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PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION

In come the rides, out go the spots

CHARLIE GRAU
Editor in Chief

Students could find themselves looking for parking for a little longer than usual when they come back from Spring Break.

From March 17 to April 20, Lot 5, located next to the Wertheim Performing Arts Center will be closed due to use by the Miami-Dade County Fair and Exposition. According to Bill Foster, director of Parking and Transportation, half of the lot sits on Miami-Dade County property, while the other half sits on FIU property.

The University has exclusive use of the lot for 11 months out of the year, while the Fair has it for the remaining month when it comes to town.

Unlike past years, The Fair will be opening later in March. It usually opens the week before Spring Break, which allows students and faculty to feel less of the traffic woes caused by The Fair.

Officials at The Fair said the date was moved back to accommodate students in the public school system who will take the FCAT in mid-March. The Fair opens on March 27 this year.

Foster said the first day is usually one of the most hectic because fair attendees can pay \$5 for admission. Regular admission is \$9.

With the added traffic during The Fair's opening weekend, Foster said Public Safety officers will be stationed at Panther Hall and Lot 6, in order to keep fairgoers from taking up the already limited amount of spaces reserved for students in housing.

Parking and Traffic will also provide some signs and staffing efforts to direct users of Lot 5 to other available spaces.

"Since FIU has this mutual aid agreement with The Fair, we do not try to keep cars off campus during fair hours. FIU parking is normally used as an overflow area, so the biggest impact during the 18 days The Fair operation comes during the night time hours," Foster wrote in a e-mail. "Parking and Transportation provides staffing at the housing lots to control access for housing resident decal holders only, and we monitor the Blue and Gold Garages to assist in a security effort for our community."

Although The Fair may create stress for those trying to find parking at University Park, Foster said there are plenty of parking spaces on campus to compensate for the month-long loss of spaces in Lot 5.

"[Students] can use the Panther Garage. It's got 800 empty parking spaces," Foster said in an interview last year with The Beacon. "That's a really great place for them to go, but most people don't look at it as a great place to go. It is a little bit more of a walk."

Students can also park in Lot 7 next to the Football Stadium, which has 200 additional parking spaces.



LIA TOWERS/THE BEACON

WAR PROTEST: Young activists lead a protest in downtown Miami on March 19, the 5th anniversary of the beginning of US military actions in Iraq.

Fifth year of Iraq war brings protesters out

ALEXANDRA MCANARNEY
Staff Writer

The Torch of Friendship, a monument on Biscayne Blvd. became the center of a protest on March 19 when over 70 activists made of high school students, college students, veterans and others gathered to mark the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war.

They waved banners stamped with the slogan "End the War Now" and chanted through megaphones to passing cars.

"I'm really pissed off," said Rebecca Lubin, 23. "We spend around \$25,000 every hour on the Iraq war and second we voted Democrats into Congress so they would cut the funding, but they haven't."

According to an MSNBC article printed on March 9, 2008, the war in Iraq has cost the United States \$12 billion a month.

Among increasing fears of an impending recession, a CNN poll released on the weekend of March 15 and 16 showed seven in 10 respondents believe the Iraq war is actually responsible for today's

failing economy. Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz estimates that the total cost of the war will reach \$3-trillion, or a quarter of the U.S.'s annual gross domestic product of \$13.8 trillion.

Rose Lubin marched as a representative for the honors Women Studies Association.

"I can't vote for Hilary or Obama. They won't get our kids out of Iraq," Lubin said, "They're serving their own interests."

The protest was organized by FIU alum Muhammed Malik and by the Act Now to Stop War and End Racism coalition, ANSWER.

"We are not only calling for an immediate end to the war, but initiating a larger call to fight these same corporations and bankers in their war against working and poor people here at home," Malik said. "The elections will show that Democratic or Republican candidates—parties funded by big business—will not come up with a plan to end the war in Iraq or the economic war being waged here at home."

PROTEST, page 2

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Slashed finances call for scrutiny

BEN F. BADGER JR.
Asst. News Director

Looming budget cuts dominated the Board of Trustees meeting on March 14 with talks of how to best prepare for the inevitable.

Bruce Hauptli, a member of the board and faculty senate chair, expressed great concern over cuts to services that have already been made over time, relating the cuts to amputation.

"Over the years we have increased in productivity and decreased in relative amounts of resources," Hauptli said. "The only thing we can do now is cut more deeply into bone and indeed amputate. The truth is we are in deep financial doo doo."

To compound the concerns over budget cuts, the board is also taking the state of the Board of Governors into serious consideration. A proposed amendment could remove power from the BOG to set tuition. The amendment could also regulate the University system and return that power to an elected education commissioner instead of an appointed one.

University President Modesto A. Maidique also expressed concerns of how these developments will affect his "FIU at 50" plan. The original goal set FIU to be within the list of top 10 public universities by the time the university turned 50. The plan later changed to the top 15.

"We might only hit the top 20," Maidique said during the meeting.

BOT members stressed the importance of lobbying state legislatures for the welfare of FIU. Honorary board member Marbely Hernandez, University Park Student Government Council president, also stressed this point with her SGC-UP letter-writing campaign.

"We really want students to write letters [to their legislatures]," Hernandez said.

Hernandez also dispelled rumors that cutting services also included elimination of summer terms.

"By law there have to be classes offered," Hernandez said. "There might not be as many as we have now, but there will be as many offered as can be."

The BOT meeting ended on a more lighthearted note when Hernandez was presented with a plaque in recognition of her service as an honorary BOT member. This will be the last meeting Hernandez participates in as an honorary BOT member.

Ben Badger can be reached at Ben.Badger@fiusm.com.

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Miami protest one of many around country

PROTEST, page 1

The protest was part of a larger, national effort railing against the war in Iraq. Other rallies happened in cities such as San Francisco and New York. However, since the troop surge in January 2007, the numbers of protests have dwindled. In the case of the Miami protest, the projected numbers of demonstrators had been in the hundreds.

“The media here, they don’t show the American people what is really going on inside Iraq,” Cecile Yanick, 35, said during the protest. “You can’t send innocent civilians to die. They’re only 20 to 21 years old.”

According to The Brookings Institution’s Iraq Index, there have been approximately 4,000 American casualties. About 51 percent of those are under 25 years of age.

“Hopefully this wave of awareness will continue to rise,” said Marc Reid, 35, who served two tours of



LIA TOWERS/THE BEACON

SMALL CROWD: While hundreds were expected, only 70 protesters showed up for the demonstration in Miami.

duty in Iraq but is now part of the Iraq Veterans Against the War. “People’s homes are being destroyed, Iraqi’s are displaced, Iraqi women are being sold into prostitution in the surrounding countries, Congress hasn’t been doing its job.”

As of May 2007, about 2,135,000 Iraqis have been internally displaced and 1.3 million to 1.75 million have fled to Syria, Jordan and other surrounding countries, according to a report issued by the United Nations High

Commission for Refugees, UNHCR. It is estimated that 600,000 Iraqi’s have been killed as a result of the war.

However, some at the protest did not think that chanting for troop withdrawals would be a plausible manner of fixing the damage already been done.

“You need to identify new ideas. They aren’t saying anything people don’t already know, they should try something else,” said Brandon Little, an FIU alum.

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Officer enforces car safety with funny, catchy signs

EDDITH SEVILLA
BBC Managing Editor

He stood on 151 Street some mornings with signs that read "will work for you to wear your seatbelts" all to gain compliance from drivers heading to the Biscayne Bay Campus and the David Lawrence K-8 Center.

"It takes a certain personality type to come out and have a funny sign standing next to you. If I have to be funny to get attention, to get compliance, I'll be funny," said FIU's law enforcement Sgt. Edward Degelsmith.

Degelsmith, who used the self-made signs for about two months and now displays the messages electronically, works some mornings close to the entrance of BBC to control traffic and encourage drivers to wear their seat belts.

"People see the little signs and they [say] 'oh I gotta have my seat belt on' and I gain compliance," he said. "I didn't have the sign up for a couple of days and I just ran the radar. A couple of people started forgetting to put their seat belts so I went back to the signs and I started getting compliance again."

Although Degelsmith comes up with

his own ideas for the signs, he said there are some drivers who offer him ideas.

"I had a woman drive by and I don't even know who she was. She gave me an idea for a sign. No seat belt and she wrote a price, speeding ticket. Obeying the law and still getting my kids to school on time. Priceless. It's a little bit too long for a sign. Most people can't drive by and read all that but I thanked her for it," he said.

Aside from deterring crime such as speeding, Degelsmith said that his presence in the streets also is to educate.

"Once they click [their seatbelt] and put it on they just leave it on. I don't see people when they come by me put it on and then down the road take it off. They just leave it on, said Degelsmith who has been working for the Public Safety since May of 1992.

While Degelsmith and his team of police officers are just doing their job, Margie Knight said that Degelsmith's presence has transformed the community.

"... Everything has totally changed since he's been here," said Knight, whose 10-year-old daughter is a student at the David Lawrence school. Everybody



NATHAN VALENTINE/THE BEACON

SAFETY BEACON: Sgt. Edward Degelsmith loads the 25-pound digital radar onto an FIU police squad car. Degelsmith is known for the posterboard slogans he holds up every morning in front of the David Lawrence K-8 Center.

obeys the traffic. He puts little signs up and everybody always gives him the thumbs up and I just feel like everybody is coming together as a community. This was total chaos because as you know the school is new. Since they put this officer here, everybody obeys the law. It's just totally organized."

The current electronic message on display reads as follows: Speeding, \$120.50. No seatbelt, \$89.50. Arrive alive, priceless.

"Part of the job of a police officer is to protect and serve and sometimes you have to protect people from themselves," Degelsmith said.

Caribbean student's voices urged to become vocal

ANA PEREZ
BBC Life! Editor

The West Indian Student Association of Biscayne Bay Campus provides a home away from home for Caribbean students and a culture shock for everyone.

Reinstated last semester, WISA hopes to have a voice on campus and be educational as well as entertaining by hosting cultural discussions and social activity events.

Joanna Oates, vice president of WISA, felt there was a need for a Caribbean voice on campus because of the vast amount of Caribbean students here.

"Students wanted to get to know people from their [home] countries and the Caribbean as a whole because we all share many similarities," said Oates, a graduate student. "We would ultimately like our membership to grow, have signature events and a large voice on campus."

Although the group has not had any events since its recent resurgence, members are currently anticipating the Florida Caribbean Student Association conference in April where all Caribbean student associations from Florida will come together.

FIU is hosting the conference, which will consist of workshops, team building activities and a pageant, with one day occurring at BBC and another two days at University Park.

The conference's main objective is to bring everyone together, and Theo Cooper, Student Organization Council's representative for WISA, believes that is the right road to take.

"As a single unit, we each have a voice,

but cohesively we can have a greater voice. We need to find ways like this to come together and ensure opportunities for everybody in the Caribbean," said Cooper, also a graduate student.

According to Oates, WISA is valuable for many students.

"WISA is a place where [members] can make friends and where we can educate others on our heritage," Oates said.

Cooper agreed and shared his personal experience.

"In my transition to this country I found a need to find people who I could identify with because they understood better what I was going through. We are the future leaders of our countries. We all had to suffer the same things so we have to think of our brothers and sisters," Cooper said. "The bottom line is we are human and whatever we can do to elevate human dignity in life, we ought to." In WISA's last meeting on March 13, the discussion topic was Caricom, the Caribbean Community, and CSME, the Caribbean Single Market Economy.

Caricom's goal is to share everything within the Caribbean communities and have whatever is allowed in one country, allowed in the others as well.

Students agreed that Caricom is great in concept, but not practical.

WISA Meetings are held every Thursday at 5:30 p.m. and flyers are posted around BBC as reminders.

Next meeting's topics will include Rastafarianism, a way of life that promotes love and respect for all living things and emphasizes the importance of human dignity and self-respect. "WISA is here to stay. We are coming back stronger than ever and we are welcoming everyone," Oates said.

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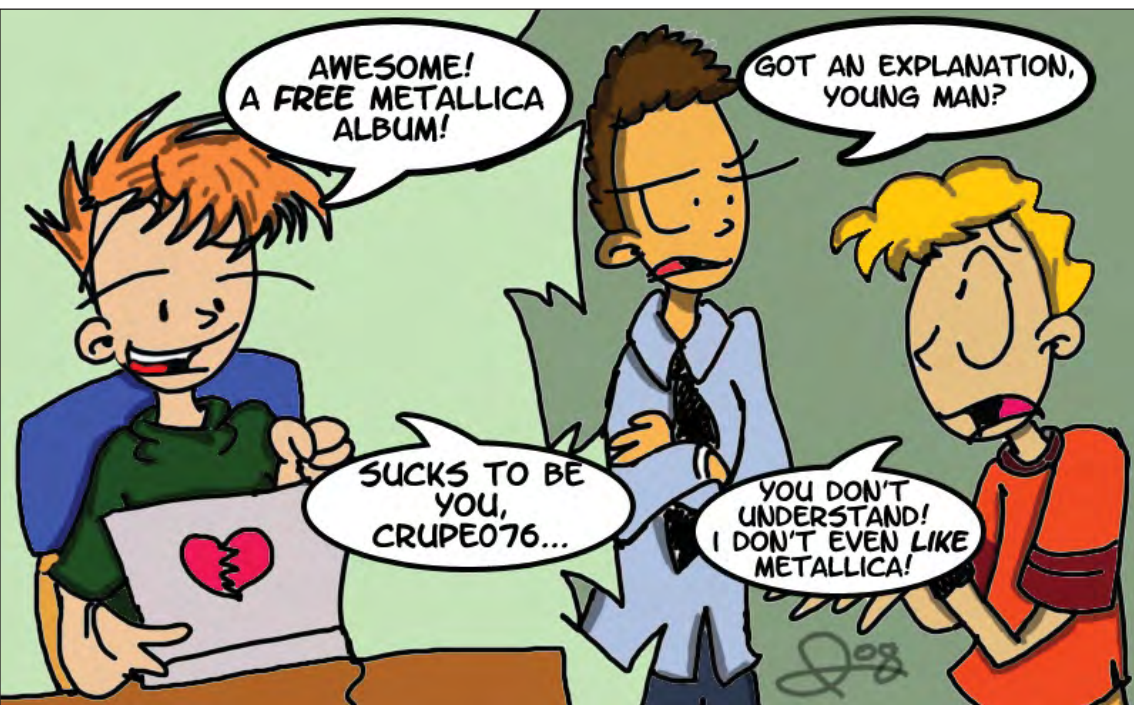
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FIU IS WATCHING



THE BEACON | Editorial

Board of Governors at risk for dissolution

In 1998 the Board of Governors was created to replace the elected Education Commissioner and with a new State House resolution, the state of Florida may be reverting back to the original format of a single, elected official, as reported by *The Beacon* on March 13.

If such a resolution were to pass, the unity that the Board of Governors (BOG) afforded Florida schools would cease to exist and the power to govern our schools would be given back to the Legislature.

Tuition would be lowered if power were returned to the Legislature, which would be great, if only the quality of said education would remain the same, according to Senate President Ken Pruitt.

The Board of Governors countered by saying that the tuition increase approved by the BOG this semester was only to maintain quality of the University System despite the statewide budget cuts.

The Board of Governors needs to remain as the educational legislating body simply because they obviously have the University System's best interests at heart, even if it means

a tuition increase to seamlessly keep schools like FIU going at their current workflow. If the Legislature, namely Senate Republicans like Pruitt, were to seize control of these decisions, our tuition would be cheap, but the growth of the University System could come to a grinding halt.

The proposal to revert to a single commissioner is opposed by two education-conscious former Governors, Jeb Bush and Bob Graham. Founder, Bob Graham has been particularly vehement on the issue.

Bush opposes the measure because it leaves the governor without the ability to drive education initiatives. With Gov. Crist's recent budget proposal only allotting the University System \$33 million, according to Crist's Web site, it might not be such a bad idea to leave the power with the BOG, who has proven to understand what's important when it comes to funding education.

The Board of Governors, even with the increase in tuition, clearly understands that it's the quality of education and not the cost that is important in a time like this.

Clean Access violates constitution

JOSEPH MARHEE
Opinion Editor

The fourth amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees citizens protection from unlawful search and seizures. The Federal Communications Act protects citizens from wiretapped conversations being included in a trial; wiretaps, internet surveillance.

With such stringent rules put in place by Congress and upheld time after time by the Supreme Court (most notably, *Olmstead v. The United States*) why is it that FIU is able to circumvent the law by using Cisco Systems' Clean Access Agent to monitor the Internet use of students? Why can FIU's University Technology Service (UTS) use information procured by this "Agent" to incriminate students? The short answer is control.

If a student is "caught" illegally downloading, the source cannot be traced back to a computer, but rather

the person whose Clean Access account was used to log in is logged and a warning is sent. If the activity continues, the student's Internet usage is cut off indefinitely, pending a police report being filed with Conflict and Resolution Services.

While the student shouldn't have been downloading in the first place, why are they being penalized for something that has also been deemed not illegal? Especially since the MPAA has dropped its investigations. Apparently cyber-criminals are more of a threat to FIU than would-be rapists running around campus as reported by the "Police Notes" in *The Beacon*.

According to *The Beacon* in 2007, Cisco Systems also peddles the Clean Access Agent to totalitarian regimes such as the government of China, who in turn use the same software to watch citizens, and much like the U.S. Patriot Act, can be used to incriminate its citizens.

The responsibility to deal with the allegations falls solely on the student whose user name was logged in at the time of the file transfer, not on the owner of the computer, at least according to Ramon of UTS at University Park.

It's the belief of the Supreme Court that using a surveillance method like CAA is in violation of the Federal Communications Act and therefore constitutes an illegal search (a search that had to be conducted to find out the user who downloaded the material) and therefore a violation of the fourth amendment.

That means that if someone guesses your username (pretty easy to do if they know your first name, last name, and birth date) and password, then you're open to a whole mess of this nonsense since UTS won't look into such "ridiculous" claims. But rather than investigate claims of possible identity theft, UTS representative simply transfers

you to Conflict Resolution.

It's unconstitutional for a University to operate in such a shady and detrimental way toward its students. There are plenty of ways to circumvent the Clean Access Agent, but rather than be dissenters, students put up with it. The Internet usage of students should be among the lowest things on FIU's priority list, but as usual, trivial nonsense like this outweighs the importance of budget crises, poor facilities, and employee salary. The point isn't "we should

be able to download," but rather, if someone says UTS made a mistake, then they need to investigate rather than forcing otherwise innocent students to waste time trying to get their Internet access back because of an obvious error on the part of UTS.

A practice like this, similar to the practices of totalitarian China, could constitute the establishment of a quasi-police state at FIU. When FIU leaves this Orwellian witch-hunt for cyber-criminals, then I think the real education should begin.

Sickening torture difficult to rationalize, define



Commentary

Matt Ruckman
Contributing Writer

All Americans hear about on the news is torture, torture, torture; the kind an inmate feels when his nipples are attached to the business end of a car battery. Where is this inmate? Some distant third-world country? A Nazi labor camp? No. He's in the Western hemisphere, Guantanamo Bay to be exact.

This is tolerated mostly because he has information that the American government wants, and because it sounds more heinous than water boarding is why. Some say, "Yes! He's a bad guy who knows about bad things, let's hurt him to save good people!" Others (Democrats mostly) say "No! He's bad because he hurts people, ergo if we hurt him we are bad!" It's not all that hard to pinpoint who is on what side: President Bush recently

vetoed a bill that would make torture, like water boarding, illegal to the almost universal disapproval of the left.

The veto only serves to shame the nation further: "President Bush's veto will be one of the most shameful acts of his presidency," Sen. Edward Kennedy said to CNN on March 8.

“All Americans hear about on the news is torture... the kind an inmate feels when his nipples are attached to the business end of a car battery.”

Everyone is aware of the benefits of torture. Insights into future terrorist plots and possibility of saving lives that otherwise would be lost, so I'll mainly focus on the costs.

One such question concerns the entire premise as to whether the detainee even has the information in the first place. Certainty is

a hard thing to come by in the murky world of government intelligence, and a priori knowledge when used by the CIA to capture these people is notoriously inaccurate. Currently there are approximately 545 detainees at Guantanamo Bay. 146 to date have been released, according to CNN in 2007. So my question is, why are they being incarcerated

in the first place?

My view is that the detainment of said individuals should be based on independently confirmed data before they are detained, not confirmed by the individual himself while he's in prison. That's a recipe for coerced confessions and misinformation.

At least this way, with a greater degree of certainty we'll be getting the bad guys and not releasing an approximate 27% who didn't know anything anyway. Another question that's plagued my mind is the definition of torture. What would make me weep like a kindergartener may seem like a hot stone massage to Chuck Norris.

I'm definitely in favor of prisoners being uncomfortable, they've earned that much if they are actually terrorists, but do such techniques cross the line into torture? Some would cry foul if you clipped their toenails. So the idea of defining torture is tricky because like Emerson said "We all boil at different degrees". So here I remain mired.

The idea of hurting someone who is wholly defenseless is a sickening thought to everyone but the Marquis de Sade. The idea itself is one that I have trouble rationalizing.

George W. doesn't see it that way: "This is no time for Congress to abandon practices that have a proven track record of keeping America safe."

New tradition

Festival promises music, movies and longevity

JONATHAN DAVILA
Staff Writer

No, it's not a call for students to rebel against tuition and the Athletics fee increase.

UProar, which stands for University Park Roar, is the inaugural week-long festival being brought to students by UP's Student Programming Council.

The festival begins March 31 at 9:30 p.m. with a kickoff party in the Graham Center Ballrooms, and culminates April 10 at 8 p.m. with a concert featuring alternative rockers OneRepublic and platinum-selling rap artist Fabolous.

Gabriel Perez, a director of UP-SPC, said the kickoff party will present a nightclub-like atmosphere; there will be belly dancers performing throughout the night and the ballrooms will be split into three different rooms, each playing different types of music: trans/techno, hip-hop and Latin.

DJ Kaewno, of Ultra Music Festival fame, will be performing at the party as

well.

Giveaway tables, where students may obtain free merchandise, will also be placed around the venue. The party is open to all FIU students. The concert, which still has an undetermined location, will allow students to bring one guest per Panther ID. If not brought in as guests, non-FIU students must pay \$10 to attend the concert. With UProar, Adrian Molina, public relations coordinator for UP-SPC, said the organization is not only reaching out to students who frequent campus activities, but also trying to gain the attention of students who seem to shy away from FIU-related events.

"We're trying to step outside the box. [We want] a diverse group of students [to be involved]," Molina said.

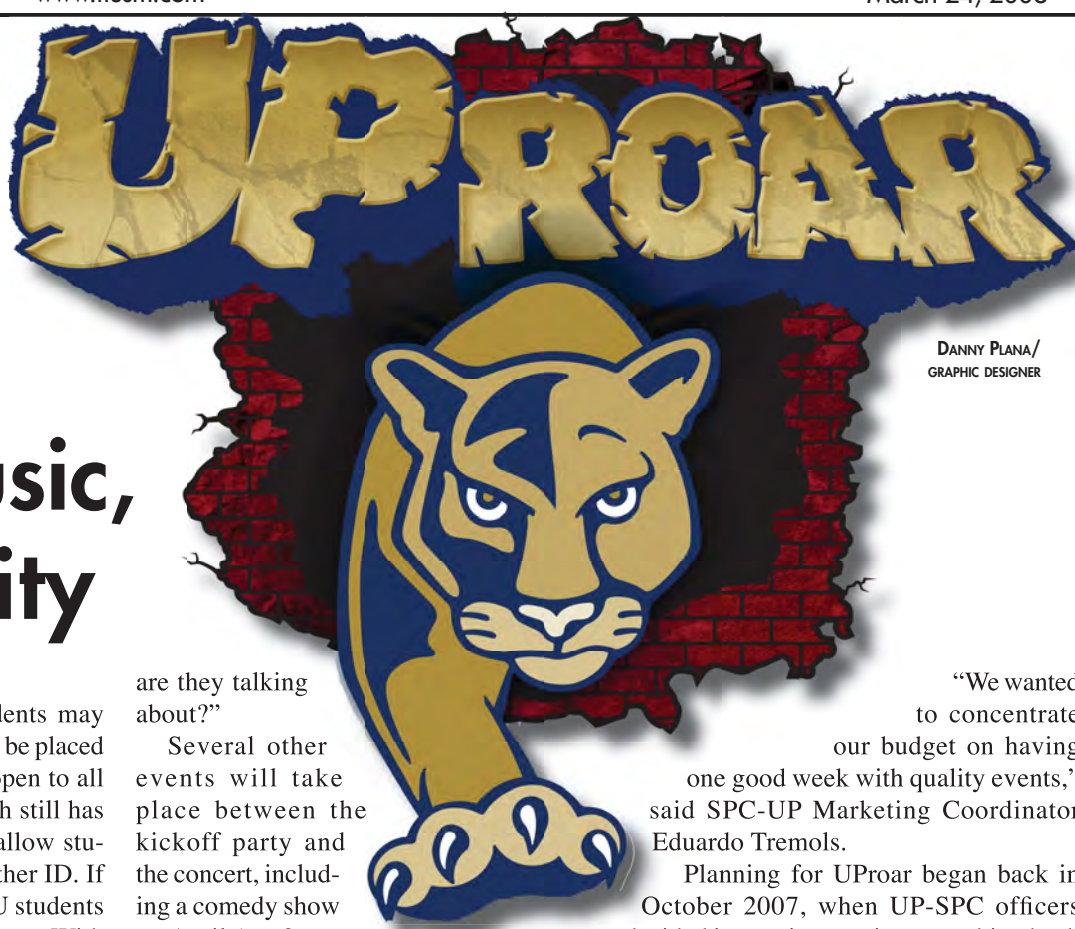
SPC is hoping to grab the attention of these students with their "Ask Me" campaign. Starting this Monday, students can expect to see UP-SPC members wearing T-shirts that simply say "Ask Me," something Perez said should spark speculation and make students want to ask, "What

are they talking about?"

Several other events will take place between the kickoff party and the concert, including a comedy show on April 1 at 8 p.m. in the GC Ballrooms, featuring actor and comedian Pauly Shore.

The film "Rendition" will be shown on April 4 at 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. in GC 140. A preview party will be held on April 6 at 8 p.m. in the GC Ballrooms, where students can get a taste of the concert's talent by listening to OneRepublic and Fabolous, while food and refreshments are served.

The Student Alumni Association, partnering with SPC for UProar, will be sponsoring "Movie on a Lawn," featuring the film "National Treasure: Book of Secrets," at the UP Housing Quad, on April 8. The event will sport a "National Treasure" theme and will have giveaways for those who attend.



DANNY PLANA/
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

"We wanted to concentrate our budget on having one good week with quality events," said SPC-UP Marketing Coordinator Eduardo Tremols.

Planning for UProar began back in October 2007, when UP-SPC officers decided it was time to give something back to the students of FIU.

"SPC's main objective is to provide [entertainment] for the students. We wanted to put on this week of events for the students because we feel that they really deserve it," Molina said.

Although Tremols said getting all of the performers to sign on for UProar was quite a task, he confirmed that UProar will be an annual event that SPC-UP will put on for students.

"It's going to be an FIU tradition," he said.

For more information, visit the SPC office in GC 2304 or approach the nearest student wearing an "Ask Me" T-shirt. Go ahead – ask them.

REVIEWS (YOU CAN USE)

GAME

Super Smash Bros. Brawl

Nintendo delivers new twists to an old favorite

JONATHAN DAVILA
Staff Writer

Back in the days of the Nintendo 64, gamers would've never fathomed Mario's gloved fist striking Pikachu's rosy cheeks until "Super Smash Bros." came out of HAL Laboratory Inc. in April 1999.

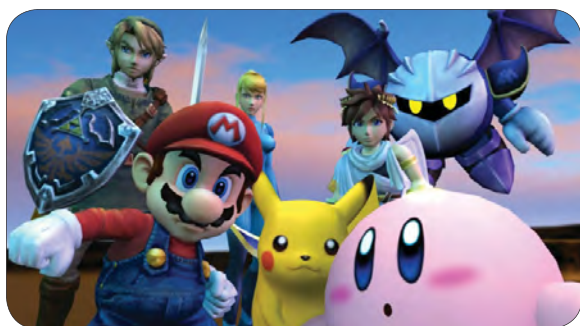
Well, how unfathomable does Solid Snake launching grenades at Sonic the Hedgehog sound?

If you answered 'not at all,' then you've no doubt played "Super Smash Bros. Brawl," the third iteration of the Super Smash Bros. series.

Building upon the successful formula of its predecessors, "Brawl" pits several of Nintendo's characters against each other in a child-friendly, fast paced fighting game. The rules are simple: beat your opponent until he or she is sent flying off the stage.

Only now, non-Nintendo characters are being thrown into the mix. Solid Snake and Sonic the Hedgehog are the first third party characters initiated into the "Smash Bros." universe. Also joining the band of brawlers for the first time are Nintendo characters, Meta Knight, Pit, King Dedede, Captain Olimar, Wario and others; the full roster boasts 35 playable character.

Thankfully, only a couple of the brawlers



COURTESY PHOTO

seem like rehashes of other characters already in the game. This means that Meta Knight isn't just an armored Kirby, and Dr. Mario isn't included because Mario without his degree is already in the game.

Gamers who can't let go of their old Gamecube controller can still use it to play "Brawl." Besides the Gamecube controller, players may also use the Wii remote, the Wii remote and Nunchuk combo, or the Wii Classic Controller to play. Introduced in this edition is the Smash Ball: an in-game item that floats around the stage while players duke it out.

The first player to reach and destroy the Smash Ball will be able to unleash their character's finishing move: their Final Smash.

The Final Smash is a devastating attack that has the potential to automatically knock out opponents. Link performs a vigorous aerial

sword attack that sends opponents flying. Snake calls in a helicopter, hops onto the rope-ladder hanging from it, and proceeds to launch rocket-propelled grenades at his foes. Every character's Final Smash is amazing to watch in action.

"Brawl" contains different modes of play. The adventure mode is titled the Subspace Emissary, and it is quite different from past releases. Previous adventure modes were simple, short side-scrolling adventures that were essentially the same experience no matter which character was chosen.

The Subspace Emissary expands upon this idea by making the adventure mode a ten-hour, cinematic experience in which players embark on a mission to save the world from the Subspace Army.

The stages vary from excellently designed, fun and engaging levels, to downright monotonous episodes that feature the same enemies. Even with all the mayhem caused by players as they fight the Subspace Army and pummel each other with bombs, hammers and soccer balls (yes, soccer balls), "Brawl" still runs at a smooth 60 frames per second.

The game has also finally made the leap over to online play, albeit lacking many features that would make "Brawl" a multiplayer



COURTESY PHOTO

masterpiece.

When playing "Brawl" online, players may either play against friends who are already in their address book or play against random players, but these are the only two options.

Playing a game with your friends against random players via Nintendo Wi-Fi is a no-no for Nintendo, whom also decided to not include voice-chat in Brawl, in order to maintain a child-friendly online community.

Overall, "Brawl" is an amazing game that should be a part of every Wii library. Nintendo's decision to basically strip online play is a respectable one, but it is still detrimental to an otherwise must-own title.

Students 'Idol'-ize former Golden Panther

DANIELLA BACIGALUPO
Staff Writer

“Charlie Spillers, Actor

She's incredible, keep an eye on her, even if she gets eliminated. Keep an eye on her career because she's going to go far.

Syesha Mercado has captured the hearts of thousands of FIU students.

The former Golden Panther has landed a role in "American Idol," a show that's one part talent show and one part personality measure and she seems to have enough of both to succeed.

"We were both in the freshman showcase and she did a scene from 'Hopscotch.' I don't know how I remember that," said Ashley Alvarez, a theatre classmate of Syesha's, "she did a really great dramatic scene.

That's what's so good about Syesha, she's not only a good singer but a great actress."

Before heading to L.A. to start her career in theatre and music, Syesha was part of FIU's School of Theatre, Dance and Speech.

She enrolled in 2005 but dropped out to pursue her career a short time later leaving a fan-base in her wake.

"I think she's very, very talented. She has the whole package. There was a show on Bravo they called the 'It Factor,' I think she's got 'It,'" said Lesley-Ann Timlick, an assistant professor in the theatre department.

Many consider the contestants in this season to be evenly talented across the board but Syesha has managed to quickly set herself apart vocally.

In "Hollywood Week," when the



MERCADO

eliminations were still done by the judges Randy Jackson, Paula Abdul and Simon Cowell, Syesha impressed all three with her rendition of Aretha Franklin's "Chain of Fools," even though she had lost her voice a few days before.

Her Hollywood performance allowed her to compete the following week.

That week, Simon said she had "probably one of the best voices in the competition."

But talent, whether in acting or singing, is not all that her former peers and professors gush about, they all constantly bring up her fun and light personality.

Ryan Rodriguez, a theatre major, described "Sye-Sye" as "bubbly" and "full of energy."

Reading her Q&A on the "American Idol" Web site is a good way to get a glimpse of her personality.

"Thinking positive brings positive outcomes," is her reply to the possibility of being voted off the show.

Syesha's positive outlook has most likely helped her through some rough patches in her life - a house fire in high school, an alcoholic father and a disap-

pointment in another televised singing competition on ABC, "The One: Making a Music Star," that was cancelled after only four episodes.

After "The One," she made it through the "American Idol" auditions and onto the show.

Syesha is not the first FIU theatre major to grace its stages - Nadia Turner also made it to the top 8 in 2005.

Maybe it has to do with FIU's plumbing.

"I think there something in the water in the restrooms, they drink it and it makes their vocal cords turn to gold," Timlick said.

Syesha's friends who attended the "American Idol" watch party in the Graham Center pit last Tuesday all think Syesha has the potential to make it farther than Nadia's top 8.

If she can overcome a few faltering performances, she just might.

Randy, Paula and Simon are still fans of her voice but audiences have not been as impressed.

In last week's show, she was voted in the bottom three but was ultimately not eliminated.

Phillip Church, a theatre professor, said in an e-mail that a show like American Idol "endorses truckloads of fakery" and that because of this, Syesha's "journey on American Idol will be fraught with obstacles."

Another theatre professor, Wayne Robinson, believes the problem might stem from the producers' inability to find a way to market her.

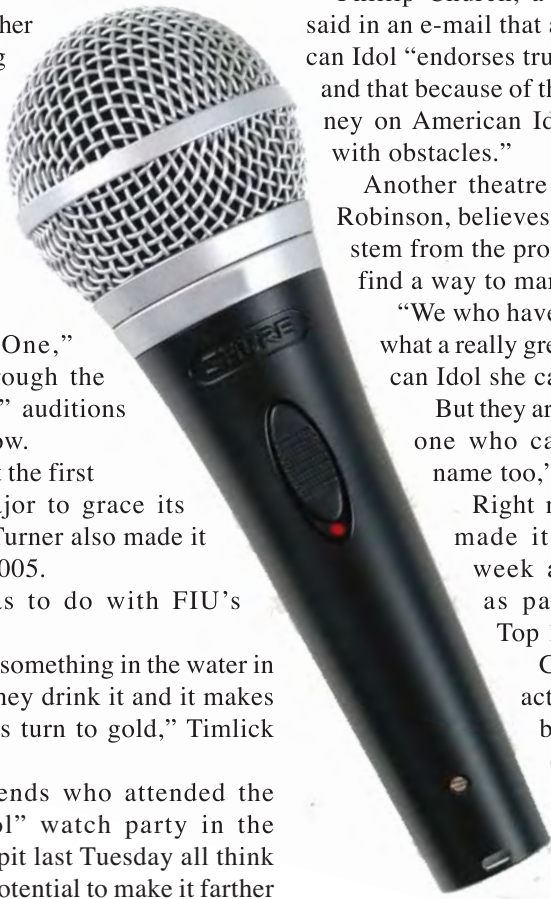
"We who have met her, we know what a really great potential American Idol she can be.

But they are looking for someone who can sell that brand name too," he said.

Right now, though, she's made it through another week and will compete as part of the show's Top 11.

Charlie Spillers, actor and Syesha fan, believes she is the one to keep an eye out for.

"She's incredible, keep an eye on her, even if she gets eliminated," he said. "Keep an eye on her career because she's going to go far."



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Soto hopes to fill void at point guard position

SOTO, page 8

help out with.

“Yeah, I will be a pass-first point guard, but if I need to score to help the team I will do it too. I just want the team to win.”

Soto admits he leaves the starting lineup up to the coaches, but sets the bar

high.

“I’ll be happy if I get 10 points, eight assists, and two steals a game,” he said.

Alvarez holds high expectations as well.

“I think he is going to be player of the year in the Sun Belt Conference,” Alvarez said.

“He is going to bring a lot

to the table.”

Soto will not hold back either, and holds even higher team standards.

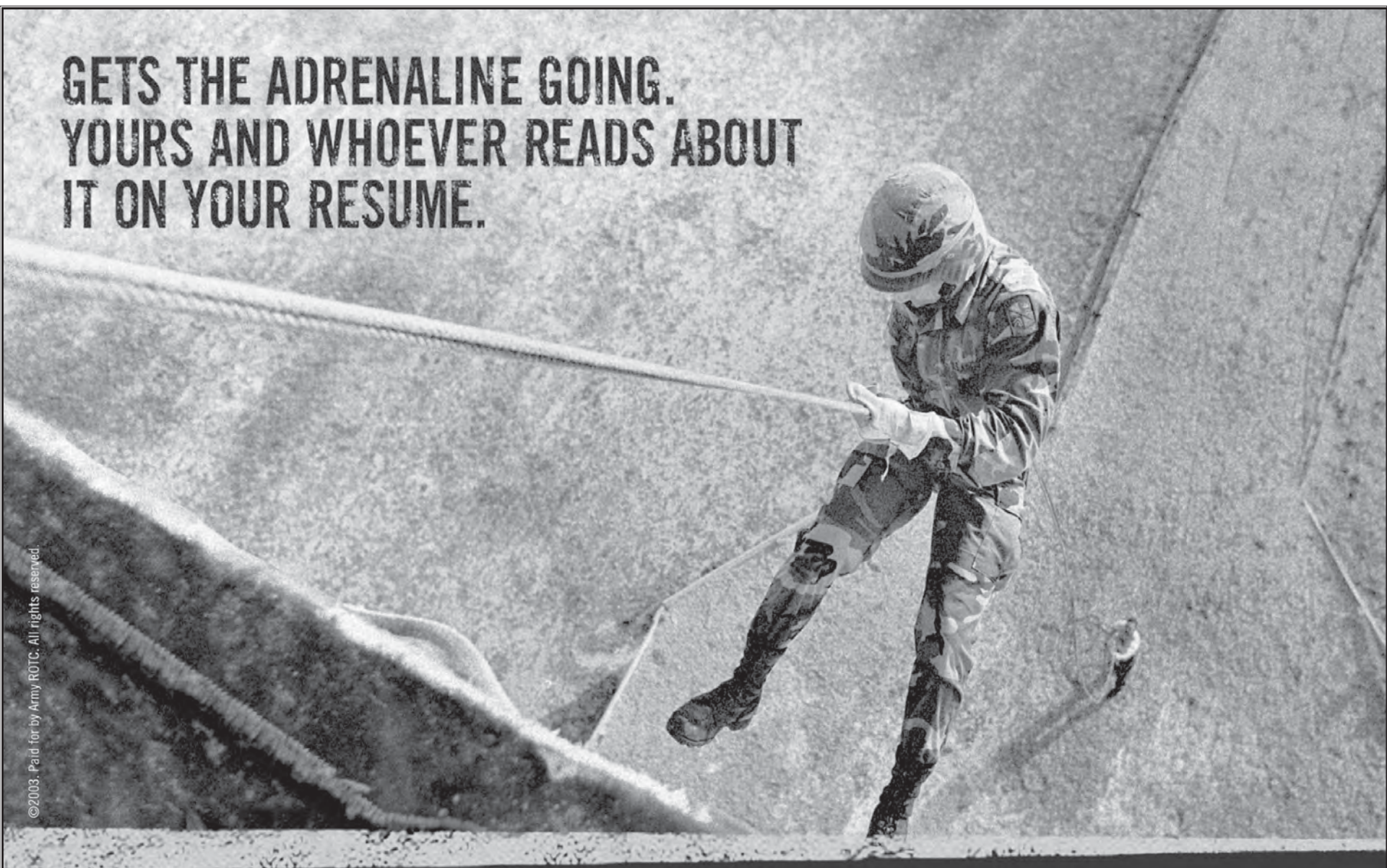
“NCAA tournament man, that’s it, I’m telling you know,” he said. “I’m telling you today, Feb. 28, 2008, we are going to be in the tournament.”

With an NCAA tournament berth on

Soto’s mind, his teammates have no choice but to react the same way they do very often with him.

“They think I’m so crazy,” he said. “But you have to do what you have to do.”

Jonathan Ramos can be contacted at jonathan.ramos@fiusm.com



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TURTLE SETS NEW PACE

Highly touted recruiter replaces former coach Danny Price

XAVIER VILLARMARZO
Staff Writer

Henry Thomas remembers playing little league baseball and, like most little leaguers, developing a deep love for the game.

"It's just such a fun and enjoyable sport that you just develop a love for it that gets inside of your heart that sticks with you all your life," Thomas said.

It's no surprise now that his love for the game has allowed him to coach for over three decades after ending his playing career in 1975 at High Point University.

FIU, however, is the first job as a head coach for the man known as Turtle – a nickname referring to his running speed bestowed upon him during his playing career.

Thomas becomes the third head coach in FIU history, replacing FIU Hall of Famer and 28-year incumbent Danny Price. But he is up for the challenge and feels there won't be many differences to his previous roles.

"As an assistant, you do a lot

of things that head coaches do," Thomas said.

He also credits former LSU head coach Skip Bertman, who Thomas said is very good about training people to be a head coach.

"He has you go out and speak in groups and gives you a lot of responsibility," Thomas said. "So I guess I've done most everything that a head coach would do like scheduling, coaching [different] positions and, obviously, recruiting."

Thomas, known as a talented recruiter with many local ties, was brought in by athletic director Pete Garcia. Both men had a previous relationship when working at the University of Miami – one with baseball, the other with football – and share the same recruiting philosophy.

"The big part about college baseball is you got to have the thoroughbreds to win the race," Thomas said.

After being hired on June 14 of last year, Thomas went right to work and signed 19 student-athletes five months later. He doesn't just go after any student-

TRAVELS OF THE TORTOISE

1979-1985 CLEMSON (ASST. COACH)
1986-1987 GEORGIA TECH (ASST. HEAD COACH)
1988-1999 MIAMI (ASST. COACH/RECRUITING COORDINATOR)
2000-2006 LSU (ASST. COACH/ RECRUITING COORDINATOR)
2007 ARIZONA STATE (ASST. COACH/ RECRUITING COORDINATOR)
2007-PRESENT FIU (HEAD COACH)

athletes who will sign, but rather those that fit certain criteria.

"It's not just the talent that a young man can bring but [he] also ... [must do] well academically, has the right mentality, the right work ethic, the right talent level, a guy that will fit into the program the way you want him to fit in [and] a guy that other players will like," Thomas said.

Thomas also said he has no reservations about going after recruits who are projected to be drafted by Major League teams.

"There are plenty of players out there who choose to go to college because they want a college education," he said. "[They] love the college game and want to learn how to play the game a little bit better under good coaches. There are plenty of guys who turn down professional contracts to play in college ... You just got to find the right guys who are college players."

Freshman infielder Javier Sujo mainly came to FIU because of Thomas.

"Everything he said I like, and he sounded like a man of his word," Sujo said. "He told me FIU was going to explode in a couple of years, so I wanted to win and I wanted to win

quick."

Sujo, who was fielding scholarship offers from Miami and South Carolina, said Thomas is different than many of the coaches he's had throughout his career.

He narrows the game down completely and he expects perfection," Sujo said. "Other coaches didn't.

"I would have never signed if he wasn't here,"

The new players brought in by Thomas aren't the only ones excited for the future of the baseball program.

Some returning players were surprised with the smooth transition from one coaching staff to a completely new one.

"I think naturally there's a bit of uncertainty whenever there's change at the top," said senior shortstop Corey Lozano. "But once I found out that coach Thomas was going to be our new coach, I was excited about all the things he could bring to this program."

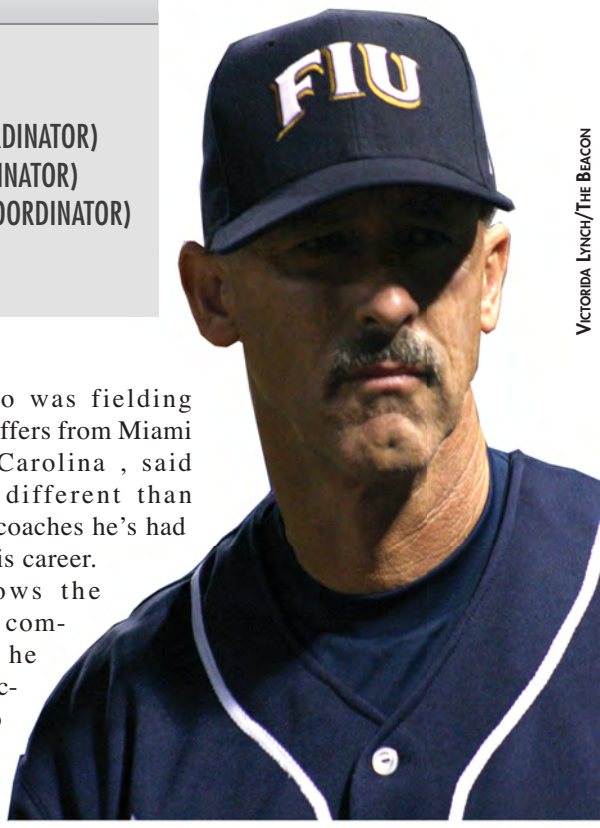
Lozano, the only player who has been with the program for four seasons, noticed a few

differences from one coaching staff to the other.

"Coach Thomas is more aggressive," he said. "I like his coaching style. I feel like he kind of lets the guys go out there and play the game – not a whole lot of thinking about the things that we worked on in practice."

Lozano said the ceiling is very high for the future of the FIU baseball program and feels that it will become a program that will be in the running for the College World Series year in and year out.

"I'm kind of jealous of these freshmen actually," he said. "I wish I could be in their shoes a little bit and pretty much experience what this program will be experiencing [under Thomas]."



VICTORIA LYNCH/THE BEACON

Soto hopes to fill void at point guard position

JONATHAN RAMOS
Asst. Sports Editor

Though he did not play in a single men's basketball game this season, it was not hard to spot Josue Soto somewhere around the action.

He could be found meeting in a collision in mid-air with his teammates before a game, jumping off the bench after a big play or simply spending more time on his feet than the assistant coaches.

The outgoing point guard just can't help it.

"I was born like that; I am always an energetic kid, because I love basketball too much," he said. "[Teammates] think I'm crazy sometimes but it's me and it's my way. It's the way I want to be."

He is just getting started. The sophomore transfer from Florida State says the people around him are just beginning to get used to him and his antics since he arrived on campus in the fall.

"I'm loud; I am always playing around and coaches get mad at me because I'm so energetic but they're getting used to it and they let me go now," he said. "In practice I go 100 percent because I'm trying to make everybody better."

Besides rubbing off his vivacious personality on the team, Soto will bring an impressive resume that includes a basket-

ball prowess at every level he has played on. By NCAA transfer rules Soto was forced to sit out the 2007-08 campaign.

SKILLS

Soto played garnered national recognition and he was one of the most sought out point guards in the class of 2006.

He played for the Miami Tropics of the Amateur Athletic Union, a team that plays in a circuit with some of the best high school players in the nation.

Art Alvarez, his AAU coach, believes FIU got itself a gem.

"FIU is getting a major steal in [Soto]," Alvarez said. "He has all the skills to be a big-time player. He has played head to head with some of the best in the nation."

Indeed, Soto made his mark when he battled North Carolina starting point guard Ty Lawson head to head in a tournament.

He was the second-leading scorer at the Peach Jam, an invitation only event, while he averaged 25.4 points and outscored Lawson head to head.

As for high school, Soto won the 2006 Gatorade Player of the Year award for Florida, which meshes athletic success as well as academic achievement.

After his high school and AAU success, Soto was receiving attention from many high profile schools.

After choosing Florida State and spending one season there, Soto didn't believe it was for him.

"It was a good experience, it was a nice start, but leaving wasn't about basketball, it was me wanting a better education," he said about FSU. "It was a good school, athletic wise, but I did not think it was a good academic school so I had to leave."

Soto found the right combination of what he wanted at FIU.

"FIU is Miami and I'm a Miami guy. I love Miami," he said. "I spoke to [Alex] Galindo, and he told me it was a good academic school, it was hard, even though I didn't have any study habits at the time."

Soto recalls his encounter with FIU head coach Sergio Rouco in which he told him he was transferring, and got the response he wanted.

"I told him on an unofficial visit that I was coming because I liked the campus and it was a fun place. But he told me straight up 'you have to get used to academics, and you're going to have to earn every minute you play, Soto said. "I like that because I appreciate his honesty."

ON POINT

Soto will vie for playing time with freshmen Tremayne Russell and Nick Taylor, both of whom did not stand out



COURTESY PHOTOS/MIAMI TROPICS

FLYING HIGH: Sophomore transfer Josue Soto looks to make a play in a prep game.

for the Golden Panthers during the season. Russell and Taylor averaged less than seven points per game combined during the year, something Soto thinks he can