

Posted: Tuesday May 11, 2010 1:02PM; Updated: Tuesday May 11, 2010 4:12PM

**Story Highlights****The murder of Yeardley Love by a men's player shocked the University of Virginia****Police have charged George Huguely with the murder and said he confessed****Could this tragedy have been prevented? Several warning signs were ignored**

# Why did Yeardley Love have to die?

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By L. Jon Wertheim

*This story appears in the May 17 issue of Sports Illustrated*

There are no seniors at the University of Virginia. The school's founder, Thomas Jefferson, believed that a "senior" level of knowledge is unattainable, that learning is a lifelong process. So students in their final two semesters are referred to as "fourth years." It's a quaint UVA tradition, one of many, but it also hints at deeper truths: Even the oldest undergraduates are novice adults, full of promise yet not fully formed. And some events in life are beyond comprehension.

This was thrown into devastating relief in Charlottesville last week as the school reeled from an unfathomable tragedy, the death of one 22-year-old student-athlete at the hands of another. Instantly the elegant campus -- the Grounds, Jefferson called it -- was transformed. Students who had been preparing for final exams and delighting in the gorgeous spring weather walked around as if in a trance.

"Shock is the prevalent emotion," says student-body president Colin Hood. Campus landmarks that had recently hosted concerts and ice cream socials were being used for memorials and candlelight vigils. Streets that had been lined only with azaleas and rhododendrons were choked with television satellite trucks. Every outlet from ESPN to *Inside Edition* had arrived in pastoral Virginia to report a heartbreaking story that blended sports, privilege, love and death.

Perhaps the most profound change was felt by the school's varsity lacrosse programs, which had spent the late winter and early spring celebrating victory after victory. The men's team, which had a 2010 record of 14-1, won the ACC tournament and ended the regular season ranked first in the nation; the women, 13-5, had nearly beaten five-time defending national champion Northwestern on the road and were rated fifth. Players had discussed how cool it would be if both teams won national titles. Yet early last week the teams canceled practice to grieve.

When they resumed working out on Thursday, nine days before the NCAA championships were to begin, the women were missing the speedy and clever defender whose exuberance had made some describe her as the heart of the team, and the men were without the burly midfielder who, ironically enough, had been described in game programs as one of the Cavaliers' fiercest attackers. And both groups were groping to understand what had just happened and why.

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Sunday night was usually a social night for the UVA lacrosse teams. Sunday Funday, the players call it. On Sunday, May 2, Yeardley Love, a fourth-year defender on the women's team, was at Boylan Heights, a popular campus burger bar, before walking back to her apartment two blocks away. At around two in the morning Love's roommate and teammate, Caitlin Whitely, and Whitely's friend

Phillippe Oudshoorn, a UVA tennis player, entered the apartment and found Love facedown in her bed and unresponsive. They called 911. The police arrived and, on turning Love over, saw a pool of blood beneath her head, bruises on her face and her right eye swollen shut -- the result of "blunt force trauma," accordingly to police reports. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

The investigation quickly led police to the nearby apartment of George Huguely, a letterman on the men's lacrosse team. Huguely, a fourth year with male-model looks, had dated Love, but they had recently broken up. After being taken to Charlottesville police headquarters, Huguely waived his Miranda rights and offered chilling details of his assault on Love. According to an affidavit, he stated that he kicked open Love's locked bedroom door; he then "shook Love, and her head repeatedly hit the wall." (Before his bio was removed from the UVA athletics website, the 6'2" Huguely was listed at 209 pounds, almost twice Love's estimated weight.) Huguely also disclosed that he left Love's apartment carrying her laptop with the intention of disposing of it.

Barely four hours after Love's body was discovered, police charged Huguely with first-degree murder. There were no other suspects. Huguely was taken from the police station and is now in a four-by-eight cell in the Albemarle-Charlottesville Regional Jail. His bail hearing is not scheduled until next month, by which time the police should have his toxicology report. Huguely's lawyer, Francis Lawrence, asserted last week, "We are confident that Miss Love's death was not intended, but an accident with a tragic outcome."

Last Wednesday detectives confiscated from Huguely's apartment two white Apple laptop computers, a green spiral notebook, two white socks, a bathroom rug, a shower curtain, an entryway rug, a pair of blue cargo shorts, a polo shirt and a Virginia lacrosse shirt stained red. Authorities are particularly interested in threatening e-mails and texts that Huguely allegedly sent Love after their breakup. "We're trying to corroborate [prior threats] through as many sources as we can," says Charlottesville police chief Timothy Longo. Earlier in the semester Huguely and Love reportedly had a violent encounter on campus that was broken up by several visiting University of North Carolina lacrosse players. An unnamed former student told the *New York Daily News* that the couple's breakup had been precipitated by an incident in which a drunken Huguely attacked Love and later couldn't recall having hit her.

Love's death puts a microscope on the underreported domestic violence among college students. While national statistics are hard to come by, the issue seems disproportionately to implicate athletes. Many of the qualities that make campuses so attractive -- freedom, trust, community -- also make them "a paradise for stalkers," says Amy Barasch, executive director of New York State's Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Students' class schedules, practice times and contact information are easily obtained. Young men and women who have been involved romantically and have broken up live in close proximity. Security is less than airtight. (Love's front door was unlocked when Huguely entered her apartment.) "We think of stalking -- the red flag for domestic violence -- as the guy in a trenchcoat in an alley," says Barasch. "No, it looks like 100 text messages or someone [lurking around] a classroom or dorm room.

"Anyone can be a perpetrator, anyone can be a victim. It's about power, about people who exhibit controlling behavior. This case might look aberrant, but sadly, it's not."

At a candlelight vigil held for Love last Wednesday, domestic violence was a major topic of discussion. "Don't hear a scream [and not report it]," exhorted UVA president John Casteen III. "Don't watch abuse. Don't hear stories of abuse and stay quiet."

Most Virginia students -- in addition to the lacrosse players and men's and women's coaches Dom Starsia and Julie Myers -- didn't want to speak publicly about the incident, complying with the wishes of Love's family, the UVA athletic department and the Inter-Sorority Council. (Love was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta.) But several students, speaking anonymously, wondered how the situation had been allowed to escalate. In short: Someone had to know something.

"This is an unfortunate tragedy and could easily have been avoided," says Amy Appelt, a four-time lacrosse All-America at UVA who graduated in 2005. She knew Love well and coached her for a season. (A Charlottesville police spokesman, Lieut. Gary Pleasant, asserts that neither a restraining order nor a complaint had been issued against Huguely; school officials claim to have no record of Love's seeking help regarding her ex-boyfriend.)

Complicating their emotions -- and now compounding their grief -- the members of the UVA men's and women's lacrosse teams are exceptionally close, eating at the same training tables, hanging out together, often dating. "I'm sure the boys are suffering just as

much," says Appelt. "I'm sure they loved Yards just as much as we did." But the closeness also means that players didn't know only the one who was slain; they also knew her alleged killer. And it means that teammates of both Huguely and Love might have been reluctant to intervene in their relationship, fearful it could fray the bond between the teams. "It's a double whammy," one current men's player explained to a friend in a text message.

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The intimacy of the UVA teams mirrors the closeness of the lacrosse community around the country. Touted as America's "fastest growing sport," lacrosse has expanded beyond its traditional pockets on the Eastern Seaboard. Bill Tierney, the revered longtime coach at Princeton, went west last July to spread the gospel as coach at the University of Denver. The sport's dynastic women's program is at Northwestern. Yet for all its manifest destiny, the sport remains deeply tribal, an insular and fairly homogenous community. Scanning the 1,000-plus friends on Love's Facebook page, it's hard not to notice how many are lacrosse players at other schools. "Everyone knows everyone," says North Carolina's coach, Jenny Levy, once a star at Virginia.

On the morning of Love's death, e-mails, texts and phone calls rocketed around the lacrosse community. By that afternoon it was the rare college player who showed up for practice oblivious to the UVA tragedy. "That's part of what makes this so tough," says Kelly Amonte Hiller, the Northwestern coach. "Everyone is affected. With high schools and club teams and camps, chances are if you didn't play with or against another player, you know someone who did."

Lacrosse Nation closed ranks during the Duke scandal of 2006, and many of its members still resent the reporters and broadcasters who denounced the players -- and, by extension, the sport -- over what was ultimately a case of false testimony and prosecutorial misconduct. While the circumstances in Charlottesville are altogether different from those in Durham, N.C., there's a collective sense of here-we-go-again, a fear of a mainstream referendum on the sport with echoes of class and race, privilege and arrogance. It's one thing when Tracy Morgan jokes on *30 Rock*, "I'm gonna have so much money, my grandkids are gonna play lacrosse." It's another when the website Deadspin asks, are the white boys of lacrosse predestined to be d---s? or ABC News titles a segment Lacrosse: Sport of Bullies?

"The rush to indict an entire sport for enabling a serious crime is irresponsible," says US Lacrosse CEO Steve Stenersen. "If people took the time to look at the circumstances instead of drawing gross generalizations, they would be muted. This tragedy struck the sport of lacrosse; it didn't come from the culture of lacrosse."

Anticipating a backlash, US Lacrosse even sent talking points to chapters around the country last week. They included:

- We are shocked by the allegations, which are both tragic and horrific.
- The reported circumstances and allegations are contrary to the overall character and culture of the sport of lacrosse, which emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility and respect, among many other qualities.
- The reported circumstances and allegations are an aberration and should not call into question the culture of an entire sport.
- ◆ Lacrosse, like all sports, is not immune from human tragedy.

Yet the profile emerging of Huguely doesn't exactly splinter the stereotype of the entitled lacrosse player. Born George Huguely V, the scion of a prominent Washington, D.C., family that made its fortune in lumber and building supplies, he grew up in the opulent suburb of Chevy Chase, Md., and attended the Landon School (motto: *Virtute et non vi* -- "By virtue, not by force"), an expensive private academy in Bethesda. At Virginia he was known for prodigious drinking. One local watering hole held a promotion: Anyone who sampled every beer on its extensive tap list got a free mug. Huguely was one of the first to claim the prize.

In 2007 he was charged with underage possession of alcohol in Florida, where his family has a \$2 million vacation home. The following year he was arrested for public intoxication and resisting arrest outside a fraternity house at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va. After shouting obscenities and threats and scuffling with a female officer, he was finally subdued by Taser -- though, remarkably, he had no recollection of the incident later. "He was by far the most rude, most hateful and most combative college kid I

ever dealt with," arresting officer Rebecca Moss told *The New York Times* last week. ♦Huguely received a 60-day suspended sentence and six months' probation, was fined and was required to perform community service and take a substance-abuse course. He was also required to disclose the arrest to the University of Virginia. He did not.

Huguely also demonstrated obsessive behavior toward women besides Love. A fourth-year UVA student told SI last week that earlier this year Huguely approached her at Boylan Heights and obtained her phone number. "He was cute, and he was charming when he was sober," she says. But before they met in person again, Huguely bombarded her with text messages, sometimes as many as 20 in one hour -- "never before 3 a.m.," she says -- asking to come to her apartment. "I'm kind of freaked out right now," she says.

Huguely's combative behavior extended even to teammates. The *Washington Post* reported that last season Huguely slugged a sleeping teammate whom he believed had kissed Love.

UVA lacrosse coach Dom Starsia, whose father died last week, declined to be interviewed for this story, but surely he will be asked to explain how so many warning signs were either missed or ignored.

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If Lacrosse Nation wanted to suggest an embodiment of the sport's virtues and fend off an indictment of an entire culture, it could scarcely do better than point to Love. Her uncle Granville Swope was an All-America UVA lax player in the '70s. Her father, John Love, also went to Virginia but left school to join the military and never graduated. When John died of cancer in 2003, Yeardeley, then 15, placed a lacrosse ball in his casket and, friends say, made it her mission to play for UVA and obtain the degree her dad never earned.

Yeardeley began playing lacrosse with her father at age five and starred in high school at Notre Dame Academy, near her home in Cockeysville, Md. She compensated for her lack of height with an outsized heart and endeared herself to coaches and teammates alike with her genial personality. "Yeardeley was the core of our team, our laughter," recalls her Notre Dame coach, Mary Bartel.

As a senior, Love was recruited by UVA. Asked recently by a team publication to recall her recruitment, she said, "When I got off the phone with Coach Myers and she had offered me a spot on the team, that definitely topped the happiest and proudest moment that I will probably ever experience."

A regular in the Cavaliers' rotation, Love was a fast defender but most distinguished herself as a good teammate, volunteering for extra drills in practice and even for the thankless task of playing one-on-one defense against an attacker. She was also one of the best students on the squad, a government major who spent last summer interning at a New York City public relations and marketing firm and had a job lined up after ♦graduation -- no small feat in the current economy. She was uncommonly social, except when the Baltimore Ravens, her favorite team, played; then no one was allowed near her. Friends say that she was "deceptively intense," warm and even submissive but "quietly knowing what she wanted and going for it."

Later this month, when the fourth years attend graduation ceremonies -- Final Exercises, they're called at UVA -- Love will receive her degree posthumously, fulfilling the promise she made to her dad. "She's the epitome of what we want our students to be," says Meg Heubeck, of UVA's Center for Politics. "That's the best way I can sum her up." Adds Appelt, "You hear that God has a plan for everyone, but maybe he messed up this one time."

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Love was buried last Saturday, after a funeral at Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Baltimore that drew more than 2,000 mourners, many from the lacrosse community. Her teammates, most of them wearing black dresses, walked with her family. The UVA men's team was well represented too. "This week a young woman died a violent and senseless death," said priest ♦Joseph Breighner, "and her name was Love."

By that time the Facebook group In Memory of Yeardeley Love had more than 50,000 members. In the wake of Love's death, the Virginia Lacrosse Alumni Network (VLAN), composed of more than 300 former men's players, invited UVA lacrosse alumnae to join their group. Then they raised \$500,000 to fund the Yeardeley Reynolds Love Endowed Scholarship, to be given annually to a member of

the women's team. "Some good has to come of this," says Drew Fox, a player on the 1994 men's team and the VLAN leader. "It just has to."

The day after the funeral the Virginia lacrosse teams received their pairings for the NCAA tournament. Both the men, who will host Mount St. Mary's on Saturday, and the women, who host Towson on Sunday, have said they'll compete in honor of Love's memory. And who knows how this suddenly wrenching season will end?

The relationship between athletes and tragedy is seldom predictable. Some teams, even the best ones, can have a hard time recovering. Others are galvanized. As one rival coach says, "Don't forget, you're still talking about two of the best teams in the country. They've been through a lot these past days, but their ranking hasn't changed."

It's just everything else that has.

*Special reporting by Joe Lemire and Andy Staples*

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