amount you desire, and have the certificate emailed to the person of your choice. Your card will get billed, they'll get the gift certificate via email, and they'll be able to go shopping at TechLocker.com and use the gift certificate as credit.

To carry out the gift certificate at the time of purchase, we'll add a new box to the checkout procedure at TechLocker.com, and when the buyer types in a valid gift certificate number, they'll get credit for the value of the gift certificate. If they don't use it all at once, they can use the rest later. If they buy more than what the gift certificate will cover, then they'll have to pull out their own credit card to cover the difference.

We're also going to add a "send as gift" feature, just like what Amazon.com has. To use this, you shop, pick something out, and pay for it with your credit card. List the gift recipient's name and

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address for shipping, check a new "send as gift" box, and we'll let you type in a message that we'll print out and mail along with your gift.

Sure, you can give gifts from TechLocker.com right now just by entering the other person's information in the "Ship to" area, but the ability to type in a personalized gift note is a nice perk. That way, the person knows just who the gift is from and gets a nice note written by the giver.

Lastly, and just as importantly, we're going to add the capability to send the TSL Extra as a gift. There is currently *no way* to do this, but we're going to add it in. When we do, we'll probably send you a one-time email via our TSLX mailing list to let you know.

2.) Do a better job of marketing TechLocker.com, period.

You've probably noticed a few more "Featured Items" rolling through the home page lately, about 2-3 every week. We do this to let you know about all the great offerings at TechLocker.com, and to make you aware of the full breadth of the product lines.

Sometimes, the items that show up on the home page are ignored, and other times, they're gobbled up. We recently ran a "Pubs of Blacksburg" T-shirt as the Featured Item on the home page, and they flew right off the shelves. It seems many TechSideline visitors didn't know we even carried such an item and upon seeing it, they got a little uh, *sentimental* about their days at VT and bought the shirt.

Another step we're going to take to help us market the store is to create a voluntary TechSideline.com mailing list for people to sign up. We'll then use this list to email you updates to the site (so every time I post a new article, you'll get an email with a direct link to it), and occasionally, to let you know first about any special offers or new products that we have at TechLocker.com. We think the email list will be a great way to keep you up to speed on site updates, plus to let you know ahead of time about good deals at TechLocker.com.

3.) Update TechLocker.com's product lines.

This is something that is a little overdue. TechLocker has basically been carrying the same things since it opened in November of 1999, so it's time for an update. This will be a two-step process in which we'll have a sale on items that we no longer wish to carry, and then we'll use the proceeds from that sale to fund buying some new stuff to carry.

I've got a list of things I'd like to see: mainly more gameday items, like car flags and magnets; more ladies' and kids' apparel; and more maroon stuff. As the spring and summer go on, we'll work on carrying more of what you like and want to see, and don't be afraid to drop me an email at will@techsideline.com and tell me what you would like to see us carry in TechLocker.com.

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Some Final Thoughts

As I reread this article, I'm a little nervous about running it. The last few sections sound too much like a big promotional rah-rah piece for TechLocker.com, for one thing. And in the opening sections, I do the exact opposite, bashing the very thing (on-line shopping) that we're trying to improve.

But after all, this *is* "Inside TSL." I created this column with the intent of giving you a peek at what we're thinking and doing behind the scenes of TechSideline.com, and our plans for TechLocker.com are a big part of what we're thinking and doing.

Still, I'm reminded of the Marvel comic books I used to read as a kid, back in the 70's — Spider-man, the Incredible Hulk, and the Fantastic Four, to name a few. In each issue, Marvel president/chairman/CEO Stan Lee had a column that he called "Stan's Soapbox," where he would write about something related to Marvel Comics and what they were up to.

At first, it was neat, but after a while, all Stan Lee did was hype whatever the next buying opportunity was, trying to promote the next thing that Marvel Comics was doing, no matter how lousy and stupid it might be. Stan quit talking about issues that affected comics as a whole and started using "Stan's Soapbox" to just sell things. Blech. After a while, with all the exclamation points he included in his writing, he started to sound like a total idiot, even to my young mind. And there's nothing worse than an adult who sounds like an idiot to a child.

I don't want to be like Stan Lee, so I promise I won't use "Inside TSL" to promote what we're doing and to attempt to get you to buy stuff. Cross my heart, hope to die.

I do remember one of those old "Stan's Soapbox" articles from the 70's, though. Stan wrote something like:

> "I was giving a speech at Virginia Polytechnic Institute the other day, and one of the college kids in the audience asked me…."

I can't remember what the question was, and I have no clue which of the comic books I would have to dig up out of my old collection to find that column, but I think that's pretty neat — Stan the Man visiting Tech back in the 70's to talk about Spider-man and Marvel Comics.

As we like to say on the message board, "And *that* makes this Tech-related." I'm outta here, folks. See you next month!