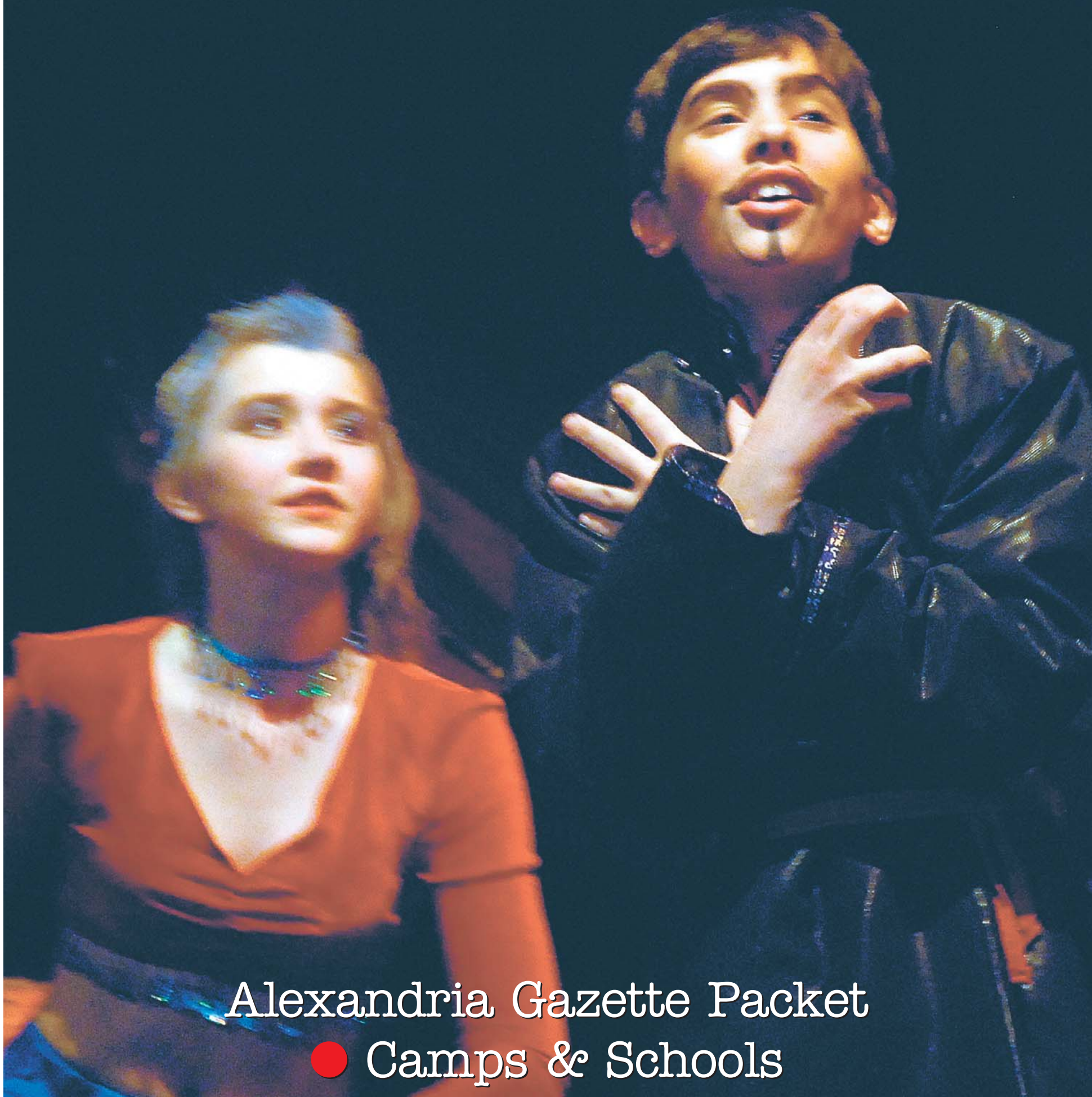


The logo features a large white 'A' with a plus sign to its right. The plus sign has a blue dot above it and a yellow dot to its right. To the right of the 'A+' is the word 'Education' in red, 'Learning' in yellow, and 'Fun' in blue, all in a sans-serif font.

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OPEN HOUSE

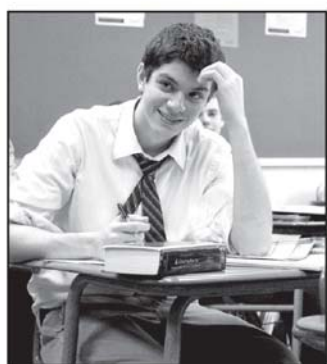
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Education • Learning • Fun

Impact of Concussions

Cognitive baseline testing protects student athletes from getting back on the field too quickly after a blow to the head.

By Jon Roetman

West Potomac linebacker Matthew Voltmer ended up on the ground on Aug. 14 and he doesn't remember how he got there.

It was a morning session during two-a-day practices at the high school in Mount Vernon, and the Wolverines were engaged in a hitting drill. A collision was the culprit, but Voltmer is uncertain of the details.

"I think we collided heads. To be honest, I don't remember the actual collision," Voltmer said. "I remember being about three feet away and then, next thing I know, I'm on my knees in front of him." The junior got up and got back in the drill.

Later that afternoon, between practices, Voltmer was watching TV when he realized the screen appeared brighter than usual. He didn't feel right, but he loves football and wanted to return for the team's second practice.

His mother had different ideas. She took Voltmer to the hospital. Doctors performed a CAT scan and found a small bruise on his brain.

If Voltmer needed additional reason for not returning to the field promptly, it came three days later, when he took the ImPACT test.

IMPACT IS A SOFTWARE program geared toward managing the harmful effects of a concussion, including keeping an athlete off the field until he or she is fully recovered. Sustaining a second blow to the head while suffering from an initial concussion can cause second-impact syndrome, which is potentially fatal. According to the ImPACT Website, second-impact syndrome has led to 30-40 deaths in the last 10 years.

ImPACT provides a baseline by measuring cognitive functioning through a series of recognition tests administered on a computer. Once a baseline is established, the test can be taken again for comparative purposes if an athlete has suffered a possible

concussion. Data from the second test can help lead to a diagnosis and track recovery. Test results are kept at the University of Pittsburgh.

VOLTMER, THE WEST POTOMAC linebacker, had established a baseline when he took the test as a freshman. Two years later, the results from his second test showed a decrease in the quality brain function. Voltmer said he remembered most of what the test entailed from his freshman year, and noticed himself struggling at times when he took it a second time.

"Every single subject was lower, reaction time, memory, [performance on] everything was much worse than my baseline," Voltmer said. "In the reaction [segment] I remember there's one where you press a button if a red square shows up [and] press a button where a blue circle shows up, and I did the opposite for about two sets."

Voltmer agreed the results produced by taking the ImPACT test for a second time helped convince him to take the injury seriously. He sat out for about two weeks and missed the Sept. 3 season opener against Mount Vernon before returning to action.

"I think we collided heads. To be honest, I don't remember the actual collision,"

— Matthew Voltmer, West Potomac linebacker

Teammate Dustin Hess, also a junior linebacker, experienced dizziness and ringing in his ears after an Aug. 17 hit during practice. He continued to participate, but after a second blow later in the evening, he decided it was time to tell someone.

"I was feeling [dizzy] after impact, but I didn't report it until the evening because I thought I'd be all right," Hess said. "Then I came out here and practiced and I hit myself again and that was the last string. I couldn't see



Matthew Voltmer and Dustin Hess, both junior linebackers on the West Potomac football team, suffered concussions in this year's preseason practices.

straight." Hess, who also established a baseline with ImPACT testing during his freshman year, took the test two days later and produced impaired results. He also missed practice for two weeks and did not play against Mount Vernon.

Hess said waiting to report his symptoms was "stupid" and he would not try to play through symptoms if they occurred in the future.

T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, uses a different method to monitor athlete's cognitive abilities before and after a possible head injury. Tanya Hecox, the school's head athletic trainer, said it's a money-related choice. T.C. Williams uses Standardized Assessment of Concussion and Virginia Neurological Index to monitor an athlete on the sideline after he or she potentially suffered a concussion. The Standardized Assessment of Concussion and Virginia Neurological Index tests an athlete's immediate memory, concentration and delayed recall, among other things. Concentration tests include reciting the months backward.

The test can be taken repeatedly to track an athlete's well-being over time.

"It's a good tool because you can do it, and then do it every day," Hecox said. "It gives you something concrete to look at it."

Yorktown High School also uses Standardized Assessment of Concussion and Virginia Neurological Index.

"I think it's good," Yorktown athletic trainer Bruce Ferratt said of SAC VNI.

"It gives you a baseline right there on the field."

Every high school in Fairfax County uses ImPACT testing to protect student athletes with possible concussions, but also they also use the Standardized Assessment of Concussion and Virginia Neurological Index.

WEST POTOMAC head football coach Eric Henderson said he suffered at least 12 concussions during his football career at Fort Hunt High School and the University of Rhode Island. Henderson said fighting through concussion symptoms was commonplace 20 years ago.

"Now, the kids are so educated on head injuries and 'don't push a head injury,' that they almost become self advocates, which is good," he said.

DR. JILLIAN SCHNEIDER of Springfield, a clinical pediatric neuropsychologist who works with ImPACT, said convincing an athlete to stay off the field while recovering from a concussion can be "challenging."

"I'll emphasize if they have another [head] injury [while recovering], their symptoms are going to be worse and they might miss a season instead of a game."

Rest is the best way to recover from a concussion, Schneider said. Patients should stay away from physical activity, which she described as anything that elevates the heart rate, and should limit cognitive stress, such as reading and studying, she said.



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● Private School Search Timeline

EARLY FALL

- Finalize schools that you plan to inquire about.
- Request admissions and financial aid material by phone or online.
- Review admissions materials to determine which schools to visit.
- Keep a calendar of pertinent deadlines for admission and financial aid and procedures, such as when schools start taking reservations for individual tours and interviews.
- Register for standardized tests—the SSAT or ISEE (for middle school and high school).
- Review the test Web sites to learn procedures and see sample questions; consider whether you want to buy a test-preparation book.
- Call to schedule individual tours, interviews, class visits, and “shadow days.” Ask elementary schools about their test schedules and how to make an appointment.

OCTOBER

- Visit open houses.
- Call to schedule tours, interviews, class visits, and school-based tests if you haven't already.
- Attend information sessions and take tours.
- Finalize school(s) to which you will make application.
- Take standardized test.

NOVEMBER

- Follow through on activities you may not have completed, such as scheduling tours, interviews, class visits, and standardized or school-

based tests.

- Continue to watch for open houses you may want to attend.
- Start lining up teacher recommendations.
- Start working on applications, financial aid forms, student questionnaires, essays, etc.

DECEMBER

- Complete any remaining applications, questionnaires, etc.
- Most application materials are due in January or early February.

JANUARY

- Pay attention to deadlines: Most schools' applications, tests scores, references, transcripts, and financial aid forms are due in January or February.
- Request transcripts at the end of your child's first semester.

FEBRUARY

- Don't miss the deadlines: Most schools' applications are due in February at the latest.
- Do school visits or shadow days for the student if you haven't already.

MARCH

- Watch for school decisions starting in mid-March.
- Watch for financial aid decisions about this same time.

APRIL

- Sign and return enrollment contracts and deposits.

MAY TO SEPTEMBER

- Attend events and activities for new parents and students during spring and summer.

SOURCE: National Association of Independent Schools, www.nais.org/go/parents

Getting in to U-Va.

Northern Virginians want more local students admitted to state colleges, but at what cost?

How Virginia Compares for Accepting In-state Students

Virginia's most competitive public universities and colleges often accept fewer in-state students than other high-profile state schools. Here is a comparison of Virginia schools rankings according to U.S. News and World Report as well as its tuition costs for in-state and out-of-state students. The following information was taken from the Web site of universities and colleges.

College/University	National Public School Ranking*	Percentage of freshman class from home state	In-state Tuition**	Out-of-state Tuition**
University of California – Berkeley	1	85	\$9,748	\$32,418
University of California – Los Angeles	2	90	\$8,266	\$30,935
University of Virginia	3	68.5	\$9,870	\$31,870
University of Michigan – Ann Arbor	4	66	\$11,037	\$33,069
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill	5	82	\$5,396.76	\$22,293.76
College of William & Mary	6	65	\$10,800	\$30,964
Georgia Institute of Technology	7	60	\$6,070	\$24,280
University of California – San Diego	7	97	\$8,816	\$31,485
University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign	9	87	\$12,122	\$26,802
University of Wisconsin – Madison	9	56.4	\$8,313	\$23,063
Virginia Tech	29	73.6	\$6,332	\$18,789
James Madison University	unknown	70.3	\$7,244	\$19,376

* based on U.S. News and World Report 2010 rankings
** This figure does not include on-campus housing costs



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