University, Sweetwater collaborate to create college town

By IAN NATHANIEL COHEN
Staff Writer

For the first time since the school was established, FIU's students and faculty may soon have a college town to call their own in the neighboring community of Sweetwater.

“The City of Sweetwater would like to revitalize certain areas which are on its northern boundary directly across from [University Park],” said Jorge Forte, Chief of Staff to Sweetwater Mayor Manuel Marocho. “It would like to develop this area as an economic engine for the city by attracting businesses that cater to the university population.”

FIU’s Metropolitan Center, the School of Architecture and the city of Sweetwater have been collaborating with each other, with the goal of transforming the city into more of a college town, providing services and businesses which cater to students' needs. At the beginning of the Fall 2005 semester, Mayor Manuel Marocho participated in a panel discussion as part of FIU’s Faculty Convocation, at which he expressed an interest in having Sweetwater and FIU find a better way to relate to each other.

Essentially, we’ve been insiders for thirty years but there really hasn’t been a very direct connection with Sweetwater,” said Roberto Rovira, assistant professor in the School of Architecture’s landscape architecture program. “So the mayor was interested in using the economic advantages of creating an environment such as a college town because it would bring students and faculty a lot of activity that would be very positive towards them.”

During the Fall 2005 semester, Rovira led a studio consisting of eight graduate students, whose task was to brainstorm ideas on how to transform Sweetwater into a college town and present their ideas and designs to city officials.

“One of the objectives of a studio is having the students get involved and understand the workings of a community, and integrate that with landscape architectural design ideas,” Rovira said. “It was a perfect fit to expose the students to the community for position making, to have them develop ideas based on thorough analysis of the city and its contexts, and then come with a series of proposals that was then presented to the city of Sweetwater.”

Throughout the process, Rovira and his students have been working together with Sweetwater city officials.

“We were dealing directly with the office of the mayor,” Rovira said. “We presented to the mayor, and his Chief Of Staff. Part of our critiques involved Miami-Dade Planning & Zoning. Regarding what services and locales would be available to the FIU community, Forte said, “Based on the input we have received from faculty and students, restaurants and cafes are a priority, as well as specialty shops and boutiques.”

Rovira’s students’ proposals also included redesigning the main thoroughfares such as 107 Ave, 109 Ave and the Flagler corridor, mixed-use developments which offer commercial spaces and cafes on the ground floor with residential units on above floors and pedestrian-friendly streets.

“They would be able to provide the sort of environment that would sustain economic activity, and that students would be drawn to,” Rovira said.

Rovira and his students presented their ideas to the city of Sweetwater at the Jorge Mas Canosa Youth Center, Dec. 8, which was open to the public.

“We basically had all the students’ projects presented to the public there, and the reaction was extremely enthusiastic,” Rovira said. “I’d say it was a very successful presentation, and I think they were impressed by the level of analysis that went into some of the projects.”

The implementation of these proposals may not be too far off.

“The process has already started,” Forte said. “However, change is a slow moving process. The city has initiated certain steps required in order to change the expectations of the city. These steps have to go through a process that involves State approval, public meetings and a lot of careful planning. This process can take two years to complete before any visible changes are made.”

However, Rovira added that the students had submitted “a splendid complement of ideas, some of which require a long term commitment, but others that are more direct and could be implemented, and probably there would be a timeline for addressing those first, and then having a long term plan to complete this overall transformation.”

Rovira considers one of the most rewarding aspects of the studio to be the instant feedback from Sweetwater city officials.

“The students actually got to see the city council making decisions and providing them with direct feedback to their ideas,” Rovira said. “I think that the projects from the master planning point of view perhaps don’t have that benefit of immediate feedback that the students would be able to get within a semester.”

FUTURE TOWN: Graduate students from the School of Architecture make models for the possible college town. Jennifer Rogers-Pomaville displays her model of Sweetwater. CHRIS CUTRO/THE BEACON

Two FIU professors who are married were indicted as covert agents of the Cuban government and arrested by FBI agents Jan. 6 for failure to register with the federal government as foreign agents.

Pedro Alvarez, associate professor for the educational leadership and policy studies, and wife Elisa Alvarez, counselor for the psychological services department are detained and facing potential charges as part of FIU’s Faculty Conversation between the city and its contexts, and then come with a series of proposals that was then presented to the city of Sweetwater.

C. ALVAREZ

E. ALVAREZ

Professors indicted for espionage

By ANA SANCHEZ
News Editor

President Modesto A. Maidique attended the hearing.

“He went to the court not as the president but he appeared there as a friend of the Alvarez’s specifically to address the issue about whether they present a flight risk,” said director of media relations Mark Roedran.

“The president and professor Alvarez are close, personal friends and their relationship does back to 25 years,” before the president even worked at the university,” Roedran said.

Students and faculty were surprised to hear the news, including, special education major student, Nicole Herrea who had Professor Alvarez for a cultural and diversity class.

“He was the sweetest—so helpful, I would have never in my life thought that [this would happen]. I knew that he was Cuban, he had a thick accent and he spoke about people’s culture in general but he never voiced his opinions on politics,” Herrea said.

Associate professor for the department of educational foundations and professional studies, M.O. Thirunarayanan agreed.

“He was always smiling,” I would see him in the hall way and we would say hello—I never expected anything like this, he was very friendly and a nice colleague,” Thirunarayanan said.

The couple admitted to their relationship with the Cuban government to the FBI in June 2005.

According to prosecutor and Assistant U.S. Attorney, Brian Frazier, the Alvarez’s provided Cuban government officials information about U.S. political situation and information about well-known Cubans in South Florida. They also allegedly gave away their FIU student who was an FBI agent.

Frazier went on to explain that the couples used to communicate with Cuba included shortwave radio, a five-digit code, encrypted computer disks and traveling to Cuba carrying messages using their academic positions as a cover.

The Alvarez’s could be facing seven to ten years in prison if convicted for not registering as foreign agents and an arrangement is scheduled for Jan. 19.

There is speculation that Carlos Alvarez recruited FIU students for cooperation with Cuban government offi cials which might lead to revitalize certain areas which are on its northern boundary directly across from [University Park],” said Jorge Forte, Chief of Staff to Sweetwater Mayor Manuel Marocho. “It would like to develop this area as an economic engine for the city by attracting businesses that cater to the university population.”

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After 29 years, Bonanno to retire

By REUBEN PEREIRA
Staff Writer

“It’s pronounced Bow-Na-No,” said John Bonanno, assistant vice president of Student Affairs at FIU, in his deep Southern accent. Bonanno will be retiring this March, after working at FIU for 29 years. He described his tenure at FIU as a very positive one and something he will miss.

After getting his Doctorate in Psychology at the University of Georgia, he joined FIU in 1977. In his career, Bonanno held many positions at FIU and has seen the university go through numerous changes ranging from attendance to physical changes of the campuses.

“When I first started in 1977, the [Biscayne Bay Campus] had just opened and the Graham Center only had the center portion of the current building. The academic classrooms and the bookstore didn’t exist back then,” he said. Bonanno had joined FIU as the co-coordinator of International Student Services.

“It was a very small office then and we tried to make it more visible on campus,” Bonanno said. Bonanno described working with international students as a learning experience.

“Every time you met someone you would learn something new about a different culture. We got them involved in student activities and wanted them to consider FIU their home away from home,” he said.

Bonanno considers the creation of the Interfraternity Council another highlight of his term at FIU. He remembers when a couple of students came home to Student Affairs wanting to start a fraternity.

“They wanted to start a fraternity on campus and after they did, we had another one come up to us, so we decided to start a system and so we formed a ‘Greek Council,’” Bonanno said.

Bonanno continues to be involved with Greek life as he functions as a liaison for Greek Housing.

Bonanno has held other various positions relating to student affairs at FIU, among which has been as director of Student Services and associate dean of Student Affairs, where he had supervised health services, disability services and recreational sports.

Bonanno detailed his current position as one that needs ultimate responsibility and requires strong leader- ship qualities. His position supervises over many departments.

“Among the various departments reporting to me are the operations of the Graham Center, housing and the children’s center,” he said.

Bringing up the topic of retirement, Dr. Bonanno said that he is really looking forward to it.

“A lot of people dread retirement but not me. It’s a different stage of life that you don’t really think of when you’re younger,” he said. Bonanno’s wife, Marcie, the library tech supervisor, will also be retiring with him.

“She’ll be retiring Feb. 28 and I’ll be retiring Mar. 1, so I have a day more than her,” he said. He added, “We’re planning to travel Europe in the future, especially Italy where my family’s from.”

Speaking of Italy, Bonanno said that it was at an Italian restaurant in Memphis, sat down to eat and the owner came over and asked my name. He asked me if I knew what my name meant and told me that Bonanno is Bon Anno, meaning Good Year,” Bonanno said.

He concluded, “People have always misspelled it or pronounced my name and banana always came up. In my freshman experience classes, I teach and talk about how to study, and memorize by associating things. My name is Bonanno, so you can associate it with banana and if it reminds you of me, that’s good.”

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NEWSFLASH

Compiled by Ana Sanchez and C. Joel Marino from Beacon staff and wire reports

LOCAL

Teen stabbed by peers in Coral Springs

Vinnie Viscuso, 17, was stabbed in the stomach near Taravella High School, the school he attended. Meanwhile, a group of out-of-state construction workers saw the suspect running away as Viscuso bled and fell to the ground.

The construction workers chased the suspect and called the police.

The suspect, later identified as Javier Gonzalez, 16, ran to the house of friend, George Sanchez. Sanchez said that the suspect closed the garage door and locked himself in the room.

The construction workers pointed out the house where the teen had hidden to the police. A Coral Springs police spokesman said that the fight originated from an ongoing dispute, but they’re still unsure what the dispute was about.

Viscuso was flown to North Broward Medical Center and was in fair condition as of Jan 9.

NATIONAL

Bird flu may be less of a threat

New research sparks hope suggesting that even though the bird flu virus is more widespread, it probably doesn’t kill half its victims.

The research also suggests that the symptoms appear to be more like a flu than a deadly disease.

There are 650 to 750 cases attributed though the bird flu virus is more widespread, it probably doesn’t kill half its victims.

Suicide bombers kill 29

Disguised as two senior Iraqi police, suicide bombers struck the morning of Jan. 10, at the Interior Ministry headquarters in Baghdad. Both had security passes which allowed them to pass through various checkpoints into the Interior Ministry.

Disguised as two senior Iraqi police, suicide bombers killed 29. The statement said that the purpose of the attack was still under investigation. The al-Qaida organization in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.

When the two previous children were girls, this second birth was just 759 girls to 1,000 boys.

Female abortions on rise in India

Canadian and Indian researchers have estimated that around 10 million female fetuses may have been aborted in India over the last 20 years from data based on a national survey and birth records.

The survey, conducted among 1.1 million house- holds in 1998, showed that in cases where the preceding child was a girl, the gender ratio for a second birth was just 759 girls to 1,000 boys.

When the two previous children were girls, this ratio fell even further, to 719 girls to 1,000 boys.

Based on the natural sex ratio in other countries, around 13.6-13.8 million girls should have been born in India in 1998, but the actual number was 13.1 million. This drop may be attributed to abortions following ultrasound sex screening coupled with a traditional preference for boys.

“We conservatively estimate that prenatal sex determination and selective abortion accounts for 0.5 million missing girls yearly,” said one of the authors, Prabhat Jha of St. Michael’s Hospital at the University of Toronto, Canada, on Jan. 9.
New Prime minister could help bring stability to the Middle East region

By CHRISTOPHER NECUZE

The humanitarian aspect aside, the U.S. has a huge stake in the outcome of this affair. Israel is one of few major allies the U.S. has in the Middle East. It has one of the best military forces in the region and ranks as having one of the most battle-trained armed forces in the world.

Also, in the war against terrorism, an independent Palestine and Israel living harmoniously side by side is probably the best, if not only, answer to how to rid the world of one of its deadliest terrorist organizations, Hamas, which is responsible for thousands of Israeli deaths.

It has been said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is just one of those conflicts which will persist for a very long time.

In the last few months, however, progress has been made and it has brought the region ever closer to that precious peace.

The removal of Sharon from the Israeli throne will further ameliorate efforts to bring these two peoples together so that they may live calmly side by side.

By CHRISTOPHER NECUZE

One of the most puzzling questions of our time is the question of peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The traditional hotbed of conflict in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been the cause of innumerable terrorist attacks and deaths.

Even prior to the infamous Six-Day War of 1967, when Israel captured the Gaza strip from Egypt – which really made the conflict into the conflict we know today – this area was a source for violence between incompatible cultures.

The recent stroke and hospitalization of the Israeli Prime minister, Ariel Sharon, left the future of Israel and the future of the region in question. Though doctors expect Sharon to make a partial recovery, he is officially no longer the Prime minister of Israel; his powers were transferred to Deputy Prime minister, Ehud Olmert.

The death of Yasser Arafat on Oct. 11, 2004, proved to be just what the doctor ordered in the grand scheme of things. Since then, unprecedented changes have been made in Israeli and Palestinian policy toward each other, culminating in the withdrawal of all Jewish settlements and military equipment from the disputed Gaza strip, which Israel had been ‘occupying’ since the war in 1967.

Olmert was the main supporter of many of Sharon’s ideas, such as the withdrawal from Gaza. With him in charge, many believe he would be more open to intervention and leadership from the U.S. His current position of leadership, however, is only temporary.

On Mar. 28, the Israeli people will vote on a new Prime minister. The time leading up to the election will be an audition, of sorts, for Olmert.
Local landmark's history
more than just picnic hotspot

By SARAH RODRIGUEZ
Staff Writer

We can face the fact that history is probably not one of the most popular subjects on campus, but the topic inevitably becomes more relevant and interesting to students when it involves a local landmark that so many have grown up knowing and loving.

While it is widely known as ‘El Farito,’ meaning ‘lighthouse’ in Spanish, its rightful name is Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, located in southern Key Biscayne. Many are unaware of the stories behind this site and might agree with sophomore Johnny Betancourt. “I’ve been to the lighthouse beach many times, but I’ve honestly never thought of the history.”

And yet, this same lighthouse on the 415-acre park is actually the oldest structure in Miami-Dade County and the oldest lighthouse in Florida.

One of the most fascinating parts of this park’s past is that in the early 1800’s, before the lighthouse was even constructed, Cape Florida served as one of the first stations in the Underground Railroad.

That meant it was a center for escaped slaves and Seminoles to gather and meet with ships heading to the Bahamas, where they could finally taste freedom. Unfortunately, once the lighthouse was built in 1825, the area was so well-lit that it was no longer practical for the purpose of this secret ‘railroad.’ But because of its role for so many years in helping slaves attain liberty, Cape Florida was added in 2004 as an official National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site.

As mentioned, the lighthouse was first built in 1825, back when Florida was still a U.S. territory and not yet a state; it became one later in 1845. The government determined that a lighthouse was crucial in this area because of violent storms, imperceptible sand bars and hidden reefs which could pose serious problems for ships.

During foggy days, keepers were required to ring a fog alarm every 15 seconds to keep ships well-oriented. They were also responsible for keeping detailed logs about events, incoming and outgoing ships and weather conditions. In addition to this, they were continually in danger from storms, war, and especially fires.

It certainly took courageous people to be willing to take on a strenuous, dangerous and also quite lonely job. From the years 1825 to 1878, Bill Baggs had a total of seven keepers.

Another one of the lighthouse’s most important events happened in 1836. The Second Seminole War was raging and Bill Baggs suffered from it. It was attacked by the Seminoles and partially destroyed by fire. One keeper was killed and the other rescued by the Navy after the Seminoles retreated.

As a result of the attack, the stairway was ruined and the very top of the structure contained around 200 bullet-holes, both of which were restored in 1846. Shortly afterwards, it had to be restored once again after hurricane damage in 1855. This time its height was increased from 65 to 95 feet.

Years of wear and tear made the lighthouse’s condition deteriorate, which hurricane Andrew only worsened in 1992. Consequently it underwent its latest and most thorough restoration project, one that cost $1 million and changed it from brick-colored to white-washed.

Junior Cristina Noguerais was happy the lighthouse has undergone restoration. “A couple of times we’ve wanted to go up but it’s been closed, and so I don’t really know much about its history,” Noguerais said.

Students will be glad to know that this restoration has been completed and the lighthouse is now re-opened to the public.

Although students new to Miami would certainly find a visit to Bill Baggs enjoyable, students who have played in its sands as children should take the time to investigate ‘El Farito.’ Not only is it rich in history, but the familiar beach and the view of their city seem still more beautiful from atop the lighthouse’s hundreds of steps.
The Beacon – January 12, 2006

Faithful production still relevant

By REUBEN PEREIRA
Staff Writer

FIU theater’s highly anticipated and long delayed theatrical production of Moliere’s classic farce “Tartuffe, The Imposter” finally makes its debut at the Wertheim Performing Arts Center Theatre Jan. 16. The play, originally scheduled to be performed in early November was rescheduled due to disruption caused by hurricane Wilma.

Moliere’s famous satire about a con man, the aristocrat he dupes and the effects of the con’s behavior on the aristocrat’s family, is probably as sharp and witty today as it was when it debuted in seventeenth century France. When it premiered in 1664, the play brought Moliere the biggest controversy of his career as it caused an outcry among the ‘devout’ religious hypocrites who Moliere mocks in “Tartuffe.”

The play tells the story of Orgon, a well-off Parisian who has fallen under the spell of Tartuffe (wonderfully played by Miguel Angel Novo), a conman pretending to be a religious man of virtue. Orgon’s entire family realizes this but, Orgon is blinded by Tartuffe’s scheme. So blinded is Orgon that he decides to marry off his innocent daughter, Mariane (Sarah Brohee) to Tartuffe, much to the dismay of Mariane’s love, Valere (David Soloman). By the time Orgon realizes that Tartuffe is a hypocrite, it may be too late, as Tartuffe has managed to capture Orgon’s home and fortune.

The play effectively deals with subjects that are as relevant today as they were then, during the reign of King Louis XIV. There is no shortage of comic as well off Parisian who has fallen under the spell of Tartuffe (wonderfully played by Miguel Angel Novo), a conman pretending to be a religious man of virtue. Orgon’s entire family realizes this but, Orgon is blinded by Tartuffe’s scheme. So blinded is Orgon that he decides to marry off his innocent daughter, Mariane (Sarah Brohee) to Tartuffe, much to the dismay of Mariane’s love, Valere (David Soloman). By the time Orgon realizes that Tartuffe is a hypocrite, it may be too late, as Tartuffe has managed to capture Orgon’s home and fortune.

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Talented Youth

STUDENT ART: High school students have demonstrated their talent throughout the Graham Center piano room. Honorary mentioned Gina Consorin took an alternative path when he was placed in the Miami Duke Public Alternative school, MacArthur South, where he pursued to express himself through art, rather than violent behavior. Two of his paintings include “lady in Red” (left) and “lets Make Music” (upper right). Others works of art include “Ballets” by Jose Soto.

CORRECTIONS

In the Culture Calender (Jan. 9), the locations listed at the Frost Art Museum should have read the Wolfsman.

TARTUFFE, THE IMPOSTER ★★★
3 out of 4 stars
Directed by: Andrew Adamson

PLAY TO REMEMBER: As the cast delivers a comedic performance, “Tartuffe, The Imposter” is said to guarantee a good time. With wacky characters, the play will be sure to leave the audience with sentiment.

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Men’s losing skid stands at nine games

Though both teams took shots at each other in the second session, FIU failed to convert key opportunities inside the lane and ASU’s three-point shooting, combined with FIU’s foul trouble, took over.

The Indians connected on five of six from behind the arc and 18-of-24 from the stripe, which in the end put the game out of hand for the Golden Panthers.

“We’re not that bad of a team,” Rouco said. “We’re right there. We’re not losing by 20 or 30 points, but we’re losing games that are right within our grasp by not making the plays we need to make.”

“We just have to get everybody on the same page.”

FIU will now head west in search of greener pastures for three tough road contests.

The trip includes stops in Denton, Tex. to face North Texas, Jan. 12 and Denver, Colo. for a Jan.14 match-up with last year’s conference champion and NCAA tournament participator Denver before closing the trip in New Orleans Jan. 19.

Following their return, the Golden Panthers open a three-game home stand with a Jan. 21 contest against Louisiana-Lafayette at Pharmed Arena.
Bouderra records 20 points, six steals in victory

Emerging from the huddle came a red hot Rudy Sims who went on a tear and scored 11 of the team’s next 14 points to bring them within two with three minutes left.

But the run was not enough as senior point guard Faeza Bouderra picked up two of her six steals – to go along with 20 points – and combined with center Lasma Jakabsone to shoot a perfect 6-of-6 from the free-throw stripe to seal the victory.

“They just started fouling at the end and in the past we’ve really struggled from the free-throw line,” Bouderra said. “We just worked on that a lot and were really focused ... but defense was the key to the game.”

With the win, the Golden Panthers have won five of their last six games. A very important stretch for them as they hit the road next weekend with two tough games against Denver Jan. 14 and North Texas Jan. 16.

“Denver is supposed to be an easy game,” Jakabsone said confidently, “but you never know because they’ve had an easy schedule and they’re 12-2 right now.”

The last time FIU faced Denver, power forward Milena Tomova put up a then-NCAA record 42 points.
By ANDONI GONZALEZ-RUA
Staff Writer

Like a bad dream, FIU’s early season hopes for success have turned sour.

The Golden Panthers dropped their ninth game in a row Jan. 7, to fall to 3-11 overall and 0-2 in the Sun Belt Conference with an 81-71 loss to the visiting Indians of Arkansas State (6-10, 1-1 SBC).

Despite not having their top player, Jerry Nichols, who is out for the season because of injury, ASU finished the second half on a 10-0 run to cut the FIU lead at the half to four, 34-30 and take control of the momentum.

From then on out, it was all Indians.

“We just didn’t know how to act with a lead,” said head coach Sergio Rouco, following the loss. “We’re not getting beat right now; we’re just losing games by beating ourselves.”

Led by forward Issac Wells and guard Yual Banks, who combined for 46 points, 23 a piece, including eight 3-pointers, the visiting Indians shot 67 percent in the second half while outscoring FIU 51-37.

FIU managed to have four men in double figures, led by Marlon Bright’s season-high 15 points, but were hit by an uncharacteristic output from senior-team leader Ivan Almonte who managed just four points and four rebounds in 23 minutes of action while recovering from an ankle injury.

Despite out-rebounding and out-shooting ASU, FIU once again turned the ball over in critical moments, especially at the end of the first half en route to accumulating 23 turnovers in their second SBC match in as many attempts this season.

A scarce crowd of less than 1,000 saw the display put forth by coach Rouco’s men, who were without Chris Fuller or Facundo Giorgi, who were out due to injury.

“We want to win,” Rouco said. “We just don’t have that instinct yet of how to put people away. But we played hard tonight.”

FIU took command in the first half and led by as many as 14 with 2:31 left to play, partly in thanks to their 3-point shooting, 5-for-11, and the play of Kenny Simms.

Simms managed nine points and seven rebounds during the first half, but could only gather one point and three rebounds after the break in just nine minutes of second-half play.

By ALDEN GONZALEZ
Staff Writer

The women’s basketball team won its second Sun Belt Conference game Jan. 7, as they scarcely held on to beat Arkansas State 54-50. The win improved FIU’s record to 9-5 and a perfect 2-0 versus conference foes.

Thanks to some timely steals on defense and clutch free throw shooting down the stretch, the lady Panthers were able to dodge a big run from the Indians. Going into the second half with a nine-point lead, Marquita Adley – the freshman forward out of Monsignor Pace high school – stepped up big with a career high 11 points and 12 rebounds.

“Her had a really good shooting night and she was the leader on the floor in the game,” said junior center Lasma Jakabsone.

Adley’s outburst gave the lady Panthers its biggest lead of the game.

With 11:14 to go and his team down by 13, Indians’ head coach Brian Boyer called a quick timeout to try and ice the Golden Panther shooters.

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Freshman leads women in second Sun Belt win

By ALDEN GONZALEZ
Staff Writer

The women’s basketball team won its second Sun Belt Conference game Jan. 7, as they scarcely held on to beat Arkansas State 54-50. The win improved FIU’s record to 9-5 and a perfect 2-0 versus conference foes.

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IN THE CLUTCH: Senior point guard Faeza Bouderra and junior center Lasma Jakabsone combined to hit all six free throws in the final 26 seconds of the game to seal the 54-50 victory. foto fotos

CAREER DAY

FRESHMAN PHENOM: Marquita Adley recorded a career-high 11 points and 12 rebounds.

Losing streak continues for Rouco’s team

By ANDONI GONZALEZ-RUA
Staff Writer

Like a bad dream, FIU’s early season hopes for success have turned sour.

The Golden Panthers dropped their ninth game in a row Jan. 7, to fall to 3-11 overall and 0-2 in the Sun Belt Conference with an 81-71 loss to the visiting Indians of Arkansas State (6-10, 1-1 SBC).

Despite not having their top player, Jerry Nichols, who is out for the season because of injury, ASU finished the second half on a 10-0 run to cut the FIU lead at the half to four, 34-30 and take control of the momentum.

From then on out, it was all Indians.

“We just didn’t know how to act with a lead,” said head coach Sergio Rouco, following the loss. “We’re not getting beat right now; we’re just losing games by beating ourselves.”

Led by forward Issac Wells and guard Yual Banks, who combined for 46 points, 23 a piece, including eight 3-pointers, the visiting Indians shot 67 percent in the second half while outscoring FIU 51-37.

FIU managed to have four men in double figures, led by Marlon Bright’s season-high 15 points, but were hit by an uncharacteristic output from senior-team leader Ivan Almonte who managed just four points and four rebounds in 23 minutes of action while recovering from an ankle injury.

Despite out-rebounding and out-shooting ASU, FIU once again turned the ball over in critical moments, especially at the end of the first half en route to accumulating 23 turnovers in their second SBC match in as many attempts this season.

A scarce crowd of less then 1,000 saw the display put forth by coach Rouco’s men, who were without Chris Fuller or Facundo Giorgi, who were out due to injury.

“We want to win,” Rouco said. “We just don’t have that instinct yet of how to put people away. But we played hard tonight.”

FIU took command in the first half and led by as many as 14 with 2:31 left to play, partly in thanks to their 3-point shooting, 5-for-11, and the play of Kenny Simms.

Simms managed nine points and seven rebounds during the first half, but could only gather one point and three rebounds after the break in just nine minutes of second-half play.

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FRESHMAN PHENOM: Marquita Adley recorded a career-high 11 points and 12 rebounds.