



MARTIN FENELLY
Columnist

Shannon still has to fight for survival

The sticker is on a locker inside Rotorwood Junior Stadium, its message is as simple as the desire of the man who put it there.

"I Love Liberia."

When he was 13, Miss Shannon left the only place he had ever known, a United States Marine helicopter evacuated Shannon and some of his family out of the African nation of Liberia, then torn by civil war.

His family migrated to America, to Newark, N.J., where Miss Shannon lived in an inner-city public high school introduced him to a new kind of war, children with drugs and guns barely hidden.

Shannon later learned relations back home had been murdered. He still can't really explain why there were just those who lived and those who died. Miss Shannon was one who escaped. "That's the story of my life," he said. "It's a survivor."

And a soccer player.

HE LEADS the Tampa Bay Mutiny with seven goals as the team prepares for tonight's home game with Kansas City. In his third season as a professional, the 28-year-old Shannon has shown a penchant for playing out of the shadows, scoring off the bench to score goals. Shannon beating odds and outshining is nothing new.

"I came out of nowhere," Shannon said after scoring in Sunday's loss to Los Angeles. "I came from a small country and a small college. That's my life."

He attended Robert Morris College in Township, Pa., scoring 44 goals and helping his team to consecutive NCAA tournaments. His coach at Robert Morris was John Kowalski, who later coached the Mutiny and drafted Shannon.

It was good luck, but Shannon still had to earn a job. He started the last game of his first season, and began last season as a starter, but finished up as a reserve. He still managed seven goals.

That didn't keep the Mutiny from bringing in two forwards in the off-season, Jefferson Godtall and Alejandro Sepqueira. Mutiny coach Tim Hankinson needed scoring. Shannon appeared back in the shadows again.

Nobody could keep him there. Godtall and Sepqueira have combined for four goals in Shannon's seven, Shannon had a five-game scoring streak early this season, three of the goals off the bench. His last four goals have come as a starter. While Hankinson thinks Shannon might provide more punch as a quick hit reserve, he has not named — and reworked — Shannon's determination.

"I think to survive in this business of professional sports, you have to have a certain reality. And I think Miss Shannon has that," Hankinson said.

SHANNON SAID it comes from deep down and far away. From family. From Liberia. He has a degree in business management. His father and mother attended Syracuse University. His mother also did graduate work at Harvard University.

It has always been about education, about making yourself better. Shannon wants to score as many goals as he can. He also likes to meet Nelson Mandela and return to help his homeland. He learned his most important lessons there.

"It comes from family," Shannon said. "My father came from poverty. No light. No water. You go to the mountains to get water. He would take us where he grew up to see how hard he worked, how he survived, and how hard we should work."

Even as Miss Shannon runs a soccer field, he's still that young boy in that helicopter, telling himself he'll get what he wants. And nothing will get to his way.

Rudd makes clean break, now searches for sponsor

DAYTONA BEACH — Sponsorship woes have Winston Cup veteran Ricky Rudd looking for more than a victory in tonight's Pepsi 400 at Daytona.

When the green flag waves at the start of tonight's Pepsi 400 at Daytona International Speedway, Ricky Rudd will be after more than a win but more crucial than a win: Try a big name sponsor.

Three days ago, Procter and Gamble announced it was severing its nine-year relationship with Rudd by not renewing its contract. The sponsorship will remain following this season. When not, the corporate giant axed the long-

Pepsi 400

- Where: Daytona Beach
- When: Tonight at 8
- TV: CBS
- Radio: WFTS 101.5 FM, 1390 AM
- On the pole: Joe Nemechek, 193, 000

Inside

- Showup: Page 2

time Winston Cup driver for NASCAR crew chief Cal Wells, a mildly successful CART Indy car driver who all but sniped the McDonald's contract out from under former Winston Cup champion Bill Elliott two months ago.



SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES FOR USA
America vs. Brazil? It's like a football match to the 1994 World Cup. (Or is it?)
STORY, PAGE 6

STORM DRENCH BUFFALO, 59-14
Waltis throws five TD passes as Tampa Bay crashes the explosive Destroyers.
STORY, PAGE 2



Joe Nemechek, who will start from the pole at today's Pepsi 400, makes sure everything's in working order.

Dr. J.: 'That's my girl'

PHILADELPHIA — After days of speculation, Julius Erving acknowledges he left out former phenom Alexandra Stevenson.

By KEN BERGER
of the Tampa Tribune

Alexandra Stevenson plays tennis with a vengeance and plenty of flare. More than overpowering serves and mammoth groundstrokes, her game creates a natural-born talent for the crowd.

Much like her father, Dr. J., Julius Erving, the basketball Hall of Famer who redefined the game with his high-flying dunks and charisma, said Friday he is the father of the 19-year-old tennis phenom.

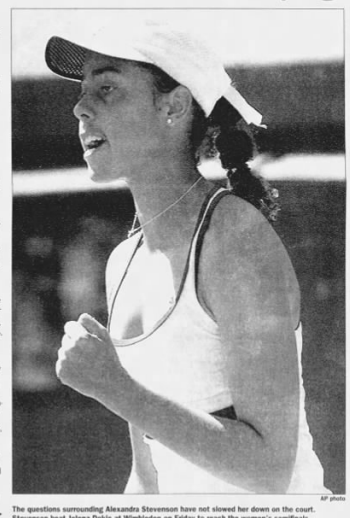
His statement by telephone to The Associated Press came shortly after Stevenson made history by becoming the first qualifier to advance to the Wimbledon semifinals.

It was a momentous day for the young, capturing player from California and for Erving, the former Philadelphia 76ers star who is now a vice president with the NBA's Orlando Magic.

"I acknowledge a relationship with her mother in 1980," Erving said from his office in Florida. "My wife, who has known from the beginning, and children are aware of this situation."

"All matters concerning Alexandra since her birth have been handled privately through counsel. I am pleased to see Alexandra at 18, doing so well and I applaud her mother's efforts and courage."

The possibility that Erving was Stevenson's father was raised this week when a newspaper published a copy of her birth certificate. Though it listed her father as Julius Winfield Erving II, he initially



The questions surrounding Alexandra Stevenson have not slowed her down on the court. Stevenson heat Jelena Dokic at Wimbledon on Friday to reach the women's semifinals.

Ex-champs eyeing 4th showdown

WIMBLEDON, England — Here but weary, Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras face a fourth showdown on opposite sides of the draw. They are not yet ready for a showdown, but they get a step closer Friday when each advanced to the semifinals at the All England Club.

Agassi earned his spot by defeating a focused 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 victory against Gustavo Kuerten, ignoring the crowd-like atmosphere that follows the Brazilian wherever he goes. Sampras' road to the semifinals was shorter but more nerve-racking. The five-time Wimbledon champion was down a set to Mark Philippoussis when the towering Australian lunged for a backhand and tore cartilage in his knee. This episode had to end, going Sampras a 4-6, 2-1 win, but the experience — which included Sampras double-faulting three times in his opening service game — left the 28-year-old feeling frustrated.

After the match, he blamed his rustiness on the multiple rain delays that have plagued the second week of the tournament.

"I can't say I really traded off Mark today. I mean, he was out-playing me," Sampras said. "I can't sit here and feel very good about it. I'm not having played that much

STORY, PAGE 2

Nothing else matters: Rays' win streak continues

TORONTO — A pulsating 8-7 victory against Toronto makes Tampa Bay's road to make a club-record six games.

By JOE WENDELL
of the Tampa Tribune

For the sake of clarity, we turn first to David Rays second baseman Miguel Cairo to see the consolidated Friday night into here.

"It's like I've told you before, what counts is Roberto Hernandez got a save and we won the game," he said. "No matter how we did it, we did it, so that's what counts. The final score was 8-7, the Tampa Bay Devil Rays win. That's what counts."

We return you now to our regularly scheduled description of the accounts of Friday's game between the Rays and Toronto Blue Jays.

Cairo captured the outcome, if not the essence, of 2 hours and 23 minutes of madness that followed last night's game.

The Rays led, 9-1, and had rookie Ryan Baez occasionally on cruise control for his fourth consecutive victory. They wound up with white knuckles from looking on and needed two games feeling dazed in the ninth to preserve their club-record sixth consecutive road victory after the Blue Jays had the tying and winning runs in scoring position.

But with one out, Hernandez faked a comeback at the mound from Shannon Stewart and was startled — and we do mean startled — to see Toronto's Tony Batista barreling down the

line from third. Hernandez threw the ball to catcher John Flaherty, although it really was something between a shot put and a heave, and ... oh, who could Cairo say?

The game ended moments later when Craig Lovvick hit an infield hit to batter to Cairo, who raked his first three and avoided a shaky two-out comeback sweep from Fred McGriff at first to barely get the final out.

It never should have been this close, most would agree. Except Manager Larry Beitzel, who has seen this all before, had a feeling it would be over as the Rays romped in an early lead he had home runs from Jose Canseco, his 29th, and Bubba Trammell. Dave Matthews also had home runs.

But bottom line? And Cairo. Six straight wins on the road, three straight on this trip. Seems clear enough.

never over in the American League," he said. "You just can't sit on beds in this league or this ballpark."

"True enough, Roger — in Roberto's words — 'get out of school a little bit' and couldn't finish the fifth as the Jays scored four times to make a go of it.

The undisciplined Rays bullpen had to go to work. Julio Santana kept things in check in the fifth, and Scott Aldred got Terry Feri needed to hit into an inning-ending double play with the bases loaded in the sixth.

"A huge play," Batista said, with the highlight of the ninth inning hysteria still clear in his mind.

Tonight's game

- When: 7:05 p.m. (ET)
- Where: Inlandia, Toronto
- Pitcher: Randy 901 (4-4, 5.48 on, Chris Caramazza 0-5, 2.63)
- TV: SportsChannel Florida
- Radio: WFLA 97.9 FM, WFTS 700 AM (Tampa)

Inside

- Game review, Page 5
- Complete baseball coverage, Page 35