THE BOYS ARE BACK

Golden Panthers to make Dolphins their first prey

By ANDRES CORDERO
Staff Writer

The Golden Panthers will open the football season at FIU Stadium today at 8 p.m. facing the visiting Dolphins for the third time in the school’s three seasons. The two previous contests saw the JU Panthers played their first football in front of a sold out crowd at “The Cage.” Fast forward three years and now the team will open its third season with games at higher stakes – Division I-A football.

It is hard to believe that FIU is the fastest university to apply to I-A. Lots of people question the move by Athletic Director Rick Mello to pursue I-A so quickly but in the long run, FIU needed to do this.

With Florida Atlantic University moving to I-A this year and with the University of Miami in town, FIU had to make this move to avoid falling behind. The biggest question will be whether the team can average 15,000 fans per game. The university is making all the right moves by giving tons of giveaways including Don Strock bobble heads and FIU seat cushions.

But, the biggest move FIU is doing is providing a free concert for fans during the Western Kentucky game. None other than famous rappers Method Man and Redman will be the highlights at the concert. The Golden Panthers will also play a home game at a bigger venue, The Orange Bowl. The team will face FAMU in the Orange Bowl Classic, which should draw over 20,000 fans.

FIU has some very talented players and if fans want football and showing the community they belong in Division I-A. The players are hungry, the giveaways are set to be handed out, and Method Man and Redman are on their way; the question is, will you show up?

By HARRY COLEMAN
Sports Editor

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Smith returns strong from tendon injury

By NATALIE SABIA Staff Writer

He rushes down the field protecting the football that he holds tightly to his body while passing defenders as they latch out towards him. He looks up ahead in hopes to see the end zone near; this year, look for him to be there, look out for running back Rashod Smith. This season, it will be his number four jersey sprinting down the field, celebrating his rushing yards, along with touchdowns. Standing at 5-feet-8-inches and carrying 188 pounds of muscle, Smith is ready for his comeback; the question is, are opponents ready for him?

Recovering from an injury last year, after slicing a tendon in his foot from a run in with a piece of glass, the senior running back is anxiously awaiting his return to the field after an injury was more serious than initially thought. “I stepped on glass in the cafeteria, but I didn’t know it was that serious,” said Smith. Smith was limited to only six games last season and finished with 278 rushing yards, third best on the team. While his teammates played throughout the season, Smith continued to get healthy in hopes for another try. “I tried to get back and play, but I couldn’t run,” said Smith who had gained over 1,000 yards on 194 carries, before his injury while averaging 5.3 yards per run.

During his freshman year at Bryant College in Rhode Island, Smith was already a talented player, who rapidly became a glimpse in people’s eyes. He averaged more than 60 yards in his first two games of the year, but after breaking a toe he was unable to return. Despite a frustrating season, Smith headed home to Miami for a fresh start. “I wanted to get back home to keep playing, especially for a new program like FIU had to offer,” said Smith.

The Sports Management major, who is no stranger to the Dean’s List, came to FIU as a sophomore and was non-other than team MVP after leading the Golden Panthers with 784 yards rushing and averaging 6 yards per carry. As FIU’s leading scorer in 2002, with nine touchdowns, Smith headed home to Miami in hopes to see the end of the season opener. “Right now were taking one step at a time and one play at a time,” said Smith. “Were getting ready for Thursday [season opener].”

Despite Smith’s nagging injuries he has endured and the fact that he hasn’t played a full season in a while, he is prepared to get back on the field and do what he is great at. “I’m good now,” said Smith, “I’m excited to get back with my team. I just want to help my team through the whole season.”

Student radio broadcasts football

By NATALIE SABIA Staff Writer

Tucked away in FIU’s press box during the Golden Panther Football games are not only the voices who shout out every detail that fans are already saying in their heads, but they are also the voices that blissfully bring us up to speed of the most crucial things that are happening down on the field.

Among the announcers and analysts whom you listen to are Sport Directors Andres Corden, Messod Bendayan, Will Schanez and Harry Coleman. These men are the faces behind the microphones during the most thrilling sports events at FIU, who bring their fans the most desired sports information by the second. “I really enjoy calling the games,” said Bendayan, “I am a huge sports nut.”

Despite the small space they have to work in, they all go through a lot of preparation before announcing a game. “It’s not an easy thing to just become an announcer,” said Bendayan. “It’s a tremendous help to have the right support.”

Considering that WRGP is strictly a ‘volunteer’ station, securing employees who will commit, while developing an air chemistry, is vital. “We are very much sports crazies, the people that we travel for, because it’s the sport FIU is trying to push the most,” said Corden. Along with the twelve football games coming up this fall, WRGP, which is Radio Golden Panther, the sports staff is already getting set in gear for an exciting upcoming football season.

On top of their game list especially this year are the games that will be played in the Orange Bowl, against FAMU, and in Pro Player Stadium, versus FAU. “I am looking forward to those games because we will be in a real press box,” said Corden. Securing a storyline that will go along with each game is their most difficult job. Whether it may be a particular threat that the opposing team will pose or maybe an interesting story that involves a player, both the announcer and analysts must create their storytelling voices fast enough so they don’t get behind the action, but yet still entertain their crowd.

“Trying to work in a story is the most difficult,” said Bendayan. Among the sports announcers, who are all very much sports crazies, they all go through a lot of preparation before announcing a game. “It’s not an easy thing to just become an announcer,” said Ben-
dayan.

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Bush rallies crowds in Miami Arena

By RODOLFO R. ROMAN
Contributing Writer

Reciting a speech delivered in a mix of English and Spanish, President George W. Bush spoke before a crowd of 8,000 in the Miami Arena on Aug. 27.

“We will win in November,” exclaimed the President in Spanish as the crowd chanted “Viva Bush” and “Four more years.”

In his rally speech, Bush addressed various key issues of his administration.

“We’ve been through a recession; we’ve been through an attack; we’ve been through corporate scandals,” he said. “And yet, we’ve overcome these obstacles because we’ve got the best workers in the world.”

The massive crowd cheered and chanted “USA” after most of the president’s quotes.

During the event, Bush promised that his administration would continue to adhere to an anti-terrorist agenda, fighting terrorism and spreading democracy around the world.

“There’s more work to be done to protect the homeland,” he said. “I just want you to know that there’s a lot of really good people who are working hard and long hours to protect you.”

He also guaranteed that the elimination of Saddam Hussein—still declared by Bush to be a sworn enemy of the American people—was the first step in fighting international terrorism.

Bush then addressed the mostly Hispanic populace by declaring that a vote for his ticket would also guarantee the struggle to free the people of Cuba governed by Fidel Castro.

“We took action to continue breaking the dictator’s information blockade,” he said. After the comments, the crowd jubilantly applauded.

Amid the clamors, Bush took some shots at his Democratic opponent, Sen. John Kerry.

“He voted yes, and I voted no,” he said in Spanish. The comment was meant to be a jab at Kerry’s vote to lift the Cuban tourism travel ban.

“If you honored me, I would uphold the honor and dignity of the office to which I had been elected,” he said, smiling brightly and waving to the mass.

As the speech was delivered, a small crowd of protesters held signs and repeatedly chanted “No more Bush” outside the arena.

The protesters, most of whom declared themselves to be environmentalists claiming President Bush has placed the Everglades at risk, exchanged vulgar abuse.

“The speech was delivered by Bush to a crowd of the left side of the arena, where spectators wearing colored t-shirts created the shape of an American flag.”

Marinette Valdorado, senior, is a member of the FIU Republican club who decided to volunteer at the event.

“I started to read and found I liked Bush’s policy. That’s why I support him,” she said.

As the November elections draw closer, several on-campus political groups will hold events such as public forums and guest speakers. They advise FIU students to be on the lookout for flyers promoting the events.

Payment rush forms massive lines

By C. JOEL MARINO

They stood in line for hours, bored and silent, waiting for nothing else than a five minute stay at the cashier’s window.

As the supposed deadline for tuition payments seemed to come to a close on Aug. 25, an estimated 1,000 students and family members stood in a massive single file at the Primera Casa first floor hallway in University Park, winding through corridors and, at points, scoping out the building.

Some students waited for approximately two hours, trying to pay on time as to avoid the $100 late fee. Throughout the day, university employees ran along the line in efforts to keep order and sort problems out. Despite these attempts, though, many of the students found grounds to complain.

“Everyday it gets worse. The system [they use] sucks,” said Hazel Rivera, a senior.

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Long waiting lines debated

I woke up today at 8:00 a.m. and I’m still here at 4:00 p.m. I have financial aid and can’t pay the difference in my tuition online.

Many students attributed the line to a combination of problems within the new Panthersoft system. “The Panthersoft system is screwy. If FIU sponsors a Visa card why doesn’t it work? I can’t pay the difference in my tuition online.”

Other students looked for the cause of the congested lines somewhere closer to home, blaming themselves and what they called procrastination. “I paid two weeks ago; the entire building was empty. If everyone was responsible and didn’t wait till the last minute, the line wouldn’t be this huge,” said Ron Silvera, sophomore, as he waited in line to make his brother’s tuition payment.

Responding to these outcries, Dean of Undergraduate Studies Rosa Jones believes the problem to be rooted more in the perception of the Panthersoft transition than the system shift itself. “I don’t think it’s an either or answer in relation to that,” Jones said. “I think there are some issues in terms of the university’s transition to a new system, as with any new system, and not just in relation to the payments, but in relation to registration. There were many students with feelings of discomfort. New students are having less problems.”

Jones, who herself patrolled the lines for three hours, agrees that not one single factor could be attributed to the congestion.

“The last day to pay is always very hectic. We’ve had some other situations. We had a lot of students that didn’t have the money to pay. The increase in tuition also made it challenging for students,” she said.

Due to the large amount of students still waiting to make payments by the end of the day, the cashier’s and bursar’s offices eventually decided to extend the deadline to Sunday Aug. 29, where students could place their transactions online.

This notwithstanding, the lines continued for the remaining days.

Anita Becker, an FIU alumna from 1982, currently has a daughter attending the university. Making the line to pay her daughter’s fees, Becker found nothing new with the accumulated crowds—she’s made plenty of those lines before.

“I’ve been waiting in lines [like these] all my life,” she said. “This isn’t a problem with the system. It’s just good old fashioned procrastination.”
OPINION

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
How did you get along with Pan-ther-soft?

• I love it, the new system is incredibly helpful and I have experienced little or no trouble.

• Although it is convenient and structured nicely, I found it difficult to search for classes. It limits your search options and can be frustrating at times.

• I couldn’t figure out how to do anything at all, I hate this confusing mess of a software and I miss the old system.

• What’s a Panthersoft?

Cast your vote at www.beaconnewspaper.com

WINNER & LOSER

WINNER

School Spirit: With the addition of a Division I-A football team and a new tradition with the “trail of the torch,” FIU morale is climbing to an all-time high.

LOSER

Presidential Offspring: During Sunday’s MTV Video Music Awards, both John Kerry and President Bush’s daughters were booed by crowds. While the American Airlines Arena had many animal restrictions for the show, scapegoats were more than welcome.

QUOTEABLES

“if things go right, I’ll be there about a week, and if things don’t go right, I’ll be there about an hour and a half.”

– Rodney Dangerfield, comedian, speculating the results of his pending heart surgery.

“We will win in November.”

– President George W. Bush at the Republican National Convention.

“I know it’s hard to believe, but our parents’ favorite term of endearment is actually ‘Bushie.”

– Barbara Bush, President Bush’s daughter, exchanging quips at the Cashier’s office during Fall registration.

“Who posed this question to me and needs to stop. These 527 committees spending hundreds of millions of dollars on attack ads should cease all their material. Unfortunately, until new campaign finance laws are established, the ads will continue.”

– Hazel Rivera, senior, referring to the long lines and hassle at the Cashier’s office during Fall registration.

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

Letters to the Editor must be dropped off in GC 210 at the University Park campus, WUC 124 at the Biscayne Bay Campus or sent to beacon@fiu.edu. Letters must include the writer’s full name, year in school, major/department and a valid phone number for verification purposes. If brought in to an office, a legitimate ID may be accepted instead of a phone number. The Beacon reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and/or spacing constraints. Letters must adhere to a maximum of 400 words.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Voters should rely on issues when selecting a presidential candidate, not war records and ads

To the Editor:

“Why should I vote for John Kerry? I don’t like Bush but I don’t know much about Kerry.” I wish I had a dime for everytime an FIU student asked me that question over the summer.

As president of the FIU College Democrats, I’m proud to say that 2 out of every 3 who posed this question to me walked away from me with a Kerry-Edwards bumper sticker in hand and a promise to vote for John Kerry on November 2. Now since I can’t personally talk to every FIU student, I’d like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts with you about this election, especially all you undecideds out there.

This election should not be about Bush or Kerry’s war record and the negative campaigning by both parties should and needs to stop. These 527 committees spending hundreds of millions of dollars on attack ads should cease all their material. Unfortunately, until new campaign finance laws are established, the ads will continue.

What is undefendable is that statistically, 75% percent of official Bush-Cheney ads are attack ads on Kerry, while only 25% of Kerry ads are attack ads. This means that we should all take these ads with a grain of salt.

When researching a candidate, analyze their platform, what are their positions on the issues? I’ll admit that’s difficult to do with the Bush campaign when they have based their campaign on attacking Kerry’s credentials, likely feeling that their accomplishments the past 4 years will not be sufficient for reelection. However, I’d like to provide you with an outline of the Kerry-Edwards platform.

Statistics show that the top 1% of Americans receive over $75,000 on Bush’s tax cut, while the middle 20% receive just over $1,000. To truly relieve the middle class burden, Kerry would repeal tax cuts for those earning over $200,000 and return to a progressive system of taxation.

Believing that no American should be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, Kerry will support civil rights, all cannot be covered equally, that heterosexual Americans receive the best health care in the world, Kerry believes that health care is a right of all Americans and will make that same health care available to all Americans and would provide a 75% tax credit to help small businesses pay for their employees health care. Under his plan, 96% of adults and 99% of children would have health care.

Although there are a number of other important issues in this election such as education, women’s rights, and the environment, all cannot be covered here.

I encourage everyone to make their vote count, research the candidates, listen to the debates and make the choice that will take America to new heights in the next 4 years. For starters, there will be a debate watching party in Gra- cie’s Grill Sept. 30 at 8:30 p.m. A great place to begin to develop or justify your opinions on the two candidates.

Best of luck to everyone this Fall.

James Valle,
Senior
Political Science/History

Phew! [FIU]

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

MATH, PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY AND BIOLOGY CONTAIN THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL AND ELEGANT TRUTHS OF THE UNIVERSE

THE DEEPEST SECRETS ARE REVEALED AND WE BEGIN TO UNFULLY UNDERSTAND THE MIND OF GOD

HOW DO THEY MAKE IT SO BORING?
By JOHN LOVELL
Managing Editor

The cloud of white gravel dust looming over the construction-ridden University Park Campus is about to settle. The loud drills have finally stopped (for the most part) and in no time the detours will disappear. Along with the new buildings begins a new era at FIU, which has recently been rated as one of the fastest growing universities in the nation.

The Graham Center expansion seems to be the focal point of all the renovation at FIU, or at least the most visible. The new wing of the student center will sport a brand new food court and other campus office buildings. Two retail spaces will also be available, with a possibility of space for a U.S. Postal Service.

Other new FIU additions are beginning to finish up as well. Two new parking garages (one of them already open and in service) will bring relief to the commuters, offering several hundred more spaces.

A new recreational center will open as well, turning the existing gym into the athletes' gym.

In the short span of three decades, FIU has blossomed into a major facility with a plethora of modern buildings. If in only one year the face of FIU can change so rapidly, who knows where we'll be after the next ten?
Polyphonic Spree: From feel good sounds to pastel gowns

By TOM MOON
Knight Ridder Newspapers

The No. 1 question that Tim DeLaughter, leader of the Polyphonic Spree, gets when people see his 25-member group wearing flowing choir robes in pastel colors, and singing unabashedly positive Up With People-ish songs: Is this some kind of a cult?

The second question: Is there room for one more?

"Every show, somebody comes up to us with this look in their eyes, and you just know they want to be in it," DeLaughter said a few weeks back, on the day the Dallas-based band's long-awaited new album, "Together We're Heavy" (Hollywood), arrived in stores.

DeLaughter referred back to Tripping Daisy. "From when I first started in music in the early `90s, says he had no clear-cut agenda. "As for the robes, DeLaughter says they're just another way to differentiate his group. "I was thinking a lot about the way people look at someone's clothes, and they made judgments about what kind of person they're looking at," DeLaughter says. "That's annoying to me. I wanted something to unify the group, and the first image was white robes, so I went to My mother-in-law, and boom _ right away we made the robes. At first the idea was to project images on the (white robes), but as we've gone along, we're so much more of a band and a family, we've realized there's a lot of vividness, a lot of color. So now each of us wears our own color _ we're like pixels on a TV screen."
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Volleyball Coach Cookie Stevens optimistic on season despite a high number of new players

By NATALIE SABIA
Staff Writer

Q: How have you and the team been preparing for this upcoming season?
We have been practicing at least two times each day for the last 2 weeks and we have been doing team building exercises, physical conditioning, individual skill work, team concepts and strategies.

Q: What are your expectations for this season?
I am very encouraged that even though this is a new team of players, we have good talent and some players with experience already to help us be competitive from the start. Our goal is to work hard and put the puzzle pieces together each week, that will bring us success.

Q: Are you excited about the new players?
Very excited, these players are hard working, dedicated and passionate about playing and winning.

Q: How do you mold your young players?
Demand from them everyday a level of excellence on and off the court and be consistent and caring. They have to know the coaches care about them as people first.

Q: How do you feel about the schedule of games your team will be playing this season?
The schedule is very challenging but very doable as far as wins against conference opponents and exciting to play the new non-conference opponents.

Q: How do you get the team in shape for the season?
The players worked hard to come in to training camp in good physical shape, before they got here. Of course, some more than others. But training two times a day, every day for two weeks - gets you in shape quickly.

It will take a few matches to find the right combinations. This process is ongoing throughout the season. Many things can affect the puzzle: injuries, players going in and out of mental slumps and confidence levels.

But our job as coaches is to train the team everyday and try to bring the best out of each player helping them to gain a higher level of performance every couple of weeks.

Q: What do you think is the best way to maintain a strategy for winning?
Know our strengths and weaknesses as a team. Capitalize on our strengths and reduce our weak areas. Know what our opponent is capable of, plan for it, and set realistic goals.

SPORTS WRITERS NEEDED!
CONTACT SPORTS EDITOR HARRY COLEMAN
AT HCOLE001@FIU.EDU FOR MORE INFORMATION
FIU not ready for Division I-A football

Under new coach ‘Tiger’ Clark, defense switches to 4-3 formation

By HENRY GONZALEZ Contributing Writer

Twenty-eight points per game, a four-and-a-half yard rushing average and a minuscule 21 sacks. When you couple those under achieving numbers with the fact that opposing teams averaged more yards rushing (227) than they did passing (172), defensive line changes are a must.

Last year’s team opened the season playing a 3-4 alignment. As a result, the defense suffered and was forced to revert to the original 4-3 scheme half-way into the schedule.

“We had to change it up,” declared Coach Tau-Tau, defensive line coach. “We’re more familiar with the 4-3 because that’s how we first started.”

Last season’s 3-4 style demanded large defensive tackles that can handle at least two offensive linemen. That means putting up, and pushing off nearly 600 pounds every play while simultaneously trying to make a tackle. While arduous, this task is not impossible and is successfully executed by many teams. However, the defenses that accomplish this enlist gargantuan men on the line who routinely exceed 300 pounds.

The Golden Panthers do not have that luxury. The defensive tackle average on the team was 257 pounds. Despite this, the Panthers produced more pressure than their 3-4 opponents did last season playing a 4-6 scheme. The 4-6 scheme and plans to bolster it with the addition of a 4-6 defense. The 4-6 simply brings a safety up to act as an extra linebacker. This move will undoubtedly help the run defense by providing one extra tackle near the line of scrimmage. The 3-4 will not be totally abolished, but will only be used sparingly in situational downs.

“I feel the 4-3 is better.”

It covers all the gaps and produces more pressure on the quarterback,” said Clark.

The players also seem to agree that the new defense will allow them to be more competitive. 

“We’ll be able to attack more with the 4-3 because defensive linemen will have more defenders to block,” said lineman Gerrod Bodie.

With more defensive players on the line of scrimmage, linebackers will have more room to run and make plays. The old 3-4 formation let offensive linemen go out and chase linebackers. It also let them dominate defensive linemen by double teaming them. These problems will be minimized by the new system.

“This excites me because I won’t have to deal with two-oilers sticking on me this year,” said linebacker Lance Preston.

Under new coach ‘Tiger’ Clark, defense switches to 4-3 formation

By MESSOD BENDAYAN Contributing Writer

Well, here we are, folks. Part tros of FIU Football. Year uno of I-A. It seems like yesterday when 17, 314 fans packed into FIU Community Stadium to see the Inaugural Game, way back on Aug. 29, 2002. I was a sophomore, then, and that game was my first taste of being a football play-by-play broadcaster.

Now, I’m about to graduate. I get to call live five games before Radio Golden Panther snags me packing. And my school’s about to get its first taste of big-time college football.

Goodbye, St. Peter’s College, Elon, Butler, Gardner-Webb, Albany and all of the other small-time Division I-AA schools. FIU played during these last two years. It’s been a pleasure knowing you. Good luck in the future.

Hello, Kansas State, Texas Tech, Alabama and all of the other Division I-A schools FIU has yet to schedule. Oh, and all of you Sun Belt schools, too, even if you’re the worst conference in I-A football. FIU wouldn’t be here without you.

I’m pretty excited about my Golden Panthers moving up to the level of Miami, Florida and Florida State. And there’s certainly a nice ring to this statement: “FIU’s transition from I-AA to I-A is the fastest ever.”

Oh, you haven’t heard that yet? Guess I’ve been at the beach all summer. Get used to it. You’re going to be hearing it. A lot. Especially when the losses come.

I’m a Golden Panthers fan, to be sure. But, I’m also an aspiring media geek, and in the business I hope to go into, facts are facts. And the facts about the losses are depressingly simple: FIU isn’t ready for big-time college football.

Here’s 5 reasons why:

1. The Golden Panthers’ all-time record: 7 wins, 16 losses. Most of their opponents up to this point have been I-AA schools. The difference between I-AA and I-A is huge. It’s like comparing the Florida Marlins to the Durham Bulls, or comparing the Miami Dolphins to Miami’s former arena football league franchise, the Hooters. --both of whom can claim FIU Head Coach Don Strock as a former member.

2. FIU has never won a game.

3. FIU has never beaten a scholarship opponent.

4. FIU has averaged roughly 7,000 fans a game, which is 8,000 short of what they need if they’re to stay I-A past 2005, according to the NCAA.

5. FIU Community Stadium makes a meek look like an I-AA football stadium.

But at least it’s not called “prematre.” This is like a baby being born only five months early in the womb and expecting it to live.

Sure, it can happen, but it’s going to take a lot of hard work and shillful people. All the rabbir’s feet and four leaf clovers in South Florida would probably help, too.

Miami Athletic Director Rick Mello has told me – and every one he talks to – that FIU had to make this move now, despite the obvious turmoil.

And he may be right; events in Coral Gables and Boca Raton certainly forced his hand.

Miami move to the Atlantic Conference Saw a domino effect on every other conference, especially small ones like the Sun Belt.

They lost New Mexico State and Utah State to the Western Athletic Conference after the loss of some of their schools to other conferences.

That put the Sun Belt with less football teams, jeopardizing its position with the NCAA. FIU’s already a Sun Belt member in all of their other sports, and they need to use Sun Belt schools to get I-A status. In fact, they’ll have to play at FIU next year, an NCAA requirement for moving to I-A.

If FIU’s development plan is to play at FIU next year, an NCAA requirement for moving to I-A. If FIU’s development plan is to play at FIU next year, an NCAA requirement for moving to I-A.

Florida Atlantic’s move to the Sun Belt is about to be turned over to a very unforgiving world.

For its sake, I hope this baby’s strong enough to begin walking on its own quick. History is not on its side.

Sports Writers needed!

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With the 2-10 record neatly tucked in the back of their minds, the Golden Panthers are set to kick-off a new football season. The sports world is cyclical and once the disappointment of a losing season fades, it’s replaced with the hope and prospect of a clean slate.

Regardless of last season’s performance, every team kicks off the Fall with a zero in the loss column. FIU will try to add wins by relying on its strength, which is games are won and lost along the line of scrimmage. The tight end position is the biggest toss-up on the team and once the disappointment of a losing season fades, it’s replaced with the hope and prospect of a clean slate.

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The O-line is the backbone of any offense. Unfortunately for the Golden Panthers, this is where the team is in most disarray. FIU has two very capable quarterbacks on its roster and it may need them both if the O-line can’t protect the starter.

The unit has given up 76 sacks for 583 yards over the past two seasons. With junior John Shanahan suffering a high-ankle sprain in a recent scrimmage, FIU will start the season with three offensive linemen sidelined. Tackle Tim Dierks (knee) and Guard Jonathan Taylor (shoulder), who combined for 1,579 snaps in 2003, will be alongside Shanahan on the injured list.

Offensive Line Coach Leon Searcy will look for converted defensive tackle Ronny Silva and freshman Tad McConahie to contribute. McConahie is a 6-feet-3, 310-pound lineman who can play guard, tackle and center. His strength and versatility has earned him praise from the coaching staff and made him a viable option to fill some of the holes left by injury. The bottom line of the team’s passing game should be every as good as it has been. They are the school’s only career 1,000 yard receivers.

Both played in all 12 games last season, and were a huge part of Josh Padrick’s break-out season. Also in the mix will be senior Chandler Williams and junior Andre Rollins. Williams is an experienced threat that made 29 catches for 460 yards last year as the number three receiver playing the slot.

Rollins has been impressive in the spring after returning from a shoulder injury. At 6-foot-4 and 222 pounds, the big guy out of Carol City High can be a good option at the slot or wide-out position. He looks more comfortable in the offense than in previous years and should see more time in the wide receiver rotation.

Quarterbacks

If ever there was a strong position on this team, this is it. The Golden Panthers have a good situation at quarterback with the return of Josh Padrick and a healthy Jamie Burke. Padrick stepped in for the injured Burke in 2003 and quickly became the story of the year en route to a school record 2,493 yards.

The number of sacks decreased with Padrick under center due in part to his superior mobility over Burke. After averaging 226.3 yards per game and completing nearly 50 percent of his passes, the starting job is his to lose.

Burke is returning from his third career ACL surgery and has spent much of the off-season getting stronger. He was impressive in his freshman year and is expected to challenge for the starting spot. David Tabor is an experienced back up who can step in if things go terribly wrong for the number one and two guys.

The addition of Tavares Kendrick is a solid move for the future of this team. Kendrick was the top rated quarterbacks out of the top-25 Miami-Dade recruits and should be the quarterback of the future for FIU. At 6-foot-3 and 220 pounds, he runs a 4.60 40-yard dash. He is praised for his size, speed, and powerful arm.