The seven contestants of the Second Annual Miss Florida International University Pageant strutted their stuff as they circled the stage showing their beautiful smiles and looks to impress the five judges.

The event was held at the University Park Graham Center Basketball Gym. Over one hundred family members and friends attended the event to cheer on their favorite beauty. Many family members held pictures with the names of their preferred contestant that read, “...for 2005 Miss FIU.”

Many important individuals of the beauty pageant world witnessed the event, such as Aaron Fowler, former Miss West Palm Beach, Aaron Fowler and Mary Sullivan executive director of the Miss Florida Scholarship program.

Also in attendance was the first Miss FIU, Merissa Amkraut, who gave violin performances with her brother Ross, as well as a farewell speech. Later that night, Amkraut was acclaimed for representing FIU and received a standing ovation when she gave her final walk as Miss FIU.

“The beauty pageant is important for FIU because she [Miss FIU] will be an ambassador to the world,” said Choban. “She will represent us in Miss Florida and in Miss America.”

TAKING THE CATWALK BY STORM: Megan Alonge shows the stuff to become the 2005 Miss FIU (above). Along with being crowned by last year’s pageant winner Merissa Amkraut (right), Alonge received $750 in scholarship money, the trophy and gift certificates included: Mfonobong Essiet, Christie For, Evelyn Danford, Robyn Luck, Rachel Louissaint, Annabelle Delgado, Megan Alonge, and Robyn Luck.

As part of the grand prize contestants competed for a chance to represent FIU at this year’s Miss America pageant which will be held at the Miami-Dade County Auditorium on June 26 - July 2.

“The beauty pageant is important for FIU because she [Miss FIU] will be an ambassador to the school,” said Choban. “She will represent us in Miss Florida and in Miss America.”

See PAGEANT, page 2.

FIU professor exposes undiscovered ingredient in OTC drug by Michele M. Arean, contributing writer

FIU Professor Albert Sabucedo, Ph.D., found that the dietary supplement, Actra-RX, also known as Yishen, is not 100 percent natural, as it claims to be, but contains large amounts of sildenafil citrate, the active ingredient found in Viagra. This could be lethal to some.

The professor began his research, which exposed Body Basics, the manufacturer of these dietary supplements containing sildenafil citrate, when former FIU student Mauricio Gutierrez brought this concern about the pills to Sabucedo’s attention.

“Abram is the brain-child behind all of this,” said Sabucedo. “Sometimes you just have to listen to the little people.”

Actra-RX used to be known as Niagra, a product that promotes sexual enhancement, but after Body Basics was sued by Pfizer Inc., the company that produces Viagra, small, white sticker was added to each label to cover the name. Actra-RX has the same amount of sildenafil as Viagra, which is legally available by prescription only in the U.S. People who are taking nitrates for conditions such as diabetes, blood pressure and many heart conditions, such as angina, should not take Viagra. Actra-RX does not contain a warning label. Yet, advertisement for the pill states “People who suffer from high blood pressure or diabetes may take it without a problem.”

Actra-RX can be lethal when combined with many prescription medications containing nitrates. Many patients who suffer from these diseases find that erectile dysfunction is often also a condition that takes this dietary supplement, it can send his or her blood pressure to plummet to cardiac arrest.

An article by Health-Day.com quotes a letter by the chairman of the board of Body Basics, Frank Estrada, stating: “The manufacturer has unequivocally assured us that Actra-Rx DOES NOT contain sildenafil.” The article also states that Pfizer Inc. sued Body Basics two years ago, claiming that the product contained sildenafil citrate. The two parties settled out of court, and as part of the settlement Body Basics was no longer able to use the name Viagra. Sabucedo’s research ultimately caused the Food and Drug Administration to recall Actra-RX, yet it took them about a year to act after his initial letter reporting his findings.

In November, the FDA issued a warning against Actra-RX for containing an undeclared prescription drug ingredient. A month later, they issued an urgent recall. Sabucedo plans to continue researching the product until he can prove that the lethal ingredient has been removed or at least a warning sign is added to the bottle.

Iraqi election too close for comfort, Pg. 3 | Largest selection of films, Pg. 4 | Basketball star back in Miami, Pg. 8
A series of new U.S. intelligence assessments on Iraq paints a grim picture of the road ahead and concludes that there’s little likelihood that President Bush’s goals can be attained in the near future. Instead of stabilizing the country, national elections Jan. 30 are likely to be followed by more violence and could provoke a civil war between majority Shiite Muslims and minority Sunni Muslims, the CIA and other intelligence agencies predict. White House officials are sending to senior officials who’ve seen the classified reports.

A new public report by the National Intelligence Council concludes that instead of diminishing terrorism, U.S.-occupied Iraq has replaced prewar Afghanistan as a breeding and training ground for terrorists who may disperse to attacks elsewhere.

“Terrorist officials with access to classified reporting said Islamic militants allied with or inspired by Osama bin Laden were forging ties to Iraqi nationalists and remnants of former dictator Saddam Hussein’s regime,” the linkage is with or inspired by Osama bin Laden were forging attacks elsewhere.

The White House and State Department have said Iraq paints a grim picture of the road ahead. Instead of stabilizing the country, national elections Jan. 30 are likely to be followed by more violence and could provoke a civil war between majority Shiite Muslims and minority Sunni Muslims, the CIA and other intelligence agencies predict. White House officials are sending to senior officials who’ve seen the classified reports.

“We have to work over- time, especially at the start, when students are just get- ting to know the campus and the university and have a lot of [assignments] to turn in.”

The Copy Center, on the first floor of GC, has been operating at FIU for almost eight years. The center also offers text bind- ing and mailbox rental. It will laminate paper and frame wall art, including the art for sale on its own walls. The center also has faxing services and is the only place at UF from which students can ship outgoing mail via Federal Express.

“We’ve been adding ser- vices ever since we started, looking out for students’ demands and concerns,” Ervin said.

JAMES BIER, an FIU stu- dent upset by the lack of self-service photocopy machines at the school, founded the center in 1998. According to Ervin, Bier needed to make pho- tocopies for a paper after one of his classes and real- ized that he had to get in his car and probably lose his parking space to waste time to go off campus to make his copies. Bier opened the first Copy Center with his father, Joseph Bier, at BBC, but due to lack of business, it closed in 2000 and relocated to the UP spot it still occupies. Bier opened its own smaller copy center after the first center’s departure, a unit called the Panther Print and Mail, located in WUC 135, that offers pho- tocopying and printing. It also has a postal service and sells shuttle bus passes.

While catering to the FIU community, the UP center is not owned or controlled by the university and remains a family bus- iness.

“When students ask us what we’re all about, we tell them that the main theme of our business is service,” said Joseph Bier, who helps at the center as a technician.

Though the tiny room can sometimes get packed with students and faculty trying to make photocop- ies, Ervin says that the center, no matter how limited its space may be, is still the best option for FIU.

“It’s the convenience factor they’re after—what we’re here, and they don’t have to go off campus,” she said. “They can just get it done, get in and get out, and we try to accom- modate everyone as best we can.”
1-A status extension may not give enough time to salvage floundering FIU football attendance

The FIU athletic department got big news last week regarding a Division I-A status of the football team. The National Collegiate Athletic Association granted FIU a second transition season of I-A football.

The news came as a surprise to many people because this season FIU did not accomplish the NCAA’s mandatory 15,000 minimum average home attendance requirement needed for 1-A status. The rule was waived for the first season because FIU had to cancel two games due to Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne striking the coast of Florida, thereby disrupting the play schedule and attendance. The NCAA board will vote in April on whether FIU will need to accomplish the requirement next season. If the rule is not eliminated, it is difficult to imagine that FIU will reach the 15,000 requirement. The team averaged 10,995 in home attendance last season. The only reason it even reached that amount was because the final game was played at the Orange Bowl and the majority of the people there (21,010) went to see FAMU’s marching band perform at halftime.

No game played at the FIU stadium drew more than 10,022 fans, and that was the opener. Not even the concert by Method Man and Redman could pack the stadium. FIU spent an estimated $90,000 on the rappers in order to draw fans, but once again FIU couldn’t get students to the stadium. Attendance actually declined from the first game of the season to the concert game, with 1,565 less fans attending the concert game. The game after the concert, drew 3,108 people. Was it worth it to spend $90,000? Was that $90,000 originally from student fees? It seems clear that FIU’s return on investment (ROI) is questionable at best.

FIU will continue to give thousands of promotional giveaways next season and maybe a special concert or two, but in order to draw fans, the team must have a winning season. All games played at FIU stadium were losses. If you don’t count the Orange Bowl game, FIU would have averaged 7,366 instead of 10,995. The figure is so low because the final game at FIU Stadium against Western Kentucky drew only 3,108.

FIU will play two very good football teams next season in Texas Tech and Kansas State. The team will also play a full Sun Belt Conference schedule. The Golden Panthers will face their toughest competition yet. Belt Conference schedule. The Golden Panthers will face their toughest competition yet.

If the average home attendance requirement of at least 15,000 people is voted into effect for next season, FIU is in big trouble. Wins will require, it will have to once again begin a two-year transition requirement. The team averaged 10,095 in home attendance last season. The majority of the people there (21,010) went to see FAMU’s marching band perform at halftime.

The team must have a winning season. The Golden Panthers will face their toughest competition yet.

Rushed Iraqi election hazards may outweigh freedom benefits

By DARA BRAMSON  Contributing Writer

When someone says “Iraq,” distinct images and feelings flood my mind. I think of war, blood, fear and chaos, not to mention the large part of the U.S.’s economy that revolves around the remote country. The date for Iraq’s first election under free rule is Jan. 30. Though I strongly believe in freedom of speech, I question whether Iraq is ready to handle a voting situation.

Provided that the U.S., a country so indigenous in its roots, can barely handle an election – how will Iraq?

The purpose of the vote in Iraq is to elect a 275 member national assembly that will construct a contemporary constitution. Out of Iraq’s estimated 12 million voters, the census is likely far from correct. Because of time constraints, instead of conducting a proper census, the electoral rolls are being based on the United Nation’s “Oil for Food” lists, which were calculated in the 1990s by Saddam Hussein’s regime.

Accurate? Far from it! Reportedly, many on the voters list may even be deceased. There could be millions of new voters that have become eligible since the last census.

Additionally, it is speculated that little or no voting will take place in some provinces. An additional 4,000 security troops, including the National Guard and regular army troops, have been added to the predominant voting areas.

Amid heavy military presence, there is still much concern for danger. General Carter Ham said, that if Iraqi security forces find themselves in a situation beyond their capability, then multi-national forces will be postured and prepared and well-rehearsed to reinforce those Iraqi security forces.

Perceptibly, any significant political issue is always downplayed to decrease panic. If the U.S. government was completely open and honest with the American people during 2001, the Sept. 11 attacks probably would not have come as much of a shock.

Undoubtedly, the world would be chaotic if everybody knew everything. However, I do believe that small hints can give us insight into the bigger picture. When a knowledgeable authority makes a statement about the preparation for additional troops, I interpret that as him saying “when needed” rather than “if needed.”

At what point should an authority decide to postpone the election? With all the casualties from the war, it seems to me that carrying out an election should not take precedence over the risk of losing more lives. I do not think I would risk my life just to vote with such high risks.

Regardless of the danger that Iraq may face due to the election, the officials are relentless. According to a CNN report, Iraqi and U.S. officials have voted not to delay the Jan. 30 election. To increase security measures as much as possible, a three-day travel ban has even been considered. Even with the uncertainty of the consequences of the election, officials seem to be taking as many positive steps as possible toward making the election a success.

They even secured Iraqi women political representation. To guarantee that at least 25 percent of the seats in the elected assembly go to women, every third name must be that of a woman.

Individuals with a petition of as few as 500 signatures are allowed to run. This can potentially bring new, optimistic voices into the Iraqi government.

I am completely supportive of a country taking the necessary steps to become a free society. However, the dangers involved in the Iraq election seem to overshadow the importance of getting the election done so quickly. Furthermore, even if the election is carried out, will the constitution be realistically implemented with Iraq in the condition it is in? Although the election in Iraq has the potential to be dangerous, we can only hope that it will bring positive changes for the Iraqi people.
Miami Dade College has a long, rich history of involvement in the cultural arts, providing South Florida with events such as The Miami International Book Fair, Cultura del Lobo and The Cuban Cinema Series. It is also home to the School of Entertainment and Design Technology.

That involvement will continue this February when the college will present the 22nd Annual Miami International Film Festival, Feb. 4-13. “The 2005 Miami International Film Festival will bring us a program that explores where and who we are in the world, our place not only here in South Florida, but also in the Americas and beyond,” said MDC president, Eduardo Padron. He said the festival will “foster greater awareness and acceptance of the diversity that enriches our entire community.”

The film festival gives a wide range of cultural perspectives by showcasing films from all over the world. “We are pleased to announce a richly diverse slate of films, all of which are eminently worthy of this year’s festival,” said Festival Director, Nicole Guillermot.

118 films – 87 features and 31 shorts – from 47 countries will be shown. At this year’s MIFF, screenings will take place at six locations throughout the city: The Gusman Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Miami, Regal South Beach Cinema in South Beach, Tower Theater in Little Havana, Sunrise Intracoastal Cinema in North Miami Beach, Bill Cosford Cinema at the University of Miami in Coral Gables and the Wolfsonian-FIU in Miami Beach.

Mick Davis’ “Modigliani” (UK), starring Andy Garcia (“Ocean’s Twelve,” “The Untouchables”), will open the 10-day event. Garcia takes on the role of Amedeo Modigliani whose passions fuel his work but consume his soul as he dares to challenge Pablo Picasso in defining the cubist art movement.

Day two will see the premiere of Rebecca Miller’s “The Ballad of Jack and Rose” (US), starring Daniel Day-Lewis (“Gangs of New York,” “Last of the Mohicans”) and Catherine Keener (“Full Frontal,” “Death to Smoochy”). The movie focuses on a man who has isolated himself from a world he feels has not lived up to his ideals, while his 16-year-old daughter tries to find her place in it.

Another highly-anticipated film is Charles Dante’s “Ladies in Lavender” (UK), starring Dame Maggie Smith and Judi Dench. The period drama fol-
By MARILYN MEDEROS
Contributing Writer

On Jan. 20th, the Hearst Distin-
guished Lecture series will present
The Language of Music. The forum
will include Miami filmmaker Mark
Moormann and Allan Richards, FIU
Journalism and Broadcasting interim
chairman.

Together they will discuss the life
and work of legendary producer/record-
ing pioneer Tom Dowd, compare inter-
viewing techniques, view parts of the
documentary “Tom Dowd & The Lan-
guage of Music,” and play excerpts
from Dowd’s 40 years of music.

Moormann directed, produced and
edited, “Tom Dowd & The Language
of Music,” which is currently nomi-
nated for a Grammy Award in the Best
Long Form Music Video category.

Moormann’s past documentaries include,
“Once Upon a Time on South
Beach,” “Hidden Rivers of the
Litter,” and “Moon-lighting in Haiti.”
He has worked on music videos for artists such as
Areosmith, Ray Vaughan and
Michael Jackson.

“I’ve interviewed and been in recording
studios with a lot of rock stars, but Dowd
was a wizard . . . and [an ano-
momaly in] the music industry, which
is littered with geniuses, crazies and
slime balls,” said Richards.

“He was a real, nice guy. Dowd majored in physics at Colum-
bia University, where he was drafted
into the Manhattan Project and the
South Pacific to conduct atomic bomb
tests. He then held a summer job during
his high school years with a recording
company that lead to a partnership with
Atlantic Records.

However, Dowd wanted to write
music recording. He soon began to work in
binaural stereo recording
and designed the eight-track console.
Dowd worked with esteemed artists such as
John Coltrane, Eric Clapton,
Ray Charles and many more.

He received a Lifetime Achievement
Grammy Award shortly before his
Death in 2002.

In a 1994 San-Sentinal cover story,
Richards wrote, "If you have bought
a record, a cassette or a CD in the
last four decades, whether it contains
Ben E. King’s ‘Stand By Me,’ Arthor
Franklin’s ‘Natural Women,’ Cream’s
‘Sunshine of Your Love’ or a number of
other hit songs, odds are you are already on good terms with the music
of Tom Dowd."

The presentation is open to the
public and is free. It will begin at 6
p.m. in the Wolfe University Center
Ballroom at the Biscayne Bay Campus.

Movie trailers for “Tom Dowd & The
Language of Music” can be viewed at

“I’m looking forward to attending
the lecture [about] Tom Dowd that
will be held in FIU. I don’t know much
about Tom Dowd, so I want to see
parts of the documentary I love many
different types of music, ” said junior
Dana Vargas.

The documentary will air on the
Sundance Channel throughout the month of January.

Local-made documentary
nominated for Grammy

MANDALA, from page 4

laws two elderly sisters
whose prim and proper
lives are disturbed and
slowg by the arrival of a
boy in 1980 El Salvador

Annual film festival largest ever

Another BRICK: French-Israeli film “Wall [Mur]” is a
documentary about a gigantic security fence aimed at
preventing Palestinian terrorists from entering Israel.

January 19, 1955

The first presidential news con-
ference is filmed for television and
newsreels.

Dwight D. Eisenhower becomes
the first president to hold news
conferences to be filmed by TV and
newsreels. On this day in 1955, Eisenhower
gave a 33-minute con-
ference in the Treaty Room at the
State Department, recorded by NBC
and shared with CBS, ABC and the
DuMont Network.

mark yr CALENDAR

THURSDAY • JANUARY 20

Comedy show featuring the Name Change
Pending Extreme Improv Troupe, sponsored
by SPC. The event will begin at 8 p.m. in
the University Park GC Ballroom.

FRIDAY • JANUARY 21

SPC Films will show “Shaun of the Dead,”
directed by Edgar Wright, in GC 140 at 7 p.m.
and 10 p.m. For more information visit www.spc.
com.

SATURDAY • JANUARY 22

Grab your W 2 forms and head down south
with Papa Keith and the Beat Street Team for
a little tax relief with H&R Block, 20220 Old Cutler
Road in Cutler Ridge. Stop by for free Beat prizes
from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. while supplies last.

SUNDAY • JANUARY 23

Enjoy an artistic afternoon at the Frost
Art Museum in PC 110 with Mark Klett.
Klett’s exhibit, “Ideas About Time,” will run
until March 13. The museum will be open from
noon to 4 p.m. For more information e-mail
artinfo@fiau.edu, call 305-348-2890 or visit www.
fiu.edu/~museum.
This spring, fashion slips into moccasins

By EMILY JACQUE
Contributing Writer

The new year is overflowing with glitz and glam, and the catch phrase for designers this season seems to be “all that glitters is gold.” Metallic shades are in, such as silver, gold and bronze, while dull, fall colors are out. Wherever you turn you will find a shiny bag and matching shoes, especially in such a fashionable city like Miami.

Fur has also become very big this season, even though in Florida’s ever-sunny weather, coats seem more like a curse than a blessing. Wherever you turn you will find exotic shoes come beaded or embroidered in nearly every vibrant color of the spectrum. Whether you prefer the glitz and glam of metallic colors or the classic cowboy look, adding a little personal style to every outfit will give you that special je ne sais quoi.

“Beaded shoes help accentuate all my outfits. They give me that special little something,” said freshman Beena Kazi.

For the classic American sweetheart look, western inspired styles have made cowboy boots trendy. They are available in a wide variety of styles, materials and colors. For those who feel this look may be too eccentric, pair calf-length boots with jeans.

“Boots with jeans are not only popular, but also very practical and can be dressed up or down with jeans or a simple tank top. Pointy or round toed, these flat and exotic shoes come beaded or embroidered in nearly every vibrant color of the specturm.”

Metallic shades Western prints
Fur & faux fur coats Cowboy boots
Moccasins in bright colors Moroccan and Indian slippers

WHAT: Concert with Not for Nothing, Blood and Batteries, Drowned Out, Words of the Fallen, Barricade Number 18
WHERE: Palm Beach Skate Zone 8125 Lake Worth Road
WHEN: 7 p.m.
HOW MUCH: $7

WHAT: Concert with Mindspin, TyFu, Deepset, Stereo 9
WHERE: SURF CAFE 395 NE SPANISH RIVER BLVD
WHERE: 9 p.m.
HOW MUCH: $5

WHAT: Revolver
WHERE: The Pawnshop Lounge 1222 NE Second Ave.
WHEN: 11 p.m.
HOW MUCH: $7

WHAT: Help Keep Ray’s Open Benefit featuring Rat Tail, Echo Me Astronaut, The Nina Pinta, Jigsaw Jones and the Electric Cowboys, Roberto Pagano and The Fluent
WHERE: Ray’s Downtown Blues 519 Clematis St.
WHEN: 6 p.m.
HOW MUCH: $5

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WHERE: Palm Beach Skate Zone 8125 Lake Worth Road
WHEN: 7 p.m.
HOW MUCH: $7

Moccasins in bright colors
Western prints
Metallic shades
Fur & faux fur coats
Cowboy boots

Looking for stuff to do this weekend? Here’s what’s going on around town.

FRIDAY, JAN. 21
WHAT: SPC Films: “Shawn of the Dead” WHERE: Residential quad lawn WHEN: 8 p.m.

WHAT: Starlight Starbright Festival WHERE: FIU Engineering Campus WHEN: 10 a.m.

WHAT: Concert with Not for Nothing, Blood and Batteries, Drowned Out, Words of the Fallen, Barricade Number 18
WHERE: Palm Beach Skate Zone 8125 Lake Worth Road
WHEN: 7 p.m.
HOW MUCH: $7

WHAT: Concert with Mindspin, TyFu, Deepset, Stereo 9
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WHERE: Ray’s Downtown Blues 519 Clematis St.
WHEN: 6 p.m.
HOW MUCH: $5
Shooting woes continue to hunt team

NORTH TEXAS 68 FIU 60

Another night, same story. FIU dropped its fifth game in a row, continuing the team’s longest losing streak of the season with a 68-60 loss to North Texas on Jan. 17.

North Texas started the game shooting 1-of-9 over the first four minutes of play, but the Golden Panthers failed to capitalize, turning the ball over three times. The rest of the first half saw turnover after turnover on countless errors by Rouco’s team.

“Too many turnovers,” said Rouco. “We had a higher shooting percentage than they did. We out-rebounded, and we still lost.”

The Golden Panthers trailed by one, 25-24 at the half, following a sloppy opening session of play. FIU turned the ball over 15 times leading to nine North Texas points.

FIU was led by the half at junior Ivan Almonte who notched 15 points on 6-9 shooting. The Golden Panthers were plagued by a lack of offensive output. Apart from Almonte, no player had more than two points at the half.

North Texas shot a dismal 8-of-33 from the floor in the opening frame, something that has plagued it all season as it ranks dead last in the Sun Belt Conference in shooting percentage.

Even with the bad shooting, the team took the lead with 7.2 seconds left in the half on a lay-up by junior forward Ron Harris. From then on, it never looked back.

North Texas leading scorer Leonard Hopkins was limited to just 10 minutes of play and three points in the opening half after quickly accumulating two fouls. He shot 7-of-7 from the free throw line the rest of the game and finished the game with a team-high 17 points.

Mean Green second leading scorer for the season, guard Calvin Watson, was also in double figures for the visitors with 13 points, all of which came after the break.

FIU clearly missed senior guard Marian, who was a late scratch in the lineup after suffering pain in his left leg following the loss to Denver. Freshmen Chavez-Jacob and Watson got the start in his place.

“It was a lack of focus,” said forward Sheldon Bailey. “It’s not the effort or the system. It’s just people putting extra pressure on themselves and trying to do too much.”

North Texas Mean Green came out a different team following the break, starting the second half on a 10-0 run. Hopkins scored six of the 10 points.

It was not until there was 15:23 left in the game that FIU finally got back on the board. N’Daye connected on two free throws to end the Mean Green run.

N’Daye came alive in the second half for FIU with 22 points after a first half that saw him manage just two. Almonte lead the way for FIU with his seventh double-double of the year with 25 points and 13 rebounds.

FIU forced 13 turnovers but only capitalized on once, while North Texas had 21 points off 26 FIU turnovers, nine of which came in the deciding half.

FIU drops to 7-10 on the season and 0-4 in the Sun Belt Conference. North Texas moves to its best record since the 1994-95 season at 9-5 and 2-1 in the conference. FIU continues its schedule on Jan. 22 in Louisiana, facing conference foe Louisiana Lafayette.

The next two home games, against New Mexico State and Arkansas-Little Rock, take place on Jan. 24 and Jan 30 respectively.

Graduating is top priority for African forward

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Graduating is top priority for African forward

JOURNEY, from page 8

thing is coming out well.

Q. You have the rest of this season and another one next year. What’s the plan after your stay at FIU?

First of all, I am going to try and get my degree, and hopefully try and play pro somewhere, maybe overseas. If I could play pro over here that would be even better, but the most important thing is to get my degree.

Q. What are your expectations, both personally and for the team this season?

Our expectations for the team are to win the Sun Belt. My expectation is to just enjoy the season and have a great year.

Q. What is the most memorable game you have ever played in high school or college?

My most memorable game was my first time in the U.S. when I was 17-years-old. We went to a tournament in Chicago with my team from back home. I think I scored about 45 points in that game, so I’d say that was the most memorable game of my life.

Q. How do you like playing for coach Sergio Rouco, and how is he different from other coaches you have had in the past?

I like him. He is more of a personal guy. He doesn’t just care about the team and win, he cares more about the person than about the team. I know everybody likes that. With most coaches all they care about is their career and not about individuals and their players.
Sports:

Losing streak hits five in a row for Rouco’s team

By ANDONI GONZALEZ-RUA Staff Writer

Incredible, amazing and ugly. These words describe the Golden Panthers performance against the University of Denver on Jan. 15.

Coach Sergio Rouco’s men dropped their fourth straight with an 8-60 loss to the conference rivals.

The loss drops the Golden Panthers to 7-9 on the season and 0-3 in the Sun Belt Conference. Denver moves to 8-6 and into the lead in the Sun Belt West with a 3-0 mark.

The Golden Panthers struggled from the start and shot poorly all night.

It was not until Cesar Chavez-Jacobo hit a three from the 12.05 mark of the first half that FIU got on the board. Luckily enough, thanks to quality defense, the Golden Panthers found itself down by only seven.

FIU shot a miserable 7-33 in the first half and found themselves trailing by 10, 28-18 at the half, despite 14 offensive rebounds.

Starters Ivan Almonte, Ismael N’Diaye and Junior Matias shot a combined 5-24 for 13 points in the opening period.

Unfortunately for Rouco, the shooting didn’t get any better in the second half. Almonte shot 3-of-15 for the game and was held to only nine points despite having 15 boards, six of which were on the offensive side of the court.

N’Diaye struggled as well in the second half, finishing the game 4-of-11 from the field. Matias led the way for the Golden Panthers, finishing the night shooting 6-of-13 for 13 points.

Rouco seemed shell-shocked following FIU’s 34 percent shooting night and knew exactly who should shoulder the blame.

“It wasn’t their defense that stopped us,” said Rouco. “It was us not making shots, us being intimidated and us not taking it to them.”

Incredibly enough the Golden Panthers out-rebounded the Pioneers 43-27, including a 22-5 edge on offensive boards.

The Pioneers were led by forward Yemi Nicholson who shot 6-9 from the field, contributing 13 points, 10 of which came in the first half.

Guard Erik Benzel came alive in the second half for Denver with 15 points, including 4-9.

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Hands-on coach and united team end player’s long journey

By ANDONI GONZALEZ-RUA Staff Writer

Born in the Ivory Coast, Ismael N’Diaye has found a second home in Miami and has been a key part of the Golden Panthers turn-around this season.

N’Diaye sat down with The Beacon to talk about his goals at FIU and some of his experiences playing basketball since coming to the United States.

Q. You were born in the Ivory Coast. At what age did you move to the U.S. and why?

I moved here when I was 18-years-old because I got a scholarship to attend Berkshire Academy, a prep school in Homestead. I went there for a year and a half. Then I went to the University of Miami for a year, attended Los Angeles City College for a year, and then I came back to join FIU.

Q. Berkshire was a school that was nicknamed for recruiting, correct? Yes, it was. Basically, I got recruited to go there. When we got caught we could only play against out-of-state teams.

Q. When did you start playing basketball, and what brought you to the sport?

I started playing basketball when I was about 11 or 12-years-old. It was a couple of American guys who moved into my neighborhood, and they introduced the game to us. I just loved basketball from then on.

Q. How popular is basketball on the Ivory Coast?

It wasn’t really popular at the time I started, but now it’s getting really big. Soccer is the number one sport there.

Q. Did you ever play soccer?

Oh yeah. I played soccer before basketball. Coming from Africa you have to know how to play soccer. That was my first sport, but I like basketball better.

Q. You were recruited by the University of Miami out of high school, then played junior college at Los Angeles City College, and now you find yourself back in Miami playing for FIU. Were all these changes anywhere near your plans three or four years ago?

I would have never expected that. To move and go to three schools in three years, it was definitely not what I expected coming out of high school. It seems as though everyday.

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