



**2008 GATOR BOWL**  
Virginia vs. Texas Tech  
WDBJ7 1 p.m.



AP photo

Virginia All-American defensive end Chris Long will play a vital role in stopping the potent Texas Tech passing offense today in Jacksonville.

**College Football**

**Flowers still on edge for NFL draft**

Southern Florida native could be playing in final game for Virginia Tech

By Nathan Wartars  
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FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Florida native Brandon Flowers, Virginia Tech's junior starting cornerback, will have an assortment of family members on hand Thursday when the fifth-ranked Hokies take on No. 8 Kansas in the Orange Bowl. Some have never seen him play a collegiate snap in person before.

Their first game may be Flowers' last. That's because the two-time All-American is still mulling early entry into April's NFL draft. "I don't know if this will be my last game or not," said Flowers, who grew up in Delray Beach, Fla., which is about a 45-minute drive from Dolphin Stadium, the site of Thursday's game.

The NFL's advisory committee, which evaluates underclassmen draft prospects, rates Flowers a potential second-round pick. He submitted paperwork to the committee a month ago and received a response on Friday. The second-round projection could deter the 5-foot-10, 200-pound two-year starter from leaving, but he's not ready to make a decision. He says he'll do that after Thursday's game.

Please see **FLOWERS**, Page D3



AP photo

Tech cornerback Brandon Flowers will make his decision to opt for the NFL draft after Thursday's game.

**BRING IT EVERY SNAP**

Virginia has to slow down the Red Raider passing offense to win

By Andy Bitter / abitter@newsadvance.com / (434) 385-5535



JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — By comeback standards, it was highly unusual. Texas Tech trailed Minnesota 38-7 in last year's Insight Bowl, seemingly too far out of reach to make a game of it. Somehow, the Red Raiders did, but it wasn't with momentum-shifting

plays like interceptions or kick returns. They simply ran their high-octane offense as it was intended, calmly and methodically gobbling up seven yards at a time on short passes and driving the length of the field to score every time they touched the ball.

Please see **VIRGINIA**, Page D4

**Today's other bowl games**

Previews of each game on Page D3

**Wisconsin** **Tennessee**

**Outback**  
ESPN  
11 a.m.

**OUTBACK**

**Capital One**  
MICHIGAN  
FLORIDA

**Rose**  
ILLINOIS  
USC

**Missouri** **Arkansas**

**Cotton**  
FOX  
11:30 a.m.

**COTTON**

**Allstate**  
SUGAR BOWL

**Sugar**  
FOX  
8:30 p.m.

**Hawai'i** **Georgia**

**High School Wrestling**

Chris Bowyer (left) and Brandon Beemer are heavyweight wrestlers for Jefferson Forest.



Staff photo by Jill Nance

**Duo plays off of each other**

Bowyer and Beemer ready for another Seminole District repeat

By Ted Allen  
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FOREST — Jefferson Forest upperweights Brandon Beemer and Chris Bowyer take opposite approaches with similar results on the wrestling mat.

"I'm a very offensive wrestler and he's really defensive," said Bowyer, who also played defensive end beside Beemer at tackle for the Cavaliers' football team.

That makes the two-time defending

Seminole District tournament champions perfect training partners, sharpening each other's strengths in the wrestling room.

"Definitely, we make each other better," Bowyer said. "Me and him beat each other up," Beemer added. "When he's out, I don't have a partner in practice."

That was the case last month, when Bowyer was recovering from a bout with mono, which went undiagnosed until after the football season. "Kids go and go and go and they get worn

Please see **DUO**, Page D2



**WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION**

**Music City Bowl**



Kentucky has to hang on to beat a depleted Florida State team  
Page D3

**Hockey**



The Pittsburgh Penguins and Buffalo Sabres are ready to battle each other and the elements today  
Page D2

**THE NEWS & ADVANCE SPORTS BLOG**



To read blog entries by The News & Advance sportswriters and leave comments, go to [www.newsadvance.com](http://www.newsadvance.com) and click on **Sports**.

**Today's TOP TV games**



Hockey: Penguins @ Sabres  
1 p.m., NBC  
Sugar Bowl  
Hawaii vs. Georgia  
8:30 p.m., FOX

# KONICA MINOLTA GATOR BOWL



## Virginia

OFFENSE	
QB	Jameel Sewell, Sr., 6-3, 226
TB	Mikell Simpson, Sr., 6-1, 197
WR	Stanton Jones, 6-0, 181
WR	Maurice Covington, Jr., 6-4, 218
TE	Tom Santti, Sr., 6-5, 242
LG	Jonathan Stupar, Sr., 6-3, 252
C	Eugene Monroe, Jr., 6-6, 310
LG	Brandon Albert, Jr., 6-7, 310
LT	Chris Long, Sr., 6-3, 280
RG	Jordan Lippsey, Sr., 6-3, 280
RG	Ian-Yates Cunningham, Sr., 6-3, 298
RT	Will Barker, Sr., 6-7, 305

DEFENSE	
DE	Jeffrey Fitzgerald, Sr., 6-3, 280
DT	Allen Bailey, Sr., 6-4, 275
DE	Chris Long, Sr., 6-4, 279
OLB	Clint Sirtim, Jr., 6-3, 248
ILB	Antonio Appleyby, Jr., 6-4, 248
OLB	Jon Cooper, Jr., 6-0, 230
OLB	Jermaine Dias, Sr., 6-1, 240
CB	Royal Dowling, Jr., 6-2, 190
S	Byron Glaspy, Jr., 5-11, 196
S	Nate Lyles, Sr., 6-0, 199
CB	Vic Hall, Sr., 5-9, 181

SPECIALISTS	
K	Chris Gould, Sr., 6-1, 221
P	Ryan Weigand, Sr., 6-2, 173

RUSHING	
Player	Att. Yds. TD
Cedric Peerman	113 565 5
Mikell Simpson	93 400 7
Jameel Sewell	115 241 4
Keith Payne	58 239 2

PASSING	
Player	Cmp-Att-Int. Yds. TD
Jameel Sewell	200-341-9 2,098 11
Peter Lallich	32-56-1 303 1

RECEIVING	
Player	Rec. Yds. TD
Tom Santti	33 402 3
Mikell Simpson	38 366 1
Jonathan Stupar	37 344 1
Maurice Covington	20 258 2

DEFENSE	
Player	Tack TFL Sack Int
Jon Cooper	103 9-32 3 2
Clint Sirtim	76 8-42 8 0
Chris Long	75 19-132 14 1
Byron Glaspy	69 105-31 5 2

KICKING	
Player	Fgm Pct Fga Pct Lng
Chris Gould	15 19 78.9 51

PUNTING	
Player	No. Avg Lng Int
Ryan Weigand	49 45.5 61 1
Chris Gould	21 36.6 51 15

1984 Peach Bowl: W 27-24 vs. Purdue
1987 All-American Bowl: W 22-16 vs. BYU
1990 Citrus Bowl: L 31-21 vs. Illinois
1991 Sugar Bowl: L 23-22 vs. Tennessee
1991 Gator Bowl: L 48-14 vs. Oklahoma
1994 Carquest Bowl: L 31-13 vs. B. College
1994 Independence: W 20-10 vs. TCU
1995 Peach Bowl: W 34-27 vs. Georgia
1996 Carquest Bowl: L 31-21 vs. Miami
1998 Peach Bowl: L 35-33 vs. Georgia
1999 Micronpc.com: L 63-21 vs. Illinois
2000 O'ahu Bowl: L 37-14 vs. Georgia
2002 Continental Tire: W 48-22 vs. WVU
2003 Continental Tire: W 23-16 vs. Pittsburgh
2004 MPC Computers: L 37-34 in OT vs. Fresno
2005 Music City Bowl: W 34-31 vs. Minnesota

## VIRGINIA

Continued from Page D1

By the time the dust had settled, Texas Tech had completed its masterpiece, a 44-41 overtime victory in what was the biggest comeback in bowl history. So to say Virginia's defense has its work cut out for it trying to stop the Red Raiders' top-ranked passing offense in today's Gator Bowl seems like stating the obvious.

"That's too much to ask just 11 players to do," Uva coach Al Groh said. "We need 33 players to do that. Eleven on defense, 11 on special teams and 11 on offense."

Groh has preached team play all year — a successful play, as Virginia (9-3) is on the cusp of winning 10 games in a season for just the second time in school his-

## No. 21 Virginia (9-3, 6-2 ACC)

## (8-4, 4-4 BIG XII) Texas Tech

WHAT: Gator Bowl WHERE: Municipal Stadium (Jacksonville, Fla.) • WHEN: 1 p.m. • SERIES: First meeting • TV: WDBJ • RADIO: 97.9 FM

### Gator Bowl Notebook

# Peerman speaks about foot surgery

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Virginia tailback Cedric Peerman spoke to reporters on Sunday for the first time since undergoing surgery on his right foot a month and a half ago and confirmed that it was a Lisfranc injury.

An increasingly common injury in football, Lisfranc is a fracture and dislocation of the joints in the mid-foot. Notable NFL running backs who made successful comebacks from it are Brian Westbrook of the Philadelphia Eagles and Kevin Jones of the Detroit Lions.

"It's not reassuring to see them have the injury," Peerman said, "but it's reassuring to see them come back and perform the way they have."

Peerman suffered the injury on Oct. 6 at Middle Tennessee. At the time he was leading the ACC in rushing. He was hopeful it would heal on its own, but he eventually had surgery on Nov. 14.

Virginia did not give any timetable for Peerman resuming football activities, but the tailback was walking without crutches at Gator Bowl practice over the weekend.

### Work hard, play hard

Defensive end Chris Long has revealed in the past that he likes watching shows about polar bears on the Discovery Channel, so it's no surprise that his favorite team activity this week was a visit to the Jacksonville Zoo.

"I got to see a lion," he said Monday with a big grin. "He was some crazy stuff at the



AP photo

Uva tailback Cedric Peerman (William Campbell) has not played since injuring his right foot at Middle Tennessee.

### It's always sunny

Virginia doesn't recruit Florida very hard, but it does have two Sunshine Staters on its roster — senior center Jordy Lipse and redshirt freshman cornerback Mike Parker.

Parker, whose role in today's game will increase due to the absence of Chris Cook, went to Edgewater High in Orlando. Lipse, a two-year starter, went to Lake Brantley High in Longwood, an Orlando suburb.

## SPOTLIGHT PLAYER

On a fact-finding mission about Texas Tech, Virginia coach Al Groh called his old buddy Gary Darnell, the defensive coordinator and interim coach at Texas A&M who has seen Red Raiders' 6-foot-3, 208-pound wide receiver Michael Crabtree in person.

"After you watch the tape," Darnell told Groh, "however good you think he is, he is better."

It's hard to imagine. Crabtree, the first freshman to win the Biletnikoff Award as the nation's best receiver, rewrote freshman receiving records with 125 catches for 1,861 yards and 21 touchdowns.

"The one thing he is, he has a great sense of space," Texas Tech coach Mike Leach said. "And even if he's not the primary read, he'll continue to work his route and find space. He's kind of a marked guy."

A unanimous All-American, Crabtree is tied for fifth on the NCAA's single-season touchdown list. With two touchdowns today — which is not a reach — he would move into third place, trailing only Troy Edwards, who had 27 receiving touchdowns for Louisiana Tech in 1998, and Randy Moss, who had 25 for Marshall in 1997.

"He's unbelievable," Texas Tech quarterback Graham Harrell said. "We knew he was special the first time we threw him the ball. He's big, he's fast, he's good at catching the ball, he has great body control. He's everything you could want in a receiver."

— Andy Bitter



Michael Crabtree

AP photo

Virginia	Tale of the tape	Texas Tech
Coach: Al Groh (7th season, 51-36)	2007 season statistics	Coach: Mike Leach (8th season, 64-37)
24.1 (86)	Scoring offense	41.8 (6)
126.2 (93)	Rushing offense	61.4 (119)
203.0 (80)	Passing offense	475.6 (1)
329.2 (100)	Total offense	537.0 (2)
18.8 (13)	Scoring defense	25.8 (51)
113.0 (21)	Rushing defense	171.0 (78)
210.4 (33)	Passing defense	196.1 (17)
323.4 (17)	Total defense	367.1 (50)
+25 (40)	Turnover margin	-.50 (92)

(national rank in parentheses)



Staff graphic



## Texas Tech

OFFENSE	
QB	Graham Harrell, Jr., 6-3, 203
RB	Aaron Crawford, Fr., 5-11, 202
WR	Michael Crabtree, Fr., 6-3, 208
WR	Danny Amenodias, Sr., 5-11, 177
WR	Eric Morris, Jr., 5-1, 165
WR	Edward Britton, Sr., 6-0, 183
LT	Ryan Rest, Jr., 6-7, 314
LG	Louis Vasquez, Jr., 6-6, 335
C	Shawn Byrnes, Sr., 6-4, 303
RG	Brandon Carter, Sr., 6-7, 374
RT	Marlon Winn, Sr., 6-6, 329

DEFENSE	
DE	Jake Rattiff, Jr., 6-7, 247
NT	Colby Whitlock, Fr., 6-2, 281
DT	Rajon Henley, Sr., 6-3, 265
DE	Brandon Williams, Sr., 6-5, 253
LB	Brian Duncan, Fr., 6-1, 239
LB	Paul Williams, Sr., 6-4, 226
LB	Marlon Williams, Sr., 6-0, 211
CB	Jamer Wall, Sr., 5-10, 195
SS	Joe Garcia, Sr., 6-1, 222
FS	Darcel McBeth, Jr., 6-1, 196
CB	Chris Parker, Sr., 5-11, 178

SPECIALISTS	
K	Alex Tricca, Sr., 5-11, 176
P	Jonathan LaCour, Fr., 6-2, 206

RUSHING	
Player	Att. Yds. TD
Shannon Woods	64 450 8
Aaron Crawford	46 185 3

PASSING	
Player	Cmp-Att-Int. Yds. TD
Graham Harrell	468-644-14 5,298 45

RECEIVING	
Player	Rec. Yds. TD
Michael Crabtree	125 1,861 21
Danny Amenodias	103 1,177 5
Eric Morris	66 690 9
Edward Britton	43 583 4
Gant Walker	42 309 2
Aaron Crawford	30 218 2

DEFENSE	
Player	Tack TFL Sack Int
Joe Garcia	79 6-11 2 2
Darcel McBeth	79 1-4 0 0
Marlon Williams	71 1-4 0 0
Paul Williams	69 2-2 1 0
Brian Duncan	62 4-7 0 0

KICKING	
Player	Fgm Pct Fga Pct Lng
Alex Tricca	12 20 60.0 51

PUNTING	
Player	No. Avg Lng Int
Jonathan LaCour	26 42.6 60 7

## Bowl History (9-20-1)

- 1938 Sun Bowl: L 7-6 vs. West Virginia
- 1939 Cotton Bowl: L 20-13 vs. St. Mary's
- 1942 Sun Bowl: L 6-0 vs. Tulosa
- 1948 Sun Bowl: L 13-12 vs. Miami (Ohio)
- 1949 Raisin Bowl: L 20-13 vs. San Jose State
- 1952 Sun Bowl: W 25-14 vs. Pacific
- 1954 Gator Bowl: W 35-13 vs. Auburn
- 1956 Sun Bowl: L 21-14 vs. Wake Forest
- 1964 Sun Bowl: 7-0 vs. Georgia
- 1965 Gator Bowl: L 31-21 vs. Georgia Tech
- 1970 Sun Bowl: L 17-9 vs. Georgia Tech
- 1972 Sun Bowl: L 32-28 vs. North Carolina
- 1973 Gator Bowl: W 28-19 vs. Tennessee
- 1974 Peach Bowl: L 6-6 vs. Vanderbilt
- 1976 Bluebonnet Bowl: L 27-24 vs. Nebraska
- 1977 Tangerine Bowl: L 40-17 to Florida State
- 1986 Independence Bowl: L 20-17 vs. Mississippi
- 1989 All American Bowl: L 42-14 vs. Wake Forest
- 1993 John Hancock Bowl: L 41-10 vs. Oklahoma
- 1995 Cotton Bowl: L 55-14 vs. Southern Cal
- 1995 Copper Bowl: W 55-41 vs. Air Force
- 1996 Alamo Bowl: L 27-0 vs. Iowa
- 1998 Independence Bowl: L 35-13 vs. Mississippi
- 2000 Galleryfurniture.com: L 40-17 vs. East Carolina
- 2001 Alamo Bowl: L 19-16 vs. Iowa
- 2002 Tangerine Bowl: W 55-15 vs. Clemson
- 2003 Houston Bowl: W 58-14 vs. Navy
- 2004 Holiday Bowl: W 45-31 vs. Mississippi
- 2006 Cotton Bowl: L 13-10 vs. Alabama
- 2006 Insight Bowl: W 44-41 vs. Minnesota in OT

## VIRGINIA WINS IF ...

- It can pressure the quarterback. Despite throwing more passes than any team in the country, the Red Raiders have allowed just 15 sacks.
- It can control the clock. The best way to keep the Red Raiders' offense in check is to keep it off the field. A major advantage in time of possession is a must.
- Doesn't get down on itself. Texas Tech is going to get yards. The Cavaliers can't concern themselves with that, just with keeping the Red Raiders' points to a minimum.

## Virginia's defense

has obstacles to overcome. The Cavaliers are without starting cornerback Chris Cook, an academic casualty, thrusting a pair of freshmen — Ras-I Dowling and Mike Parker — into the line of fire. They'll be charged with trying to stop Biletnikoff Award winner Michael Crabtree, who has put up video game numbers this season, with 125 catches, 1,861 yards and 21 touchdowns.

Uva fans will remember fondly the last time the Cavaliers had that kind of challenge heading into a bowl game, however. In the 2003 Continental Tire Bowl, Groh devised a successful defensive scheme to limit Heisman Trophy runner-up Larry Fitzgerald, who caught just five passes for 77 yards in a 23-16 loss, watching his 18-game touchdown streak come to an end.

## Texas Tech's offense

Another problem is that Texas Tech's offense, which averages 41.8 points per game, seems to be suited to neutralize Uva defensive end Chris Long, who has 14 sacks this season.

The Red Raiders' passing scheme is based around short dropbacks and quick releases, minimizing the risk on the quarterback. Though quarterback Graham Harrell has thrown 694 passes this season, he's been sacked just 15 times. That's once every 46.3 attempts, the second best ratio in the country.

"As a defensive lineman, I can't say, 'Oh, they're going to be getting rid of it quick. I'm not going to bring it,'" Long said. "You've just got to keep coming like you would as a pass rusher in any other game."

"We seen Chris get a number of sacks this year just by being

## relentless," Groh noted.

Of course, the best way to prevent Texas Tech from scoring is to not let it get the ball. Groh has stressed his offense the importance of sustaining drives and milking the clock, a task that should be made easier by tailback Mikell Simpson's return to the team after an academic scare last week.

Though the Cavaliers' offensive numbers aren't impressive — they're 100th nationally in total offense — they have been able to move the ball when they need to, especially in late-game situations.

It's reflective of the entire team, which has done just enough to win all season, pulling out five games by two points or less.

"To this point, whatever it's taken to win the game," Groh said, "all three of (our) units have been up to the task."