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Gator Bowl foes have some interesting links

By Marlena Hartz | Avalanche-Journal
 Sunday, December 30, 2007
 Story last updated at 12/30/2007 - 3:41 am

decade or so ago, Troy Lescher danced in a football stadium near the Blue Ridge Mountains, pretending to be a square-jawed soldier with a mustache and goatee.

These days, the 31-year-old teaches and studies the art of voice and movement surrounded by amber plains at Texas Tech.

Lescher was Cav Man, a University of Virginia mascot, for two years before he earned his degree from the university in 1998 and moved to New York City to pursue an acting career. Four months ago, he exchanged big city for big skies and enrolled as a fine arts doctoral student at Tech.

UVa and Tech will compete Jan. 1 in Jacksonville's Gator Bowl.

"The irony of it," Lescher said.

"The year I move," he said, "they play my alma mater."

Other coincidences: UVa head coach Al Groh was an assistant

coach for Tech in 1980, according to www.rivals.com; both schools received awards for grounds maintenance from the same society in 2007; and politicians founded both universities, though Tech is considerably younger (about a hundred years), and UVa's founder, Thomas Jefferson, is considerably more famous.

Lescher, someone who knows a thing or two about Tech and UVa, said, "It's so hard to compare the two."

The graduate student plans to return to Lubbock today from his mother's house in Charlottesville, Va., home of UVa.

"Being the mascot for two years (at UVa), your blood is ... orange and blue. I want Virginia to win," he said.

"But watching Tech this fall ... I think Texas Tech will probably beat them up pretty well. I don't think Virginia has an explosive offense like the Red Raiders."

If Tech's own hat-wearing mascot needs a sub? There's at least one person qualified for the job.

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Troy Lescher, now a Texas Tech graduate student, served as UVa mascot Cav Man in the late 1990s, when he was an undergraduate at the university.

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Off the field: Red Raiders vs. Cavaliers

Texas Tech

• **Beginnings:** Founded in 1923 by several state legislators who introduced the idea of creating a new public institution of higher education for West Texas, rather than creating a branch of Texas A&M

• **Did you know?** Before every home football game students wrap a campus statue of Will Rogers and horse Soapsuds with red crepe paper. The statue also has been wrapped in black crepe paper to mourn national tragedies.

• **Number of students:** Approximately 28,000

• **Average SAT score:** 1,131

Source: www.ttu.edu

University of Virginia

• **Beginnings:** Founded in 1819 by Thomas Jefferson, who envisioned an academic village and a library - instead of a chapel, as was conventional at the time - at the center of a lawn shared by students.

• **Did you know?** Edgar Allen Poe attended UVa from 1826 to 1827.

• **Number of students:** Approximately 20,800

• **Average SAT score:** 1,307

Source: www.virginia.edu

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