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Tudor: ECU Pirates will have crowded QB race

By Caulton Tudor - staff columnist - ctudor@newsobserver.com

Three quarterbacks combined to pass for 248 yards in East Carolina’s spring football game in Greenville.

Rio Johnson, Cody Keith and former walk-on Brad Wornick all had moments of success.

But when the Pirates open their season Sept. 1 against Appalachian State, a guy who watched from the Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium sidelines back on April 14 may be the starter.

Shane Carden, a redshirt sophomore entering the 2012-13 academic year, missed the final two weeks of spring work after he broke the index finger on his right hand and had to undergo surgery.

Carden’s recovery leaves ECU offensive coordinator Lincoln Riley with a confounding elimination process when preseason camp opens.

“It’s unusual to have to four of ’em so neck and neck,” Riley said this week. “I’ve never seen a situation like this one. But the thing is, I like it because it’s encouraging that we have this much quality depth in only our third season here. All four have the arms and basic talent to be starters.”

The 6-foot-2, 216-pound Carden is the son of former major league baseball player Jay Carden.

Born in California, Carden moved to Houston with his family when he was in the seventh grade. Although he was a standout player at Houston’s Episcopal High, Carden was ready to play at Stephen Austin University in Nacogdoches, Tex., until ECU hired Ruffin McNeill from Texas Tech to follow Skip Holtz as head coach after the 2009 season.

McNeill brought along Riley to handle the Pirate offense, and Riley brought in Carden.

“I’d never really been in this part of the country until I took a visit when coach Ruff got here,” Carden said. “But ECU was a great fit for me. So is our attack offense. I think it was meant to be in a way.”

With Dominique Davis at quarterback for the past two seasons, Riley’s offense was among the most prolific in the nation.
Davis, who signed a free-agent contract with the Atlanta Falcons, threw for 62 touchdowns and more than 7,000 yards and rushed for 14 TDs.

For all of the scoring, the Pirates could do no better than 5-7 (4-4 Conference USA) after finishing 6-7 (5-3 C-USA) in McNeill’s first season.

Although the absence of Davis may seem daunting, Riley says there will be little change in his nonstop spread alignment and doesn’t see quarterback inexperience as an overwhelming barrier to improvement.

“It’s an aggressive offense, and we’ll stay aggressive,” Riley said. “We won’t retreat. I don’t think we’ll have to with this quarterback group. I’ve been around them enough to think they’ll be fine.”

Riley also plans to settle on one quarterback, who he hopes to have in place a couple of weeks before the noon game against Appalachian State.

“I think you have to get two ready, of course,” Riley said. “But I’ve never much liked the idea of a rotation. You have to show faith in your starter, and that’s especially the case in this kind of offense.

“The way we play offense, you have to be a leader and play the role of a leader.

“Settling on a starter will be tough, but the upside is that all four of these guys have a solid understanding of the offense. From the day we get out there, we can get right to work on the competition.

“We won’t have to do any brushing up on the playbook or how to execute it.”

Years ago, one of Greenville’s most popular gathering spots for ECU students and fans was a place named “The Coach and Four.”

Someone should have saved a few T-shirts for Riley and his quarterback quartet.

Tudor: 919-829-8946

**Four quarterbacks**

**Shane Carden** (6-2, 216, Soph., Houston): Redshirted in 2010 and the primary scout team quarterback in 2011. Got in for a few plays as a wide receiver last season in a 34-13 win against Tulane.

Lincoln Riley on Carden: “Very smart youngster ... maybe the best athlete among the four.”

Riley on Johnson: “Very talented pure passer ... has gained a lot of maturity but needs to keep working on that aspect of it ... good student of the game.”

**Cody Keith** (6-3, 189, freshman, Charlotte): Redshirted last season and battled a left ankle injury. Golfer Webb Simpson’s brother-in-law. Threw for almost 4,000 yards and 39 TDs in 2010 at Cheshire (Conn.) Prep Academy.

Riley on Keith: “Has a ton of quarterback talent ... everything comes fairly natural to him ... Terrific kid with bright future.”

**Brad Wornick** (6-2, 192, Sr., Charlotte): A former walk-on who began his high school career as a receiver at Charlotte Ardrey Kell. Completed 13 of 19 passes for 138 yards and one TD in five games in 2010 season. Completed four of five in a bowl loss to Maryland.

Riley on Wornick: “He’s never been an exceptional practice player, but he’s established that he can’t be counted out of this thing. ... At Texas Tech, we went with a lot of fifth-year seniors as first-time starters.”
East Carolina University lost a legend Monday morning when former track and field coach Bill Carson passed away in his sleep.

I met Bill shortly after he came to East Carolina in 1967, just a few years after I arrived on the scene at The Daily Reflector. I was taken with him right away.

One thing can be said of Bill Carson: He was committed to bringing top athletes to the school, and he did. He knew how to coach them to new heights and to conference championships.

His specialty was sprinters and he brought in some outstanding ones. Later in his career, he made this the prime effort of the program.

But before that, he brought about a fine overall program that won three consecutive Southern Conference championships. Even after the team was mainly composed of sprinters, his athletes won most valuable player awards and other awards at league and IC4A meets. Two of them were named Colonial Athletic Association athletes of the year.

One of his crowning achievements was having several Olympic runners, including Lee McNeill, who was a five-time All-America selection and ran with the 4x100-meter relay team in the Seoul Olympics.

LaShawn Merritt won the 400 meters at the 2008 Olympics and is one of the top contenders in that event later this month at the London Games.

Bill’s efforts were not just for the ECU track program. He also was very interested in the area’s high school programs. For several years, he hosted and ran the NCHSAA Regionals at the Pirate track, then located where the soccer field is now.

He was always encouraging the athletes to work hard and do their best even if they were not coming to East Carolina.

Away from the school, Bill and his wife, Ruth Ann, joined me and my wife, Linda, and a couple of other couples in getting together to play cards. We always had fun and Bill was one of the reasons.
Bill also fought for his teams. He had a running war with East Carolina’s athletics media relations department for some years. The office wanted him to call in results from road meets, but Bill always said, “I’m the coach; you’re the press people.”

Even I had run-ins with Bill, but they were mostly when we’d agree to disagree. It never got in the way of our friendship. There’s the old saying that nice guys finish last. Not so!

Bill Carson was a nice guy and a good man. He ran the good race and he came out a winner. Contact Woody Peele at wpeele@reflector.com.
Letter: Downtown crime represents failure

“It’s pitiful that this goes on in a place like Greenville, but a bigger market such as Raleigh can find ways to keep the downtown area safe.”

Wednesday, July 4, 2012

Why are there deadly shootings downtown time and time again, along with beatings/muggings/assaults/etc. on Fifth Street when the Greenville Police Department is downtown and the ECU Police Department close by? What are these guys getting paid to do? Why do shootings happen a block or two from the station? Why are people dying? Traffic is not bad between midnight and 2 a.m., why did the Greenville Police Department stop blocking off downtown? It’s pitiful that this goes on in a place like Greenville, but a bigger market such as Raleigh can find ways to keep the downtown area safe.

I don’t need a response, but a story should be run about the poor performance of all Greenville-area police departments. Students aren’t going to stop throwing parties; it’s a college town. I’m also certain that the large majority of college kids are not the ones responsible for deadly shootings. What exactly are Greenville-area police departments doing?

Here is the trade-off: Would you rather have police preventing underage kids from drinking or people shooting/assaulting others, leading to deaths?

CHASE SCHAAP

Greenville
Learning program trips

East Carolina University’s Lifelong Learning Program is offering study tours and trips. Register by today for Paul Taylor and More on July 20. Also offered are an art appreciation tour of the North Carolina Museum of Art on July 24 with a July 6 registration deadline; and Lincoln’s Presidency to the Holocaust on Sept. 20-23, with a July 27 registration deadline. Seats are limited. For more information or to register, call us at 328-9198 or visit www.ecu.edu/llp.
CHARLOTTE — Davis Tarwater didn’t qualify for the London Games, yet Tuesday morning he joined seven other swimmers from North Carolina at Olympic practice.

Thanks to Michael Phelps.

Phelps’ decision to pull out of the 200-meter freestyle in the upcoming London Games opened a spot on the U.S. Olympic team for the 28-year-old Tarwater, who’d retired Sunday night after failing to make the team in three events.

When Tarwater returned to Omaha, Neb., on Tuesday he sought out Phelps, telling him “I owe you dinner.”

He said Phelps laughed at the gesture, then responded, “Alright.”

Tarwater, who’ll swim the 800-meter freestyle relay, joins a strong contingent with North Carolina ties heading to London: Cullen Jones, Nick Thoman, Micah Lawrence, Kara Lynn Jones, Ricky Berens, Charlie Houchin and Greenville’s Lauren Purdue all qualified for the Olympics.

Tuesday evening five of the swimmers returned to Charlotte were greeted by hundreds of cheering fans when they arrived at the airport.

“I’m shocked, we completely didn’t expect this,” said 2008 gold medalist Cullen Jones of the reception. “This is awesome.”

Five of the swimmers — Tarwater, Lawrence, Thoman and the two Joneses (no relation) — train with Charlotte SwimMAC. Dave Marsh, the Charlotte SwimMAC coach, was also selected to join the men’s Olympic coaching staff. He said the airport welcome was special to his swimmers.

“It was beautiful,” Marsh said. “This is really touching for me, the show of support. I hope that everybody in Charlotte was connecting with our swimmers while we were at the Trials. And judging by the reception we had here tonight I feel certain it impacted the area and put folks in a patriotic mindset. We’re thankful.”
Nobody was feeling more thankful Tuesday than Tarwater, who had a whirlwind 48 hours.

He left Omaha a little depressed after failing to qualify in all three events he participated. His dreams of representing the United States in the Olympics had been dashed and he decided to retire.

Sitting in the Omaha airport at 6 a.m. Monday he bought a piece of pizza and devoured it — a symbolic gesture that he’d put the long hours of training behind him.

He was ready to move on to the next phase of his life.

But when he arrived at the Charlotte home a few hours later he learned that Phelps had withdrawn from the 200 freestyle. The next several minutes were frantic, not knowing if he’d made the team.

Then came the call from Marsh, who notified him he was on the team — and that needed to head back to Omaha right away for the Olympic team’s first practice.

“I didn’t believe it,” Tarwater said. “When I got the news I was totally elated. In fact, elated doesn’t even capture my true emotion.”

Berens will race for Phelps in the 200 free, while Tarwater gets a spot on the relay team. Tarwater had the seventh-best time and the top six qualify.

With Phelps withdrawing he got the sixth spot.

“It’s incredibly satisfying,” Tarwater said. “I’m thankful that this went my way. God is good. Last week was a tough week. I felt like I swam well but I didn’t get the result I hoped for. I was really close to making the team. It was a hard pill to swallow.”

Now he has a chance at a storybook ending, possibly winning a gold medal in London.

Being the sixth man on relay likely means Tarwater will swim in the qualifiers, but the four men who swim in the finals is largely up to the coach’s discretion. It’s almost certain that Phelps and Ryan Lochte will be two of the members of the 800 free relay, so Tarwater will have to swim extremely well in the qualifiers to even have a shot at the finals.

Regardless, even if he doesn’t swim in the finals he’d still win a medal if the U.S. places in the top three.

“Right now I’m just thrilled to have a spot,” Tarwater said.
As for the dinner offer to Phelps, Tarwater said it was the only thing he could think of to offer him.

“I mean, what do you do in that situation?” he said with a laugh. “Dinner seems like the least I can do.”

For Cullen Jones, getting a chance to swim in the 50 free and 100 free in London takes the sting out of failing to qualify in any individual four years ago.

Jones won a gold medal four years ago as a member of a relay team but wanted more this time around.

“I feel great being able to say I have two individual events to swim,” said Jones, who’ll also compete on the 400-meter freestyle relay team. “It puts a little pressure on, but I welcome it. All of the training comes to a head now. Coach Marsh told me when the lights are the brightest you’re going to show up, and that’s exactly what I did.”
Editorial

**Hopefully foundation can fund much-needed underwater research vessel**

A Florida-based foundation has a vision where politicians have tunnel vision. Once again, in the name of saving money, Congress and the president are poised to scratch funding for an acclaimed research vessel that allows scientists a unique window on life under the sea. And the vessel in question, Aquarius, just happens to be affiliated with the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

Thankfully, a private foundation is determined not to let the sun set on Aquarius. The foundation, whose director is a resident of the Florida Keys, has defined its mission as raising money to keep the vessel operating. Her idea is an excellent one, but it should not absolve the pols in Washington of providing adequate funding for the one-of-a-kind vessel.

Aquarius is a federally owned underwater research lab operated by UNCW, whose marine sciences programs are among the best in the nation. It rests about 63 feet below sea level off Key Largo, and its presence there has attracted world-class research scientists to the university. The lab supports important research on sea and underwater plant life. One very important mission has been the study of our coral reefs, which sustain much of the fish and plant life beneath the ocean.
It has been on the chopping block before, but efforts by U.S. Rep. Mike McIntyre and other North Carolina members of Congress managed to get the money restored – often through the use of those much-derided “earmarks.”

But Aquarius is not a toy or a frivolous expenditure. It is the world’s only permanent undersea research laboratory, and its benefits go far beyond UNCW. Because it is a permanent lab, scientists can use the vessel to do undersea research for days at a time, rather than diving in, having a look around and popping back up to the surface.

Until NASA was downsized, Aquarius also helped train astronauts in an environment similar to what they would experience aboard the International Space Station.

The research that happens aboard Aquarius is more than worth the annual operating budget of $1.5 million to $3 million. Congress should restore funding, but it also is encouraging to know that someone can see its immense value. Raising that kind of money will be a difficult undertaking, but we wish the Aquarius Foundation luck in its endeavor.

It has picked a commendable cause to support.
New study finds disordered eating among older women

By Kerstin Nordstrom, knordstrom@newsobserver.com

Fashion magazines show thin young models. An after-school special shows a teen girl suffering with bulimia. We perceive eating disorders as diseases of the young.

It’s a false perception, according to new research from UNC-Chapel Hill. The authors surveyed the disordered eating behaviors of 1,849 women aged 50 and older. They found disordered eating does not discriminate based on age.

“We just haven’t bothered to ask how Grandma feels about her body,” says Cynthia Bulik, director of the UNC Eating Disorders Program, who led the study. Bulik is also the author of “The Woman in the Mirror,” a practical guide to help women suffering from body image issues. The work was published in the International Journal of Eating Disorders.

“The thought is that older women replace body concerns with health concerns. But it turns out those body concerns don’t go away,” says Bulik. “It’s double trouble.”

Older women are no small group either. Women over 50 comprise about 17 percent of the U.S. population, more than 50 million people.

None of this surprises Eve Cribbs, a licensed clinical social worker.

“The bulk of who I see are between about 35 and 60,” she said. Cribbs, based in Raleigh, exclusively counsels people with eating disorders.

**Disordered eating**

The survey measured disordered eating, which is an umbrella term for all the symptoms of eating disorders.

In other words, disordered eating refers to specific behaviors, but an eating disorder is a diagnosed disease. Eating disorders include anorexia, bulimia and binge eating.

Someone who engages in disordered eating does not necessarily have an eating disorder, though the likelihood is stronger as symptoms pile up. Further, disordered eating can still have major health consequences, regardless of whether a person has an outright eating disorder.
The symptoms surveyed included binge eating, obsessive weight checking and low body mass index (BMI), which is the number the National Institutes of Health uses to define under/overweight individuals. Another symptom, purging, includes vomiting, laxative use, and excessive exercise.

Some figures were startling. Eight percent of women reported purging – without binging – in the past five years. “Even women in their 70s reporting purging,” said Bulik.

Of the women surveyed, 3.5 percent reported binge eating at least once a week, a figure comparable with numbers from other age groups.

Cribbs sees the stories beneath the statistics every day.

“Some patients started out disordered as adolescents, and have intermittent returns to these behaviors. Some patients are former bulimics, who still binge eat with no compensatory purging,” Cribb said.

Psychologically, body image plays a large role. Sixty-two percent had frequent concerns about their shape, a few times a week or more. Four out of five indicated their body image played the most important role in their self-perception. A full 71 percent were trying to lose weight.

The study also busted the notion that eating-disordered people are thin. A larger BMI was correlated with a higher likelihood of disordered eating. Bulik thinks this result might be painting a grim picture of yo-yo dieting and its consequences.

“Sometimes, it’s an attempt to outrun aging, as menopause can change the body,” Cribbs says. Bulik also wants to do this study in men, another group often ignored with respect to eating disorders.

“Guys are really having trouble, too,” she said.

**Link to health issues**

Health issues linked to disordered eating are numerous, such as gastrointestinal and heart problems. Tooth decay can arise from purging by vomiting because stomach acid erodes tooth enamel. Osteoporosis is a concern for all women, and disordered eating can make it worse.

With older patients, health care providers may be blind to issues associated with the young, such as disordered eating.

Doctors use glucose screening for pre-diabetic testing. When a patient is diagnosed as pre-diabetic, they are often given a lecture, she said. This lecture often includes a prescription of weight loss.
“But if there is any compulsivity about weight loss, they can really easily become reactive,” Cribbs said. “They may lose the weight quickly, unhealthily, only to regain it. They feel at fault. Avoid the doctor. It also messes with the metabolic condition (of diabetes).”

“Health care providers have to keep these issues on the radar screen,” Bulik said. “Bodies aren’t as resilient as they age. (Disordered eating) can take an even bigger toll on health than it does in young people.”

Nordstrom: 919-829-8983
Teach For America alumnus Josh Carson, who will be beginning his fourth year of teaching, watches his students throw up their hands to participate. He teaches middle school math at Henderson Collegiate Academy.

**Teach For America’s ranks grow amid education cuts**

By Dean-Paul Stephens - dstephens@newsobserver.com

As school districts across North Carolina cope with state budget cuts, the organization Teach For America is offering a ray of good news: It’s expanding the ranks of newly minted teachers it sends into some of the state’s poorest school districts.

Nationally this year, Teach For America will send out a record 10,000 new teachers – a 10 percent increase over 2011 – to work in 46 regions in 36 states. In North Carolina, the TFA teaching corps is expanding from from 150 to 230.

Teach For America Eastern North Carolina, which is based in Durham and serves 10 counties, focuses on underfunded and underperforming school districts.

“In the area we serve 48,000 kids who are living in poverty. We decide where we work based on where we are needed,” said Robyn Fehrman, the executive director of Teach For America Eastern N.C.
In poor school districts, Teach For America teachers are especially welcomed because they are carefully selected for their academic ability and their commitment to teaching in challenging circumstances. In North Carolina this year, TFA accepted only 17 percent of graduates who applied for the post-college teaching work.

Laurie Baker, principal of Warren Early College High school, said TFA teachers are especially coveted in small, rural districts like hers that have difficulty luring top teachers.

“One of the reasons why TFA is so attractive is because it is very competitive, so schools know they are getting good teachers,” she said.

Josh Carson, a Davidson College graduate and former Teach For America member who taught at North Hampton County High School West in Gaston, said his two years as a TFA teacher were deeply fulfilling.

“I was really blessed with the time spent with Teach For America,” said Carson, who now works as a math teacher at Henderson Collegiate Academy in Henderson. “It was an experience I would go back to.”

**Addressing ‘education inequity’**

Founded in 1990 by Princeton University senior Wendy Kopp as part of her undergraduate thesis, Teach For America has grown steadily despite recessions and budget cuts. Last year, according to the Teach For America website, more than 9,000 corps members taught 600,000 students. Many of the organization’s 24,000 alumni also remain involved in education.

Teach For America seeks to ensure that the most qualified teachers have access to the most underprivileged students.

Drawing from their motto “One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education,” the group subscribes to the idea that good students can’t exist without good teachers. “Our main goal is to address the problems that come with what we call education inequity,” Fehrman said. “Education inequity is a gap in achievement between students in poverty and their more affluent peers.”

Every summer, Teach For America takes a select group of recent university graduates and puts them through rigorous teacher training during summer sessions. After the sessions, teachers are placed in underprivileged classrooms where they work for two years. Participants in the program are paid an average salary of $30,000.

North Carolina has a long history with the organization. The group’s Eastern N.C. branch was one of the organization’s original chapters. In the 22 years
since the establishment of its Eastern N.C. branch, Teach for America has built a reputation among North Carolina school districts for producing top new teachers.

“We look for highly qualified teachers, diverse teachers, and teachers who are masters of their craft,” said Cynthia Byrd, principal of Weldon Middle School in Halifax County.

The group’s funding is derived from public dollars and private donations. School districts that partner with the group also pay a fee to use TFA teachers.

**Not free from scrutiny**

Despite its noble aims, Teach For America has drawn criticism from teachers unions and some education experts. Teachers unions have complained that the group enables districts to replace veteran teachers with teachers making starting salaries. There also has been criticism that the group’s mission ignores the importance of classroom experience and assumes that bright young people can serve in difficult schools with only concentrated training.

But the effectiveness of the TFA concept has found support in an academic study and in testimonials from local educators.

Gary T. Henry, a professor specializing in public policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a small group of six researchers, released a report this year about the effectiveness of new teachers. The report identifies Teach For America as one of the most effective teacher preparatory programs in the state.

“I wanted to assess whether teachers who trained through less traditional routes were more effective than teachers who trained through more traditional routes,” Henry said.

The study compared teachers from UNC’s teacher preparation system with Teach For America and 10 other programs. It discovered that Teach For America surpassed UNC in 73 percent of teacher effectiveness tests and tied UNC in the remaining 27 percent.

“The study was quite clear,” Henry said. “TFA is very effective in raising test scores.”

Henry’s study is backed up by the real world experiences of school officials like Ray V. Spain, superintendent of Warren County Schools.
“Teach For America has been a godsend,” said Spain in a meeting with The News and Observer last month. “We’ve seen consistent results with our test scores among TFA teachers and normally they do better than other teachers.”

Stephens: 919-829-4563
A Columbia University dean who expanded the school’s engineering programs but was the object of a protracted rebellion by members of his faculty has resigned, the school said on Tuesday.

The dean, Feniosky Peña-Mora, was a high-profile addition to the faculty when he was hired to run Columbia’s Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science in 2009. A charismatic scholar who won acclaim here and in his native Dominican Republic, he rose swiftly through American academia.

But on campus, Dr. Peña-Mora quickly became controversial. A majority of the faculty members and the department chairmen who served under him complained that he was expanding the engineering school too fast, overloading professors with too many students, making promises he did not honor and prioritizing fund-raising over research.

Dr. Peña-Mora will remain as a member of the faculty. On Tuesday, Columbia’s president, Lee C. Bollinger, and its provost, John H. Coatsworth, said in a statement, “We thank Professor Peña-Mora for his service as dean and look forward to his future academic contributions as a faculty member in the fields of civil engineering and engineering mechanics, earth and environmental engineering, and computer science.”

In his own statement, Dr. Peña-Mora said that under his watch, the engineering school had greatly increased its number of student applicants, doubled the size of its annual fund and risen in the national rankings of engineering graduate programs. “Differences of opinion are inevitable at
times of change, and criticism of a leader bringing about the change can be expected, particularly, I suppose, when the person is an outsider both institutionally and in other ways,” he wrote.

“When certain senior faculty then saw fit to press their own interests through personal attacks on me, I was disappointed,” he added. He went on to say that his critics “did not, in my view, serve Columbia well, and, in the end, the discourse offered no model to our students of how faculty in a diverse and thriving academic environment should conduct themselves.”

Professor Donald Goldfarb, previously the school’s executive vice dean, will serve as interim dean while a replacement is sought.

The uprising against the dean and his departure have created a public relations headache for Columbia. Prominent Hispanic and black community leaders, led by Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, have accused the university of being hostile to minorities. Dr. Peña-Mora was one of three high-level minority administrators Mr. Bollinger hired in the span of several months in 2009. The other two — Claude M. Steele, who served as provost, and Michele M. Moody-Adams, who was the dean of Columbia College — have both since left those posts.

Last month, Mr. Rodriguez met with Mr. Bollinger to express his concerns about Dr. Peña-Mora’s job security, and sent a letter to that effect signed by 20 elected officials and the Rev. Al Sharpton.

On Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Rodriguez said it was “so unfortunate” that Columbia had lost another high-ranking minority administrator. He said he planned to hold a rally along with Mr. Sharpton in support of Dr. Peña-Mora in September.

The departure comes at a delicate time for the school, which is trying to raise its profile in the sciences. Columbia has begun a large expansion into West Harlem that includes new science facilities and had submitted a proposal to the city to build an engineering campus on Roosevelt Island, an opportunity that was granted to a partnership of Cornell University and Technion-Israel Institute of Technology.

Born in the Dominican Republic, Dr. Peña-Mora was raised by his father and his aunts and uncles after his mother left, when he was 10, to seek work in New York. He studied engineering at the Universidad Nacional Pedro Henriquez Ureña in Santo Domingo, then at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he earned a master’s and a doctorate in civil engineering systems. He served on the faculty there and at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before coming to Columbia.
Can Teresa Sullivan and Helen Dragas still work together at U-Va.?

By Jenna Johnson

The two University of Virginia leaders stood in the Rotunda and spoke quietly last week. The conversation between Rector Helen Dragas, leader of the Board of Visitors, and President Teresa Sullivan drew attention. Onlookers wondered: Was it a friendly chat? Or was it as tense as the events of that month?

At any university, the working relationship between the president and the governing board leader is critical. And the relationship between Sullivan and Dragas was battered during the U-Va. leadership crisis in June.

Both leaders survived the turmoil: Sullivan was reinstated as president on June 26. Dragas was reappointed to the board on June 29.

And now many wonder: Is it possible for Sullivan to work with, and trust, the person who a month ago asked her to resign for the good of the
university? Can Dragas retain her authority having been vilified for leading the failed ouster?

That remains to be seen, but they have made several public displays of reconciliation, including a hug that was captured by a student journalist.

The image was captured at about 3:45 p.m. on June 26 by Veronica Manuel, a multimedia coordinator for the Cavalier Daily student newspaper.

Less than an hour earlier, Dragas and Sullivan had walked into the board room together. And during a 30-minute meeting, the board voted unanimously to reinstate Sullivan. It also gave a vote of confidence to Dragas. Toward the end of the meeting, Dragas said: “We look forward to working with President Sullivan.”

Then the group moved to the steps of the Rotunda, where Sullivan addressed the crowd with board members standing behind her. She said the board showed strength in reversing course and told those gathered that Dragas cares deeply for U-Va.

Back inside the Rotunda, as Dragas and Sullivan spoke in hushed tones, Dragas reached over and hugged Sullivan. Manuel snapped a photo and posted it on Twitter:
“I thought to myself, ‘That’s odd,’” said Manuel, 20, a rising third-year student from Arlington. The embrace was long and didn’t seem awkward, Manuel said, but when the women saw that reporters and others were watching, they retreated to a private room to, presumably, continue talking.

That Tuesday, the two leaders symbolically walked together, stood together on the steps of the Rotunda and embraced. They praised one another and renewed their vow to work together.

Those are the symbolic actions. The true working relationship between the two will be revealed in the coming weeks, months and years as they are pushed to take stances and make decisions.

The board’s next scheduled event is a retreat on July 13 and 14. The next board meeting is scheduled for Sept. 13 and 14 — after the start of the next school year.

Updated: An earlier version of this post had the wrong title for Veronica Manuel of the Cavalier Daily. Manuel is the multimedia editor, not the social media editor.