

Jones

from p.15

shots, and if he wants a new coach to take over the football team, sooner or (in this case) later, that's what he gets.

Many fans don't see Strong's departure as a loss. His record of 14-19 going into his fourth season is no better than that of his predecessor, Wayne Nunnely, who guided the Rebels to a 19-25 record before being run out of town. It will be difficult for Strong to get the five wins he needs to catch Nunnely with this year's difficult schedule. And Nunnely was hired to clean up the program more than anything else. Strong was brought here to win games and sell out the Silver Bowl. That hasn't happened, so why should anyone care if Strong leaves?

It's simple.

The UNLV football program will advance more with Strong than by starting over next season with a new coach. Unless one of Strong's staff is named as a replacement (which is highly unlikely), the new coach will have to start over from scratch. The program has come too far for that to happen.

Although the wins haven't come as quickly

and as often as expected, Strong and his staff have done a great deal to improve the team. Winning is important, but there are other ways to judge a head coach.

Thanks to Strong, some of the country's top players now wear UNLV uniforms. Henry Bailey and Demond Thompkins are one of the best receiving tandems in the nation and either could start for many nationally-ranked teams. They came to UNLV.

Parade magazine All-American tailback Omar Love was heavily recruited coming out of Eisenhower High School. He too came to UNLV.

The roster has far more depth than any UNLV team in recent memory, and more importantly there are eight players from local high schools on the roster. Any program that wants to be successful must sign the in-state talents; Strong has reeled in some of the area's best, including kicker Nick Garritano and center Howie McGowan.

It's likely that the legacy Strong will leave behind is the number of quality players he has brought to the Rebels.

If you think about all that was asked of Strong, could anyone have done better? A big name coach like Joe Paterno, Lou

THE REBEL YELL
Holtz, or John Robinson could have used their name to draw some quality players here, but no coach of their status would ever take the job. Imagine the difficulty Strong (or anyone who takes his place) faces in trying to persuade a player to choose UNLV, a choice that means the player will have to use outdated training facilities, never play on television and compete in a stadium with only 13,000 fans who only come to the game because they got the tickets free or had to buy them to get choice basketball seats.

It's a no-win situation but Strong found a way to succeed. He managed to get some very good players to come here. Given time, he likely would have signed more, and the wins would follow. Eventually UNLV football would be taken seriously by recruits who don't want to play for a rebuilding (a.k.a. losing) program. Years of progress go out the window when Strong packs up and moves on. Then the rebuilding process starts over again.

UNLV would be better off if Strong were allowed to remain as coach for three more seasons. Anything good takes time and the football program under Strong was on the right track. When the team goes back to square one, we'll



never know what could have happened if Strong were given adequate time to do the job he was hired for in the first place - rebuild UNLV into a consistently winning program.

The next question is will Strong's replacement be given time to do such a task, or will he get fired if he doesn't win the Big West right away? A little patience goes a long way, but not when you demand impossible results.

Can you build a tradition in only three years? Not a strong one.

Rider

from p.15

of Nevada, Las Vegas. He was accused of "academic fraud," kicked off the basketball team last spring, and forced to watch from the stands as his teammates were humiliated in the National Invitation Tournament.

The story made national headlines: Star basketball player's class work questioned, paper turned in shows two different handwriting styles.

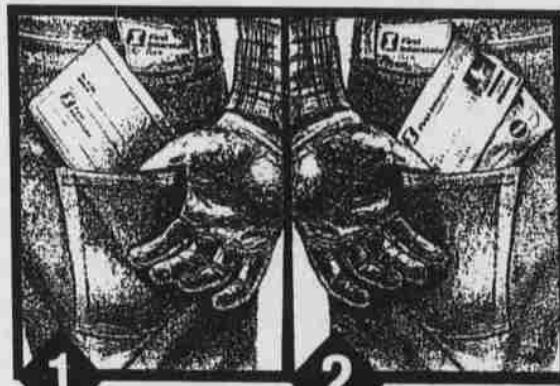
But in late May, Rider was exonerated by a University of Nevada system-commissioned report.

"I knew all along that I was right," he said. "But when I was going through it and I was the guilty one it would haunt me for weeks. When I was exonerated it was only in the media for a day or two so not everyone knows about it. That's unfair. It should have been on ESPN like it was when I was accused. The whole world should know that J.R. Rider supposedly did nothing wrong."

But he readily admits that he has done wrong in the past, but there is another side to him. It's true that he was ineligible his senior year at Encinal High School in Alameda and missed out on a scholarship to Kansas State, faced eligibility prob-

2 HIP OFFERS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS!

Stop by our Campus Booth and register to WIN a Specialized Hardrock 21 Speed Mountain Bike.



1 CHECKING ACCOUNT!

No monthly service charge for the entire time you are enrolled in school.*

2 CREDIT CARD!

First year annual fee completely waived.**

1 First Interstate Bank

Member FDIC

*Checking Account Offer is good on StudentLine Account. Check Safeguarding (non-return of cancelled checks) is mandatory. Students must provide proof of enrollment annually (in at least two classes) at an accredited college or university. Other conditions and restrictions may apply.**Student Credit Card Offer provides a \$500 line of credit with the first year annual fee waived. The annual fee will be reinstated and charged after the first year. All other credit card fees still apply. Applicants must meet student credit criteria. Students must provide proof of enrollment (in at least two classes) at a 4-year accredited college or university. All credit cards are subject to credit approval. Other conditions and restrictions apply. No purchase necessary to enter Mountain Bike Sweepstakes. See booth for details.