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History of the Spider

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Many UR students know some variation of the history of the Richmond Spiders’ mascot. When I asked a couple of students around campus what they knew about WebstUR’s origins, I received a lot of shrugs and the occasional “Something about a baseball player, right?”

Well, Forum Magazine is here to set the record straight.

From 1876 to 1893, the university baseball team was known as the “Colts” due to the players’ enthusiasm and energy on the field. The term “spider” wasn’t associated with the University of Richmond until 1894, when Ragland Chesterman of the Richmond Times-Dispatch likened UR baseball pitcher Puss Elyson to an arachnid due to his “lengthy arms and stretching kick.”

Since then, the name stuck, most likely because of its uniqueness. To this day, UR is the only institution in the United States with the spider as its mascot.

For a while, the Richmond Spider was affectionately known as “Spidey,” until Marvel Entertainment objected. “Spidey” is a trademarked name for Marvel’s superhero Spiderman. In the late 1990’s, UR developed a clever new name for its mascot - “WebstUR”.

With this new name came the need for a new identity. In 2011, students, faculty, and alumni were encouraged to vote on WebstUR’s new design. The first option depicted WebstUR as a tough, aggressive competitor, while the second showed a more benign WebstUR with rocket-launchers attached to his legs. The former won, reflecting students’ enthusiasm for UR’s athletics.