

Anonymous criticism of Mooney is outrageous, as is Richmond's lack of response

By Paul Woody

Everyone knows how to do your job better than you, no matter your success, experience or dedication.

Teachers know this all too well. There's not an umpire or referee in the world who hasn't been told he's blind in one eye and can't see out the other, doesn't know the rules and should "Call it both ways!"

Patients, having seen a one-minute television commercial for a new drug, think they have more knowledge than someone with a medical degree and years of experience.

The proliferation of television shows about lawyers has given real-life lawyers too many clients who think if they only had Alan Shore (a young James Spader on Boston Legal) or Ben Matlock (Andy Griffith in a role that probably would have aggravated Mayberry Sheriff Andy Taylor) they'd have the largest corporations in the world quaking in fear over the threat of a lawsuit.

Coaches might be in a special category, though. Everyone knows how to coach. Every coach is questioned and scrutinized, even those with national championships on their résumés.

Richmond coach Chris Mooney might be the leader in the clubhouse for criticism this season. A group of fans has been active on social media and now via an electronic billboard in calling for his dismissal.

Mooney works diligently. He meets the press after every game and answers every question calmly, respectfully and professionally.

He holds at least one press conference each week. He is well compensated to be sure, and while we can say his press obligations are part of the job, that hasn't stopped other coaches throughout the country from blowing off the media in a fit of pique.

Mooney's critics are less forthcoming. Those responsible for the electronic billboard told Richmond Times-Dispatch reporter and UR beat writer John O'Connor, "We'd prefer to remain anonymous."

Of course they would. It's easier to snipe from the peanut gallery or hide behind a sign than to publicly confront the target of your discontent.

Success in college basketball is judged by NCAA tournament berths. Mooney has led the Spiders there twice, but not since 2011. Richmond reached the quarterfinals of the NIT in 2015 and 2017.

Coaching is a wins and losses profession. But before attacking Mooney, his antagonists should contemplate several occurrences in the Richmond program.

Khwan Fore, one of the Spiders' potential starting guards for 2018-19, graduated last spring and opted to spend his final year of eligibility at Louisville, an ACC member and top 20 team. Fore has played in every Louisville game, started 16 and averages 20 minutes per contest.

De'Monte Buckingham, the Spiders' potential power forward/small forward/shooting guard, was dismissed from the team last spring for violating an athletic department policy. Buckingham was the A-10 rookie of the year in 2016-17 and last year led the team in rebounding, was second in assists and steals and averaged 12.2 points.

He transferred to California State University, Bakersfield.

Nick Sherod, a junior in his third year as a starter, tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee in the first half of the sixth game of the season and has not played since. He averaged 36 minutes, 15.2 points and 6 rebounds going into that game against Hampton.

Any team would struggle after losing three talented starters.

Anonymous critics also might ask if Mooney is getting all the support he needs to compete in the Atlantic 10 Conference. The top teams in the league, and now even perennial doormat Duquesne, have made major commitments to their programs. If these schools are recruiting a player who meets the NCAA requirements for eligibility -- and in some cases even a player who doesn't but will after sitting out a year -- that player is getting into the school.

It's fine if Richmond doesn't want to do that, and if not, consideration should be given to leaving the A-10 to compete at a more appropriate level -- the Big South, Colonial Athletic Association or Patriot League, for example.

Earlier this month, O'Connor asked UR vice president and athletics director John Hardt about Mooney's future. Hardt said, "This is not the time. The focus right now is on the team and competing on the court."

The university opted not to comment on the billboard.

Every responsible adult at Richmond should be outraged by this anonymous attack on a member of its community. The university's silence is equally outrageous. Someone in a leadership role should have come to Mooney's defense.

This is the time for the UR administration to decide whether it stands with the coach who has represented it capably and honorably since 2005 or with an anonymous group that hides behind signs and the unsocial side of social media.

Parents, faculty, staff in Henrico schools owed explanation for Bedwell's return

By Paul Woody

Reasonable people can disagree, but ...

Parents, faculty and staff in the Henrico County school system should wonder about the David Bedwell situation.

Bedwell left his job as athletic director at L.C. Bird High School in Chesterfield County to take the job as a school counselor and head football coach at Hermitage High School in Henrico County.

He had been at Bird for 19 years and the football coach for 17. He won 203 games and three consecutive state championships.

He gave up the job to become Bird's athletic director for two years before deciding he wanted to return to coaching.

But before he began coaching at Hermitage, he was charged with a felony for ordering \$5,600 of football equipment, which he removed from school property, and "spirit" wear bearing the imprint of the Hermitage panther paw, paid for with L.C. Bird funds.

Ultimately, the equipment was returned and Bedwell repaid Bird for the "spirit" wear. He entered guilty pleas to two misdemeanor counts of entering property of another with intent to interfere with the right of the owner.

He was sentenced 12 months on one charge, with the entire sentence suspended. He was sentenced to 12 months on the other charge, with 10 months suspended.

He was on paid leave in Henrico during the disposition of his case.

It is admirable that Henrico County school superintendent Dr. Amy Cashwell sent the message that faculty, staff, and, we hope, students, will be considered innocent until proven guilty. In some cases, even pleading guilty to two misdemeanors and serving two months in jail is not enough to cost an employee his or her job.

Students, teachers and administrators make mistakes. It is the human condition, a condition from which we all suffer at times and prosper at times.

However, should parents be comfortable that someone sentenced to 24 months in jail, with 22 months suspended, is a school counselor and head football coach at Hermitage?

"I feel that Mr. Bedwell has taken the appropriate steps in addressing this with the Hermitage community, to include the faculty, staff and students at the school," Cashwell said via email. "With the legal matter now concluded, his reinstatement follows the outcome of the case, a careful review of the facts and numerous discussions with Dave himself.

“I’m afraid the school division will decline to elaborate on those discussions. I know Dave will work every day to serve the best interests of students and families and to build on the high levels of trust our families place in us every day.”

Administrators have a policy of not commenting on personnel matters, especially when it involves a dismissal.

Bedwell wasn’t dismissed. He kept his job.

If Cashwell and the Hermitage administration believe Bedwell is a good person, outstanding counselor and coach and there’s something about this situation that does not merit further punishment, they should say so.

Bedwell did not respond to a request for comment sent to his Hermitage email address nor to a phone message left with the Hermitage counseling office or a voicemail on his cellphone.

It seems there is more to this case than has been publicly disclosed.

If ever a community was owed an explanation on a hiring decision, this is the one.

More is required than the letter Bedwell sent to the Hermitage community, apologizing for the negative publicity and promising this experience will make him a better counselor and role model for Hermitage students.

School system employees have a right to know if how this situation was handled is standard operating procedure for anyone in similar circumstances.

“It’s standard operating procedure that each case is handled on its own merits,” Cashwell said via email. “If you’re hearing any insinuation that Mr. Bedwell’s status as a football coach played a role in that process, I can assure you it’s false and uninformed.”

Appreciate that, but to be honest, I’m not hearing it. I’m not really listening for it. Rumors and gossip can be juicy, but they aren’t facts.

Parents of Hermitage students and every employee of the Henrico County school system are entitled to the facts.

This is one time when the implied statement of, “because we say so,” is not an adequate response.

Kyle Guy makes three terrific, amazing, spectacular free throws

By Paul Woody

MINNEAPOLIS - Over the course of a career, a basketball player stands at the free throw line in his driveway, in a park on an asphalt court late at night, in the gym early in the morning, almost always by himself, and shoots hundreds of free throws, thousands of free throws, a countless number of free throws.

Each time, he tells himself he has to make two or three to win the game. Each time, he dribbles, takes a deep breath and shoots.

Some players don't leave, no matter how long it takes, until they've made those shots in what they are pretending is a pressure situation.

But it isn't a pressure situation. There is no way to replicate the pressure of having a game, a season, a career at stake until the player is standing at the line by himself in a game with all those things at stake.

And in this case, Kyle Guy stood at the line for the Virginia Cavaliers, six-tenths of a second left in the game, Auburn leading 62-60 with a berth in the national championship game hanging in the balance.

Guy had been fouled on a last-second, desperation attempt to make a 3-point shot from the corner off what could have been Virginia's last inbounds play of the season.

Now, as he stood at the foul line, his teammates were gathered behind him at midcourt. The Auburn players lined up along the foul lane and there were about 70,000 people in U.S. Bank Stadium, watching in silence, some holding their collective breathes.

Others stood with their eyes closed, waiting for the reaction of those around them let them know whether look up an smile for joy or keep their eyes closed to fight back tears.

"Those are moments every basketball player dreams of," Guy said.

Immediately after the game, Guy said in a television interview he could lie and say he knew he was going to make all three, but that, really, he was terrified.

Later, after he had composed himself, Guy said, "Kind of had that feeling in your stomach, like a good kind of nervousness, like, 'All right, this is my chance.'

"To be able to go to the national championship off that, with these guys and coach Bennett, I mean, I really don't have the words."

Guy had sprung open on a screen set by De'Andre Hunter. The pass came from Ty Jerome. The shot missed, but official's hand immediately was in the air, signalling a foul had been committed by Samir Doughty.

Auburn led 62-60. The officials checked the video monitor and put 0.6 seconds on the clock.

For Virginia and Guy, it was a matter of making two free throws to force overtime or three to give Virginia the lead and, in all probability, a victory.

Guy stepped to the line. He dribbled once, just as he has done hundreds of times, thousands of times, countless times by himself, and shot.

Swish.

The official handed Guy the ball.

One dribble. Shot. Swish.

Auburn called timeout.

While the Virginia players gathered around coach Tony Bennett, Guy walked almost aimlessly around the perimeter of his teammates.

He asked for a towel. He walked a bit more.

"I didn't want anything to do with my teammates or coaches," Guy said. "I just wanted to be in my own space.

"I knew they had confidence in me. I just needed to build up my own."

No one said a word to Guy. No one signaled for him to join the huddle. Everyone knew the stakes. Either the game went into overtime or the Cavaliers went to the championship game of the Final Four.

Guy went back to the foul line. The Auburn players lined the lane. The official handed Guy the ball.

The 6-foot-2 junior dribbled once and shot. Swish.

Virginia 63, Auburn 62. Sixth-tenths of a second later, the game was over, and Virginia, which lost in the first round of the NCAA tournament in 2018, had made it to the last game of the 2019 tournament.

"To make those three free throws was terrific," Virginia coach Tony Bennett said.

Terrific? That's the best you've got? Terrific?

Guy had not been to the free throw line all night. A season, a chance to play for the national championship, and for Guy, shots he would remember rest of his life, either with lasting regret or everlasting pride, hung in the balance.

"Sorry that wasn't a strong enough word," Bennett said. "Amazing. Spectacular. Is that good enough? I don't have many more. I didn't graduate from Virginia, so my vocabulary is limited."

Yeah, those will do because considering the circumstances, considering all Virginia has invested in this season, terrific, amazing and spectacular is exactly what those shots were.