

# Football at the University of Virginia, 1951-1961: A Perfect Gridiron Storm

JOHN S. WATTERSON<sup>†</sup>  
*Department of History*  
*James Madison University*

*In 1951, during one of the best gridiron seasons in University of Virginia history, a faculty committee headed by Professor Robert Gooch had opposed giving athletic scholarships and called for faculty control of athletics. Two years later the University of Virginia joined seven other institutions to form the Atlantic Coast Conference. Membership in the new conference proved to be disastrous for Virginia football. The team had only two winning seasons in three decades and from 1958 to 1961 suffered a twenty-eight-game losing streak. This article attempts to determine whether the Gooch Committee or President Colgate Darden were responsible for the free fall of Virginia football during the 1950s. By staying out of the Gooch controversy, Darden ensured the rapid demise of the committee's recommendations, but because he had no enthusiasm for big-time football, Virginia was unprepared to compete in the Atlantic Coast Conference.*

<sup>†</sup>Correspondence to [johnwatterson@comcast.net](mailto:johnwatterson@comcast.net).

IN OCTOBER OF 1953, THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA JOINED seven other Southern institutions to form the Atlantic Coast Conference. Two years earlier, a faculty committee headed by a former football player, Professor Robert “Bobby” Gooch, released a lengthy report calling for faculty control of athletics. The three-man committee demanded faculty control as it had existed before 1935 when Virginia left the Southern Conference—and, more precisely, faculty control over extracurricular activities as in the early years of the century.<sup>1</sup> In the fall of 1951, as the Gooch Report made its rounds, Virginia football had one of its best seasons ever, and the 1952 season was nearly as good. Yet, in three decades after 1952, Virginia produced only two winning teams. Worse still, between 1958 and 1960, the football team lost twenty-eight straight games.<sup>2</sup> Why did Virginia football go so rapidly into free fall? Did it have to do with the controversy triggered by a faculty report in the fall of 1951? Or was Virginia unprepared to go into a conference that emphasized big-time, commercialized football? Or were there other, less apparent reasons?

Since 1941, Virginia football had seen a revival in its fortunes from its losing records in the 1930s. Art Guepe became head coach in 1946 and rapidly turned Virginia football into a winning program. In 1949, the team defeated the University of Pennsylvania for the first time in fourteen attempts and in 1950 triumphed over arch-rival North Carolina for the first time in six years. In 1951, a year in which controversy engulfed football nationally, Virginia beat several teams that would compete against them in the soon-to-be formed Atlantic Coast Conference.<sup>3</sup>

Despite Virginia’s recent success, the Gooch Committee report released on October 10, 1951, seemed to cast doubt on the future of football at the university. In addition to calling for faculty control, the committee opposed athletic scholarships based on athletic ability; the scholarships should be given on need and academic merit. Students and alumni interpreted these recommendations to mean “de-emphasis” of Virginia football, in effect throwing the University’s football team into the small college ranks.

Appointed by the Academic Faculty more than six months before, Gooch and two colleagues set out to examine Virginia athletics and make recommendations. The newspapers and alumni, if they were aware of the growing academic uneasiness, were not prepared for demands from the normally sedate faculty. When the Academic Faculty endorsed the report a week later, the alumni seethed with hostility—and alumni chapters went on record opposing the committee. Largely unnoticed was the fact that the faculties of other schools such as Education, Law, and Medicine had yet to respond to the report nor had the University Senate considered the Gooch report.<sup>4</sup>

The Gooch report created so much controversy in its first week that President Colgate W. Darden felt compelled to issue a statement. The university did not give scholarships based solely on athletic ability, Darden contended. He reassured the football team that the university still cared about them. Darden also wrote to Gooch criticizing him for implying that the coaches put pressure on the faculty to alter the grades of athletes.<sup>5</sup>

At the time the report was released, Coach Guepe’s Cavaliers had played two games. In those two contests, Virginia shut out George Washington, 10-0, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute or VPI (now known as Virginia Tech) 33-0. However, on the weekend following the release of the Gooch report, Virginia was clobbered by a nearby small-college power Washington and Lee, by a whopping 42-14. Was the Gooch Report to blame for

low morale? Though the players may have been barely aware of the report, many alumni, students, and sportswriters thought so. As it turned out, that was Virginia's only loss of the season.<sup>6</sup>

To be sure, 1951 was a traumatic and difficult year for college athletics. A point-shaving scandal damaged the reputation of several basketball powers, and lurid headlines accompanied the trials of the players indicted in New York. In August, a cheating scandal at the United States Military Academy resulted in the expulsion of almost the entire football team. Shortly thereafter, the College of William and Mary, less than two hundred miles from Charlottesville, had its own travails. The football and basketball coaches as well as the president of the college (but not the football team) were fired because of a scam in which the coaches doctored the players' transcripts. During the fall, eight venerable Eastern institutions, now the Ivy League, were considering proposals that would drastically de-emphasize their football.<sup>7</sup>

So intense was the pressure for change that the American Council of Education and the NCAA appointed high-profile committees to recommend reforms. The American Council of Higher Education put forward ten proposals that closely resembled the recommendations of the Gooch Committee. Though the Council did not mention faculty control of athletics, it insisted that scholarships should be based on academic need and ability rather than on athletic potential and that the same admission standards should be applied to athletes and non-athletes. The NCAA, in turn, had a twelve-point program that resembled the ACE's but was not as rigorous. For example, it gave cautious approval to post-season contests and spring practice.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the ferment of reform at the national level, the Gooch committee may have been influenced by the scandal at William and Mary. Yet the faculty's discomfort with football also had its roots in the university's athletic history. In 1935, Virginia had resigned from the Southern Conference, then an athletic grouping that included the most powerful and successful institutions from Maryland to South Carolina. Ostensibly withdrawal from the Southern Conference resulted from the UVa honor code—and by rules against athletic subsidies said to be honored in the breach. Virginia alumni believed that the schools subscribing to the Graham Plan adopted by the conference were actually breaking the rule by subsidizing their players. The Gooch committee report charged that the honor code was merely a pretext for withdrawing from the Southern Conference. It contended that alumni wanted to subsidize Virginia's athletes.<sup>9</sup>

In 1935, the University had just suffered one of its most frustrating seasons ever. In addition to a loss to lightly-regarded Hampton-Sydney, four games ended in 0-0 ties, followed by a 61-0 shellacking at the hands of arch-rival North Carolina. After leaving the Southern Conference, Virginia established athletic scholarships—not by that name, but aid that could be given to needy football players. UVa football gradually improved, and in 1941 Virginia won all but one of its games, losing only to Yale. Since 1947, Coach Art Guepe had put together four consecutive winning seasons.<sup>10</sup>

Why did the alumni react so explosively to the Gooch Report? Was there reason to believe that the faculty could undermine Virginia football? The faculty, which before 1922 controlled athletics, had occupied three seats on a nine-member athletic committee. One of those seats was held by the Athletic Director, Norton Pritchett, a member of the faculty.

When Pritchett died in the summer of 1951, he was succeeded as athletic director by Gus Tebell, a coach and athletic administrator who had no faculty status. Did it matter that the faculty was now reduced to two members on the athletic committee? Probably not. Implicit in the athletic setup was the principle of institutional control. The coaches answered to the Athletic Director, who in turn was responsible to the university president and to the Board of Visitors (each state institution was governed by its own board of visitors). Since the faculty had traditionally set academic standards, the alumni may have feared that professors could still take control of Virginia football.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to its improved gridiron performance, Virginia had led a movement to defeat a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) initiative. In 1949, UVa was one of seven schools that challenged the NCAA Sanity Code, the first scholarship requirements imposed by the Association. Unlike the NCAA's formula of need-based stipends, Virginia's scholarships did not require needy students to work for their tuition.

In response to challenging their regulations, the NCAA leaders attempted to expel the seven institutions. Though President Colgate Darden spearheaded the opposition, the schools that voted against expelling the "sinful seven" had an agenda quite different from Darden's. Many of the institutions in the Southern, Southeastern, and Southwest Conference rebelled against restrictions on scholarships—and that included big-time football powers such as the University of Maryland, one of the so-called "seven sinners." In contrast, Darden felt that work-related aid such as the Sanity Code made necessary unduly burdened football players. He showed no dissatisfaction with Virginia's modest number of scholarships.<sup>12</sup>

Not long after the NCAA repealed the Sanity Code in March of 1951, the academic faculty appointed Robert Gooch and two colleagues to examine the athletic structure and make recommendations. Did the sudden faculty interest in athletics result from the Sanity Code controversy? Though the Sanity Code brouhaha lasted more than two years, the faculty played practically no role in this national drama. The date of the committee's appointment, March 28, 1951, came just after the code was repealed and during the trials of point-shaving basketball players in New York.<sup>13</sup>

Yet no one expected the bombshell that exploded on October 10, 1951. As a former Virginia quarterback before World War I, Gooch played on teams which were then faculty-controlled. When he himself became a member of the faculty, he and his colleagues exercised far more power than they did in 1951. During the late 1920s and until the new scholarship regulations went into effect, Virginia's football hardly merited much attention, and there is no evidence that the faculty voiced opposition. Yet it is likely that Gooch, a former Virginia football player who had watched the gradual erosion of faculty power, was responsible for shaping the report. The scandal at William and Mary may have also spurred Gooch and his two colleagues to go for broke—to erase thirty years in which faculty control had all but vanished.

Football reform had re-emerged in the 1920s, nearly twenty years after injury crises had forced radical changes in the rules, but was gradually overshadowed by the Depression of the 1930s. After World War II, a number of once powerful and prosperous teams were forced, or chose, to make changes in their football programs. Smaller institutions such as Carnegie Institute and Johns Hopkins University scaled back: a number of Roman Catho-

lic institutions with formidable pre-war teams such as Georgetown dropped football altogether. The Ivy eight were making plans to drop football scholarships and to end spring practice. For schools such as these who continued to play, the buzz word became demphasis. When the Gooch committee released its report, there was no doubt in the minds of alumni and students what the faculty intended—the word most often used: demphasis.<sup>14</sup>

Presiding over the university was a former governor of the Commonwealth, Colgate W. Darden. In 1946, Darden had become only the third president of Thomas Jefferson's University (the first president was not appointed until 1900). Darden believed that football should play a distinctly secondary role to education; in the Sanity Code controversy, he had argued that athletes could not be expected to play football, study, and hold down a paying job. Did the university president oppose football? On the one hand, he accepted it as a necessary evil and used it to schmooze with politicians such as Senator A. Willis Robertson (evangelist Pat Robertson's father) or fellow university presidents who sat with him at football games. However, he preferred to play teams that did not emphasize big-time football or subsidization of athletes. Before the Gooch Report was released, he also inquired about eliminating athletic scholarships, a reform which the Ivy schools would adopt in 1951. Though he later opposed joining conferences, he had earlier approached the chancellor of Vanderbilt, Harvie Branscomb, about the possibility of forming a "small football league" without the evils of big-time football.<sup>15</sup>

If Darden did not share the notions of faculty control or the elimination of athletic scholarships, he believed in the gridiron status quo. Let Virginia play state schools and a few out-of-state schools (he preferred Ivy League institutions as interregional rivals); keep athletic subsidies at an existing level—slightly over \$50,000 a year (though he would have preferred to give no athletic scholarships); and try to recruit players in state: in other words, put a player's education first. "Where an institution goes beyond this point and recruits players as players, it is on shaky ground," he wrote to an alumnus, "and that ultimately gives trouble because players are not interested in an education or in University life."<sup>16</sup>

The Board of Visitors decided in October to put off consideration of the Gooch Report until December of 1951. In contrast, the Virginia alumni reacted quickly and vocally. The powerful Richmond and Washington chapters condemned the report out of hand; so did the Board of Managers of the Virginia Alumni Association. The board charged that the report was designed so that "the faculty may claim the authority to control all athletic policies to the exclusion of the president and the board of visitors, alumni and students." Yet that same week, the Education Faculty had rejected the report 21-1, and the Law and Medical Faculties (and the University Senate) had yet to report.<sup>17</sup>

The few students and alumni who wrote or were quoted in the *Cavalier Daily* also opposed the report. One alumnus wrote: "I am only a Virginia man and [so] can say hell to the Oxford Report [the Oxford Report referred to the fact that Gooch and A.K. Davis, a committee member, had both been Rhodes Scholars]. Let's have bigger and better football at the University I love so much." Another alumnus told Staige Blackford, managing editor and a columnist for the newspaper, "I do not want to suffer Saturday after Saturday with a losing team. I do not want to discuss a losing team with my friends." Did winning

teams hurt their universities? This alumnus saw no correlation with “physical facilities, academic standards, and national [football] ratings.”<sup>18</sup>

The Virginia football team seemed to be making this very point. After the Washington and Lee game, Coach Art Guepe’s gridders reeled off five straight wins—impressive ones. The team defeated VMI, a highly competitive team in the Southern Conference, 34-14; then they had three outstanding wins against Duke, a perennial power, 30-7, the Citadel, 39-0, and North Carolina, 34-14, and managed to eke out a 28-27 victory against a strong South Carolina squad.<sup>19</sup>

The season finale against William and Mary was regarded as one of the team’s more difficult games. Following the scandal in August, the still robust W&M football team had won five straight victories against Wake Forest, North Carolina State, Richmond, Pennsylvania (which had defeated Virginia the year before), and Virginia Tech. But, against William and Mary, the surging Cavaliers, playing at home in their final season game, mauled William and Mary, 46-0.<sup>20</sup>

That victory was enough to make bowl scouts sit up and take notice. Since the Southern Conference had banned bowl games, Virginia at 8-1 was a natural candidate. When asked if they wanted to play Georgia Tech in the Orange Bowl, according to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, “the Cavaliers almost tore holes in the ceiling with their whoops.” Besieged by reporters, Guepe commented: “I don’t want to be a bowl maniac, but these kids did a tremendous job this season and they deserve a good trip if they want it.”<sup>21</sup>

But not if Colgate Darden had his way. Meeting with athletic director Gus Tebell the next day, Darden turned thumbs down on a bowl appearance. His explanation: it was up to the Board of Visitors to decide whether Virginia would go to a bowl. Darden and everyone else knew that the bowl committees had to have an immediate “yes” or “no.” The Board would not meet until December. It was no secret that Darden opposed post-season competition, and he undoubtedly disliked the idea of Virginia playing in a bowl game. Probably he associated bowl games with big-time, highly subsidized football. The Southern Conference had banned its members from post-season play. Given the faculty’s attitude toward subsidized football, Darden would have put himself on the side of big-time football. Adept politician that he was, he was careful not to play into the hands of the faculty critics by endorsing a New Year’s bowl game.<sup>22</sup>

Though disappointed by Darden’s abrupt decision, hardly anyone openly criticized it. With the threat of faculty intervention, Darden’s position may have seemed moderate. Instead, the Southern Conference broke ranks. First, Clemson accepted an invitation to the Gator Bowl and then Maryland, the epitome of big-time football, agreed to play in the Sugar Bowl. The splintering of the Southern Conference over the bowl ban was a symptom of what would occur two years later when seven schools seceded to form the Atlantic Coast Conference. Ironically, though an independent, Virginia would be caught up in the secession of the seven schools and swept into the movement toward big-time football that Darden wanted to avoid.<sup>23</sup>

In December of 1951, the Board of Visitors appointed a special committee to draw up a new system of athletic control. In the spring of 1952, reacting to the Gooch Report, the University Senate (which included all of the schools within the University) called for a committee that would consist of five faculty, two alumni, and two students named by the

Student Council. Taking their cue from the American Council on Education, the Senate proposed that no aid be awarded “primarily on the basis of athletic ability.” Their position was at odds with the alumni who, in 1948, had established a Student Athletic Foundation. Though unstated, the primary purpose of the foundation was to award athletic scholarships. The faculty and alumni were on separate tracks, each group intent on exercising control of the athletic program.<sup>24</sup>

A year after the Gooch Committee report, the Board of Visitors had the final word on athletic control. After hearing a report from their special committee, the Board established its own Advisory Committee on athletics consisting of three faculty members appointed by the president, two members elected by the alumni association, and two students. In a pinch, the students and alumni could outvote the faculty. Added to this was the fact that the president appointed the faculty and not just those from the Academic Faculty which had endorsed the Gooch Report. For all intents and purposes, the Gooch Report was dead. The Board of Visitors ended their discussion with the statement: “[A]s in all other phases of the University’s activities, [athletics] is subject to review and final determination by the Board of Visitors.”<sup>25</sup>

But President Colgate Darden’s approach—to avoid big-time football as played by major college teams—lingered. Whereas the Gooch Committee’s recommendations had been rejected, Darden managed to keep Virginia football at its moderate, post-war level. In March of 1952, after the team had wracked up an 8-1 season, the Board accepted Darden’s recommendation to raise Coach Guepe’s salary by \$100; a year later, after the team had gone 8-2, Guepe went to Vanderbilt to interview for the coaching position. Before his visit to Vanderbilt, Guepe had requested a five-year contract at an annual salary of \$10,000. According to athletic director, Gus K. Tebell, “[U]ntil his return, Mr. Guepe had no knowledge whether or not his requested contract would be accepted or revised and therefore, could not consider his contract in deliberating his offer from Vanderbilt.” Offered a salary of \$12,000 by Vanderbilt, Guepe announced after returning from Nashville that he was leaving. Darden, who could probably have persuaded Guepe to stay by paying him a competitive salary, was resigned to losing him: “While I regretted to see Mr. Guepe go, I do not think he could have refused the offer made him at Vanderbilt, nor do I think we could have equaled it without giving to football here an emphasis, in comparison with other activities, which would have been injurious in the long run.”<sup>26</sup>

Injurious it was for other reasons. The replacement for Guepe, Ned MacDonald, won only a single game in 1953, three games in 1954, and one game in 1955. The coaches who succeeded him were unable to win consistently—or to win at all. When Darden retired in September of 1959, the team had won only a single game in the previous season. Darden’s variety of de-emphasis was simply to play at the same level as Virginia had done in the Guepe era. Unfortunately, the secession of seven teams from the Southern Conference put Virginia football at a gridiron crossroads.

In May of 1953, seven teams from the Southern Conference announced that they were forming the Atlantic Coast Conference. Rumors soon circulated that Virginia would be invited to become the eighth team. In spite of its status as an independent, Virginia played Southern Conference teams and, even though an independent, acted almost as if it were a member of the Conference. The Virginia teams who belonged to the Southern such

as VMI, VPI, and William and Mary were competitive with the University of Virginia but none of them were invited to join the ACC, possibly because they lacked the prestige of being major state universities. The president of VPI later attempted to get Colgate Darden to help his institution in joining the conference, but the ACC rejected a school that had traditionally been better known for its “cadet corps” than for its athletics or its academic programs.<sup>27</sup>

Many alumni and students favored joining the ACC. One member of the board contended that the prospect of joining the conference was already drawing students to the University. The athletic council added that the conference would offer an opportunity in a host of lesser sports. Yet a residue of distrust of the faculty left over from the Gooch Committee may have influenced the alumni. Rumors still circulated that Virginia planned to de-emphasize football, fears that Darden had unintentionally fanned. If Virginia maintained the status quo or joined the Southern Conference, it would be easier to downsize the program. Once the university affiliated with the Atlantic Coast Conference, the football program would be traveling in faster company. It would be impossible to de-emphasize the team without resigning from the conference or dropping football altogether. In addition, the prospect of playing major out-of-state teams, not to mention the anticipation of joining a major conference, whetted the appetites of alumni, students, and athletic authorities. Even the possibility of attracting better students was mentioned as a reason for joining the ACC.<sup>28</sup>

The memory of Virginia’s experience in the Southern Conference still loomed in the minds of some alumni and board members. If Virginia joined the ACC, these alumni believed, it would be subject to the conference rules—and would have to play conference teams. Because of their dislike of nearby University of Maryland, the alumni in the Washington area were bitterly opposed to joining the ACC. Maryland, whose president H.C. (Curley) Byrd was a former football coach, had built a football colossus in the late 1940s and early 1950s and was picked in some polls as national champions in 1951. Other schools poised to join the new conference were rumored to have made underhanded deals with recruits, even guaranteeing that the players would automatically graduate. Virginia had left the Southern Conference in 1935 because the Southern had eliminated athletic subsidies but had not kept schools like Duke and North Carolina from giving assistance *sub rosa*. Would Virginia again be placed in the same predicament—trying to obey the rules and suffering as a result?<sup>29</sup>

Darden strongly opposed joining the ACC or even re-affiliating with the Southern Conference. As a former governor, the president believed in keeping close relations with state schools. “My own belief is that the University should not align itself with a conference to the exclusion of other Virginia teams,” he wrote, “more especially if the conference should adopt a rule requiring the restricting of contests to conference members.” He insisted that good relations with Virginia schools were more important than joining the ACC.<sup>30</sup>

When the Board of Visitors debated joining the conference on October 9, 1953, Darden enlarged on these views. He conceded that Virginia would still be able to schedule state schools. But he insisted that “our joining the ACC and leaving them out would hurt us with them and their alumni.” He also pointed out that the rules of the ACC (the rules



of the Southern Conference) required all students to take twelve hours while Virginia's mandated only nine. Some of the players might be forced to leave the team if they were to maintain their academic standing. Implicit in this statement was the assumption that Virginia students were either required to take more demanding courses or that they came from poorer academic backgrounds and took longer to get their performance up to the University's standards. Even the advocates of joining the ACC acknowledged that some players might have difficulty in going from nine to twelve hours.<sup>31</sup>

But "gate receipts and glory," in the words of President Robert Hutchins of the University of Chicago, won out. One member of the Visitors, Frank Talbott, contended that the University depended on the athletic department to raise three-fourths of athletic funds. Of necessity, the money had to be raised by gate receipts. "Our athletics are commercialized whether we like it or not," he wrote. "If we remain aloof, we will in time be unable to schedule conference members like North Carolina. Revenues will diminish along with interest in our program."<sup>32</sup>

Ironically, these were the same fears that the Gooch Committee had fanned—and the same emphasis on big-time football that the Gooch committee had attempted to squelch. Academically the standards of the school might be raised by requiring more hours and tougher courses, but the faculty's role in determining whether athletic ability was considered as a criterion for scholarships might be diminished.

The Board of Visitors voted 6-3 to join the ACC (actually the invitation had not been received though it would arrive the following day). Only one of those who testified on October 9 suggested that Virginia might have difficulty competing in the ACC. Even though the football team was winless after two games and would win only one game that season, the ability of the Cavaliers to compete against conference and state teams was taken for granted.<sup>33</sup>

Colgate Darden had played a largely low-profile role during the Gooch Report controversy. He had not attended the Arts and Sciences faculty meeting when the Gooch report was overwhelmingly endorsed or the meeting of other schools when it was discussed. He had not taken a stand except to state that he did *not* believe that football was overemphasized at the university. He had made no statements to the press other than his initial statement immediately after the report when he tried to calm the controversy. Other than refusing to accept a bowl invitation, he had allowed the faculty, the alumni, and the Board of Visitors to argue the issue or make recommendations.

Yet Darden had a vision of football at Virginia that played a role in the outcome of the football wars, though not necessarily with the result that he desired. His vision was this: Virginia should continue to compete at a modest level of subsidization; it should mainly compete with Virginia schools that played at its level; it should encourage players from Virginia to try out for the team and, if possible, students without scholarships; and the players should be given every opportunity to do their academic work. Moreover, the university should not pay exorbitant salaries to head coaches; and, of course, there should be no post-season contests. While his views were not those of the radical reformist American Council of Education, they tended in that direction.

Darden's approach had worked in the 1940s and early 1950s because he had a talented head coach and Virginia was able to choose its opponents. The Gooch Committee

report and Darden's failure to retain Art Guepe would not have affected Virginia football in the same way if the seven institutions had not seceded from the Southern Conference and invited Virginia to join them. By trying to avoid big-time, highly commercialized football, Virginia found itself less able to compete in the Atlantic Coast Conference. By itself, this may not explain three decades of losing, but it gives some insight into why Virginia's football spiraled downward so rapidly.

Though the Gooch Committee briefly caused shock and dismay in October of 1951, its controversial report played only a minor role in the decline of Virginia football. It is true that Athletic Director Gus Tebell confided to Darden that Coach Art Guepe left in 1953 not simply because of a higher salary offered by Vanderbilt but also because of the unsettled state of Virginia athletics. The enthusiastic response of Virginia alumni (outside the Washington area) to the prospective ACC offer may be attributed in small part to the uneasiness caused by the fear of faculty's (and Darden's) hostility toward big-time football.<sup>34</sup>

This is not to say that the faculty had no power over Virginia athletics. By setting academic standards, the faculty could determine who was admitted and what courses they took. The foreign language required for admission, for example, favored students from Eastern prep schools and urban high schools. It hurt the prospect of attracting players from small towns and rural areas of Virginia. In addition, a freshman core curriculum that included the dual requirements of trigonometry and calculus not only proved daunting to first-year students but also contributed to the academic woes of potential varsity players. While the curriculum may have played a minor role in Virginia's fall from gridiron respectability, it interfered with attempts to revive the football program in the years afterward.<sup>35</sup>

President Colgate Darden retired in September of 1959 (in the midst of Virginia's twenty-eight-game losing streak). As an ex-governor and president of a public university, he viewed the university in terms of the state it served. And this attitude carried over to football. He felt that football, like higher education, should engender rapport between state institutions. Wary of recruiting too many players from out-of-state, he believed that UVa's modest number of athletic scholarships should give an opportunity to Virginia students to play on the team.

Darden's distrust of big-time football was also rooted in the turmoil that overtook the sport in 1951. His view was in keeping with presidents of the Ivy League institutions who were trying to find a solution for the evils of big-time football. His leadership of the movement against the NCAA Sanity Code was an effort to keep football from becoming too burdensome for players who might have to work as well as attend classes and play the game. While he was careful to stay out of the public controversies (such as the furor over the Gooch Report), he cautiously pushed a moderate agenda.

The University of Virginia's misfortune was to be caught in the perfect storm of conflicting forces. From 1953 to 1961, when its twenty-eight game losing streak ended, Virginia won only thirteen games. Unable to choose between big-time football and a mid-sized college model in the early 1950s, Virginia football would pay a stiff penalty in the decades that followed.<sup>36</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Report of the Athletic Committee of the Academic Faculty of the University of Virginia Appointed March 28, 1951, President's Papers, Permanent File, 1960, Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia (hereafter UVa Spec. Coll.).

<sup>2</sup>*Virginia Football 2006* [Media Guide], (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Athletics Department, 2006), 186. The final section, "The Record Book," contains the scores of all University of Virginia games from 1888 to 2005.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. The University of Virginia defeated Duke, North Carolina, and South Carolina, all of which would be charter members of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

<sup>4</sup>*Cavalier Daily*, 12 and 14 November 1951, p. 1; *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 19 November 1951, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Colgate W. Darden, Jr. to Robert K. Gooch, 15 October 1951, President's Papers, Athletics, July to December 1951, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>6</sup>Jim Callery, "Buckshot," *Cavalier Daily* (University of Virginia), 15 October 1951, p. 4; *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 15 October 1951, p. 11; *Virginia Football 2006*, 186.

<sup>7</sup>*New York Times*, 4 August 1951, p. 1; Wilford Kale, Bob Moskowitz, and Charles M. Holloway, *Goal to Goal: 100 Seasons of Football at William and Mary* (Williamsburg, Va.: Botecourt Press, 1997), 133-147; *New York Times*, 19 February 1951, p. 1; John Sayle Watterson, *College Football, History Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 249-252; Richard Goldstein, *Ivy League Autumns, An Illustrated History of College Football's Grand Old Rivalries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 129-130.

<sup>8</sup>Watterson, *College Football*, 227-234.

<sup>9</sup>Report of the Athletic Committee of the Academic Faculty of the University of Virginia, pp. 19-22, UVa Spec. Coll.; Testimony of Frank Talbott, Minutes, Board of Visitors, 9 October 1953, p. 313, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>10</sup>*Virginia Football 2006*, 186. This page includes records for the 1935, 1941, 1946-1950 seasons.

<sup>11</sup>Report of the Athletic Committee to the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia, 14 December 1951, box 3, Athletics, July to December 1952, UVa Spec. Coll. While the committee stated the chain of command in 1951, it was largely restating the existing order.

<sup>12</sup>Watterson, *College Football*, 214-218.

<sup>13</sup>*New York Times*, 19 February 1951, p. 1; "Preliminary Statement of the Joint Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees: the Board of Directors of the Athletics Association; and the Executive Committee of the Alumni Association of the University of Kentucky," n.d., President's Papers, Athletics, January to June 1952, UVa Spec. Coll. Kentucky players were also involved in the point-shaving scandal.

<sup>14</sup>James Whalen, *Gridiron Greats Now Gone: The Heyday of 19 Former Consensus Top 10 Programs* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1991); Hunter Guthrie, "No More Football For Us," *Saturday Evening Post*, 13 October 1951, pp. 117ff; G.F. Wilson Shaffer, *Recreation and Athletics at Johns Hopkins: A One-Hundred Year History* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 33-47; *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 15 November 1951, sec. II, p. 1. The article discusses Yale's decision to drop spring practice.

<sup>15</sup>*Cavalier Daily*, 12 January 1950, p. 1; A. Willis Robertson to Colgate W. Darden, Jr., October 28 1952, President's Papers, Office Administrative Files, 1952, UVa Spec. Coll.; Colgate W. Darden, Jr. to Harvie Branscomb, December 1 1951, President's Papers, Athletics, July to December 1951, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>16</sup>Colgate W. Darden, Jr. to Charles C. Craddock, 31 August 1951, President's Papers, Athletics, July-December 1951; Statement by Darden, Minutes, Board of Visitors, University of Virginia, 9 October 1953, p. 313; Proposed Grants for the 1953-54 School Year from the University Alumni Association and the Virginia Student Aid Foundation, President's Papers, Athletics, July to December 1953, all UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>17</sup>*Cavalier Daily*, 14 November 1951, p. 1; *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 19 November 1951, sec. II, p. 1; Reports from Departments, n.d., President's Papers, Athletics, January to June 1952, UVa Spec. Coll. The Department of Education faculty rejected the report, 21-1.

<sup>18</sup>*Cavalier Daily*, 16 October 1951, p. 3; 26 October 1951, p. 2; 14 November 1951, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup>*Virginia Football 2006*, 186.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid*; Kale, Moskowitz, and Holloway, *Goal to Goal*, 131, 298. Pennsylvania had defeated Virginia the year before and was a perennial Eastern power.

<sup>21</sup>*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 November 1951, sec. D, p. 1; telephone interview, Tom Scott to John Watterson, 20 April 2006, notes in possession of the author. Scott was a member of the team and confirmed that the team members were sorely disappointed not to go to a bowl.

<sup>22</sup>*Cavalier Daily*, 27 November 1951; Minutes, 1, Board of Visitors, University of Virginia, 14 December 1951, p. 216, UVa Spec. Coll.; Martin L. Dellinger to Colgate W. Darden, Jr., 28 November 1951, President's Papers, Athletics, 1951, UVa Spec. Coll. Darden responded to a question at a meeting of the alumni in Richmond where he explained why he opposed bowl games.

<sup>23</sup>*Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 14 November 1951, p. 2; 26 November 1951, p. 11; *Cavalier Daily*, 28 November 1951, p. 3; Minutes of the Board of Visitors, University of Virginia, 14 December 1951, 216, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>24</sup>Report of the Committee of the University Senate, n.d., President's Papers, Athletics, July to December 1952, UVa Spec. Coll.; Excerpt from the Senate Minutes, 24 September 1952, President's Papers, Permanent File, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>25</sup>Minutes, Board of Visitors, 10 October 1952, p. 262, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>26</sup>Minutes, Board of Visitors, 14 March 1952, p. 231; Gus K. Tebell to Colgate W. Darden, Jr., 12 February 1953, President's Papers, Athletics, January to June 1953; Darden to Charles G. Craddock, 31 August 1953, Athletics, July to December 1953, President's Papers, all UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>27</sup>Testimony of Gus K. Tebell, Colgate W. Darden, Jr., Minutes, Board of Visitors, 9 October 1953, pp. 311, 313; Darden to Gordon Gray, 29 October 1953; Darden to Hollis Edens, October 29 1953; Darden to Walter Newman, 29 October 1953, President's Papers, Athletics, July to December 1953, all UVa Spec. Coll. There were also Virginia alumni who opposed the admission of Virginia Tech. See W.N. Watson to Darden, 10 August 1953, President's Papers, Athletics, July to December 1953, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>28</sup>Charles G. Craddock to Barron F. Black, September 9, 1953, Charles G. Craddock to Colgate W. Darden, Jr., Athletics, July to December 1953; testimony, Judge Alfred D. Barksdale, Board of Visitors, 9 October 1953, p. 314, all UVa Spec. Coll. See also Minutes of Meeting of the Athletic Council of the University of Virginia, 30 May 1953, Athletics, President's Papers, January to June 1953, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>29</sup>Testimony of Frank Talbott, Minutes, Board of Visitors, 9 October 1953, p. 313, UVa Spec. Coll.; testimony of Mortimer Caplin, Board of Visitors, 9 October 1953, p. 312, UVa Spec. Coll..

<sup>30</sup>Colgate W. Darden, Jr. to W.N. Watson, 6 August 1953, President's Papers, Athletics, July to December 1953, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>31</sup>Testimony of Colgate W. Darden, Jr., Minutes, Board of Visitors, 9 October 1953, p. 313, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>32</sup>Testimony of Frank Talbott, Minutes, Board of Visitors, 9 October 1953, p. 313, UVa Spec. Coll.; Robert Hutchins, "Gate Receipts and Glory," *Saturday Evening Post*, 3 December 1938, pp. 25ff.

<sup>33</sup>Testimony of Nelson T. Offutt, Minutes, Board of Visitors, 9 October 1953, p. 311, UVa Spec. Coll. Offutt was director of the Virginia Student Aid Foundation that gave out privately-funded athletic scholarships.

<sup>34</sup>Gus K. Tebell to Colgate W. Darden, Jr., 12 February 1953, President's Papers, Athletics, January to June 1953, UVa Spec. Coll.

<sup>35</sup>Telephone conversation, Gene Corrigan with John Watterson, 17 November 2006, notes in possession of the author. Corrigan, a former athletic director at Virginia, came to UVa to coach lacrosse in

1957. Though his players came from Eastern prep schools, they also had difficulties with the freshman requirement of trigonometry and calculus. The author also draws on his own memories as an undergraduate at the institution from 1957 to 1962.

<sup>36</sup>*Virginia Football 2006*, 186-187.