Second increase in less than one year

BY REUBEN PEREIRA
Staff Writer

According to the Department of Parking and Traffic, ticket prices for FIU's inter-campus shuttle service, the Golden Panther Express, are expected to increase for the second time in the last three semesters.

For a long time, the cost for a one way trip was a dollar. However, in 2004, it was increased to $1.25.

Beginning with the Fall of 2005, it was again increased to $1.50 and in this year, there are plans to increase the ticket prices again.

“The prices are too much,” said Dane Yankowich, an advertising major who uses the shuttle twice a week. “Each bus holds over 40 people and if everyone is paying the price, that [should be] more than enough to cover gas and tolls,” Yankowich said.

Like many other students, he has no choice but to register for classes at the Biscayne Bay Campus because the classes he needs for his major aren’t offered at University Park.

Vijay Pradeep, a senior majoring in public relations shares Yankowich’s sentiment.

“We pay enough when it comes to raised tuitions. The ticket price should be part of our tuition,” Pradeep said.

The raised tuition and the increasing shuttle prices are a priority concern of the Student Government Association.

“We do not want to increase the shuttle prices. I’m a student too and I know how it is,” Alex Prado, president of SGA, said. “But unfortunately it’s our only option. We will absolutely not consider canceling this service.”

Currently, the funding for the shuttle service comes partly from Parking and Traffic department fees paid by students and from the shuttle tickets.

“Increasing the parking and traffic fees by a dollar won’t significantly affect students, but a dollar increase for 37,000 students will mean 37,000 extra dollars, which would not only reduce the burden on the Parking and Traffic department, but also greatly help funding for the services,” Prado said.

When the Golden Panther Express was started, it was free and was supposed to link the two campuses together. However, in the past couple of years, the prices have been consistently increased.

“The prices have been increasing,” Kenneth Gelok, chair of Student Services for SGA, said. “And they will be going up again.”

Gelok stated that he didn’t know how much the increase would be and when it would be instituted by Parking and Traffic.

He stressed that the increasing prices were justified compared to the prices of driving by car.

“If you’re driving from University Park to the Biscayne Bay Campus, you have to pay for gas as well as the highway tolls. With the bus, you’re traveling comfortably, you’re relaxed, you can talk to your friends as well as talk to people and it’s much cheaper than paying for gas and tolls,” Gelok said.

See INCREASE, page 2

Alvarez couple pleads not guilty to charges

BY ANA SANCHEZ
News Editor

Professor Carlos M. Alvarez and his wife, counselor Elsa Alvarez pleaded not guilty at the Jan. 9 arraignment in a Miami federal court.

Their attorneys, Steven Chaykin and Jane Moscovitz, argued that their solitary confinement in the Federal Detention Center is pretrial punishment. The couple is charged with failing to register as foreign agents with the U.S. Attorney General’s office. They are accused of operating as covert agents for Cuba’s government, giving them information about Miami’s exile community.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Andrea Simonton believes that past trips and contacts with the Cuban government made the Alvarezes flight risks. She denied them bond on Jan. 9.

According to The Miami Herald, in 1982, a congressional testimony by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement agents said that self-proclaimed double agent Rev. Manuel Espinosa, who died in 1987, identified Elsa Alvarez as a member of the Antonio Maceo Brigade.

The Alvarezes’ attorney denied these allegations at the arraignment. A brigade leader told The Miami Herald that Elsa Alvarez was not a member of the Brigade, but he did not deny or confirm whether Elsa Alvarez may have attended Brigade meetings or taken trips with them.

See INCREASE, page 2

FLORIDA STUDENT ASSOCIATION: Student Government Association’s from 10 Florida universities and colleges unite to form the Florida Student Association. FSA meets once a month to discuss issues which concern all of their students and they lobby together in Washington D.C. for change in legislature. Their meetings rotate at different campuses, and on Jan. 20 they met at University Park. Alex Prado (top), FIU SGA President led the meeting and (bottom) Biscayne Bay SGA President Ledar Linton attended the meeting.
Shuttle bus usage decreases

INCREASE, from page 1

In regards to the reason behind the increased tickets, Gelok blamed the increasing gas prices: “Gas prices are going up after the hurricane. The bus companies are absorbing the costs, but they can’t do it forever,” he said. “I know FIU hires a company, 7871,” Yankowski said. “But I think it would be cheaper if FIU [used their own buses].”

Prodi disagrees. “It is much cheaper to hire a private company than to use our own buses because maintenance prices for these keep bus costs [high]. Not only that, we have to keep in mind the costs of tires, gas, hiring drivers and paying them, not to mention benefits.

All this costs money and it’s much cheaper to hire 7871 instead,” Prodi said. Lazaro Rodriguez, coordinator for the Parking and Traffic department that oversees the operations of 7871 said that FIU has contracted the company since 2003. “Before 2003, we used to hire ‘Coach USA’ but they went out of business in Miami,” Rodriguez said. When asked about the increase in ticket prices, Rodriguez declined any comment saying he had no information on it.

However, Rodriguez did offer some statistics on the number of students taking the shuttle in the past year. The first half of the year, 89,615 students used the shuttle, compared to 83,312 in the second half, showing a decrease in usage.

Despite these statistics, Gelok believes that bus attendance has actually risen. “Once gas prices went up, there was a spike in the number of students using the bus. We heard that a number of students were left behind last semester when there weren’t any seats on the bus,” Gelok said.

SGA Vice President Christine Denton concurred. “Students were taking an earlier bus in order to take a class a much later time in order to get to a seat on the bus. We took this problem seriously as students couldn’t take classes. So we got an extra bus which cost a lot of money,” Denton said.

Denton understands the plight of students taking the shuttle as she used to take the shuttle regularly. She stated that SGA is taking the increasing shuttle prices into consideration.

“We will be meeting with Parking and Traffic to discuss these problems,” Denton said. “We are going to discuss the prices and there will be student representatives at the meeting.”

A meeting between SGA and the department of Parking and Traffic took place on Jan. 29 during which a conclusion was made to increase the price of the shuttle bus tickets. However, the proposal has to be approved by the Board of Trustees, who will be meeting to discuss the issue at a date yet to be determined.

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POLICEBEAT

FRIDAY • JANUARY 6

• Sometime between 4:43 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. a car was broken into and a laptop computer was stolen from the trunk.

• The student parked his car by the bookstore loading area at University Park. Someone smashed the driver’s side window and gained access to the trunk.

THURSDAY • JANUARY 12

• At 11:46 a.m. a young man allegedly attempted to enter the information booth in the Glen Student Center. He requested access to the office from the custodial staff. When they refused, he allegedly jumped the counter and entered the office. Custodial staff members attempted to stop him. He attempted to kick a female member of the custodial staff, he failed to strike the victim. The custodial personnel called Public Safety and the suspect took off running toward the Gold Garage. The suspect was then chased by an officer up to the third floor of the garage and was stopped at his car. The suspect refused to return with the officer to the scene and then became ‘hostile.’ The suspect was restrained with handcuffs. The suspect did not deny the incident and said he was frustrated about losing his keys and was attempting to search for them. He was then transported to Turner Knight Guilford centre for arrest and processing.

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Compiled by Andrew Leins
Students at the Biscayne Bay Campus will have the chance to honor the birthday of a great writer and thinker: Jose Marti. The 6th annual Jose Marti scholarship breakfast will be held at BBC on Jan. 28, with the hopes of honoring Marti’s memory and significance in Latin American literature and ideology.

Considered a “breakfast with a purpose” by many who have attended earlier years, the breakfast— which is shared between FIU and Miami-Dade College—is always held on Jan. 28 to recognize Marti’s birthday. This year’s breakfast event is also helping raise money for a scholarship in Marti’s honor, according to committee chair Mercedes Koper.

Students from both schools are encouraged to submit papers and apply for the scholarship as well as other prizes presented to essay contestants. “Marti and his Impact on Latin America” is the topic for the essays, and the winner will receive a $200 scholarship for textbook costs.

“We would like to change this event from a Cuban event to an international event bringing students from all over,” said Vice Provost Raul Moncada. “[It is for] anyone who is interested.”

Instead of concentrating on Marti’s work during the Cuban Revolution, this year has focused more on Marti’s overall impact throughout each country he visited and, in particular, the influence of his writing and poetry.

Marti was known for battling to obtain Cuban independence and also against any country or person trying to take control of another nation. His words inspired the oppressed, motivated revolts and supported his beloved Cuba achieve independence.

“Jose Marti y la Republica Dominicana” or “Marti and the Dominican Republic” is the title of this year’s honorary breakfast.

The event’s guest speaker will be Oscar Haza, a television and radio personality known for his news reporting and work with Univision, a Spanish-language television station.

The Dominican Republic-born journalist has also written for the opinion section of The Miami Herald and was news director at various radio stations, according to univision.com.

The breakfast will be held Jan. 28, at 9 a.m. in the Wolfe University Center ballroom. Tickets are priced at $25 for regular admission and $10 for students.

Funds will go toward the scholarship. To make reservations call (305) 919-9549 or (305) 919-5748.
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Find out if Barry is where you belong. Visit us at www.barry.edu/podiatry.
Increase in inter-campus shuttle bus fare ridiculous

Professors should not have to suppress political bias in classroom

In an abduse, the University has decided to increase the shuttle bus fee for the second time in less than a year. Though no exact date or increase fee is known, an increase is expected by next Fall semester.

Why do we think this is absurd because University leaders (including President Modesto A. Maidique) keep saying that they want Biscayne Bay Campus and University Park to be known as one campus, one entity and one university.

However, as changes like the shuttle increase take place, the idea of being one university keeps being just that—an idea, that is never put into place.

Why should a student who happens to have a major that primarily has classes at BBC have to pay to get there? Shouldn’t she or he just be able to flash his/her Panther Card and not have to worry about paying for the service?

The shuttle bus fee should already be included in tuition. This would alleviate the cost of spending money on every bus ride and make life easier for students. While not all 37,000 plus students use the bus service regularly, they have a right to argue against including it in tuition.

The university charges many fees including recreational, health and wellness, parking and traffic and athletic fees which many students do not use or take advantage of.

We are called Florida International University, meaning many students from across the world come here to have an education. Many of them don’t have access to a car so why should they, or any other student who does not have a car, pay the parking and traffic fees?

Any fee can be argued against and that’s why the shuttle bus fee should be included in tuition. If every student paid $5 to $10 every semester, that would clear the backlog of selling bus tickets and of students having to empty out their wallets every week. Students who now use the bus service roundtrip four times a week and $48 a month. If an increase of 50 cents takes place for a roundtrip fare—which is the expected figure—that would total to $16 a week and $64 a month. This would be a significant increase for students.

FIU is currently building new residence halls with the goal of the university housing more students. For this same reason, both campuses should be more accessible to students, as the shuttle is a lifetime for many.

Another part of the problem with the increase is that several bus drivers let students on the bus at no charge. With frequent riders becoming friendly with drivers, this has led to many drivers letting students on here.

There is no policy at FIU that prevents a professor from expressing their biases in class, but they are encouraged to be balanced. Professor Millner said she made the decision early on to be upfront about her biases with students.

She’s upheld honest about bias and encourage students to be open about their biases,” Millner said. “From there I create the best balance that I can and usually that sparks very meaningful conversation.

But I’m so naive to believe that every classroom situation is ideal.

There’s always going to be those teachers, whether liberal or conservative (because there are both) whose word is law and whose demeanor is overpowering.

Such is life and the University is here to prepare you for the real world. It would be a completely different story if a professor sat you down and began teaching things which were factually incorrect to help support his own biases, but that’s not what’s going on here.

Sometimes we need to be big boys and girls and take what we’re told with a grain of salt and move on. Adults debate issues, respect each other’s opinion, ask thoughtful questions and analyze alternate viewpoints for themselves.

Instead, organizations such as the NCC have decided not to encourage students to fight back with words and ideas. They encourage students to condemn dissenting speech, to criminalize an alternative ideology for perceived wrongs against their comfortable beliefs, victimizing themselves in the process.

There’s a very distinct difference between teaching bias as fact and exposing students to bias. Intelligent debate and the free sharing of a range of ideas is a principal American ideal and a right we must fight to preserve, not subvert.

Speaking your mind freely is the most American thing you can do, no matter what political stance you take (Bill O’Reilly, Michael Moore and Ann Coulter make a living by speaking their minds.)

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are your thoughts about the University’s decision to increase the inter-campus shuttle bus fare?

• That’s total nonsense. If it keeps going up then it stops being useful.

• I guess it depends on how much the price is increased.

• It’s fine. You still save some money.

• There’s another campus?

Cast your vote at www.beaconnewspaper.com

FREE SPEECH: Personalities like Bill O’Reilly, Michael Moore and Ann Coulter make a living by speaking their minds.

DO YOU THINK?
Whether you are looking for a former high school classmate or an ex-significant other, it’s likely you can find them on MySpace.com.

With the social networking website frosting 47 million users worldwide, MySpace has achieved unprecedented popularity since it was founded in July 2003. You can search a person’s name and MySpace will automatically bring up any possible matches.

None of MySpace’s competitors – including thefacebook.com – can provide a search with so many results. To put this perspective, as of November 2005, Facebook had a mere 11.1 million users.

MySpace CEO Chris DeWolfe and President Tom Anderson launched the website from Los Angeles, California in 2003. After seeing the potential value in acquiring MySpace, Fox Broadcasting’s parent company, News Corporation, bought the site’s owner Intermix Media for $580 million in July 2005.

One reason for MySpace’s increasing popularity is the website’s vast number of features. On the site, users create an online identity by filling out a profile with personal information such as hobbies and interests. After members create a profile, they are able to communicate with other users.

“I found some old friends on MySpace and I just don’t believe how much they had changed,” said sophomore Gabriela Duarte.

Indeed, the site has rekindled some lost relationships, such as sophomore Rosalyn Delgado’s friendship with Coral, a middle school classmate. After Coral moved away to Michigan five years ago, the two friends lost touch. After a search for “Coral” on MySpace last year, when she checked her MySpace: a friend request from Coral.

“It was a blast from the past. MySpace really does help people keep in touch. Coral and I talk all the time now,” Delgado said.

MySpace also offers its users a convenient “rate my professor” feature. Students can look up professors and see what ratings other students gave them. Since MySpace has become so popular among the current generation, advertisers are using the website as an effective promotional tool. By using the website’s communication tools, such as blogs (online web journals) and bulletins (notices that appear on a user’s homepage), celebrities and companies are keeping their audiences up-to-date on the latest happenings.

For instance, comedian Dane Cook continuously promoted his latest comedy album Retaliation by using bulletins to announce the album’s release date, and FIU mascot Golden Panther Roary Rage has a MySpace home that promotes the University’s athletic program.

“Roary’s page is convenient for students. It has information on all the sporting teams’ schedules, so I already know what’s going on with FIU sports,” said sophomore Erika Aguilar.

MySpace’s rising fame, however, comes with a price. Because more people are meeting friends online, face-to-face interaction is no longer required. With a simple click of a button, a user can gain a new friend – no social skills necessary.

“Online communication leaves a lot to be desired. Only through face-to-face interaction can you truly learn about another person,” said speech communication professor Kathleen Watson. “What you miss online are the nuances of nonverbal communication.”

In addition, MySpace can become an addiction for many college students. For a student, looking at people’s profiles can be more fun than working on a term paper. Instead of getting work done, students might waste time by checking to see if their friends have posted pictures from last night’s party.

“Instead of listening to my professor, sometimes I go on MySpace and check my messages [on my laptop],” said sophomore Wendy Corrales.

Even with these disadvantages, MySpace continues to grow in popularity. The ability of talking with old friends and meeting new people while establishing a unique online identity, compels people to join the website. An increasing membership and the regular addition of new features solidify MySpace’s online status: The website is probably here to stay for a very long time.

Stylish vampire flick fails due to forced acting

It’s been two years since Underworld descended into cinemas in the fall of 2003. The film was a hit with action and horror fans alike, and in Hollywood, meeting that condition usually means the green light for a sequel.

The film, chronicling the war between vampires and lykens (werewolves), boasted an alluring concept, was stylishly shot, violent, bloody and has some ridiculous over-the-top acting.

As the first film ended, Selena, played by Beckinsale, went on the run from the vampire race with her vampire/werewolf hybrid boyfriend Michael (Scott Speedman). The sequel picks up exactly where the original left off. Selena and Michael are somewhat in cold and icy with each other, at least that’s what the film makers want us to presume, searching for the origins of their bloodlines.

The perfect word to describe the plot of Underworld: Evolution would be ‘muddled.’ Although the film gives depth to the story of the original, the viewer is left with questions.

“Online communication leaves a lot to be desired. Only through face-to-face interaction can you truly learn about another person,” said speech communication professor Kathleen Watson. “What you miss online are the nuances of nonverbal communication.”

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“Online communication leaves a lot to be desired. Only through face-to-face interaction can you truly learn about another person,” said speech communication professor Kathleen Watson. “What you miss online are the nuances of nonverbal communication.”
Poor plot leads to cheap end

From UNDERWORLD, page 6

decision to jump directly into the
cru of the war between the vampires
and lykens wasn’t a wise one.

It requires the audience to have a
clearer understanding of the complex
history of the two races, which was
discussed in the original. Director
Les Wiseman and co-writer Danny
McBride try to solve this problem
by offering half-baked flashbacks
which don’t offer much insight into
the story other than to show-off the
original’s best action scenes.

While this film is a little better than
the original, it is still plagued with
problems. Sure, Les Wiseman knows
how to direct an action sequence,
but they’re used so frequently that
they start feeling redundant.

Also redundant are the close-
ups Wiseman devotes to his wife’s
(Beckinsale) face. This is unfortunate
because Beckinsale demonstrates
the acting abilities of a fish. Beckinsale, if
given the right part, is a fine actress.
The Aviator and Brokeback Mountain
are proof of that. However, in this
film, all she does is pout, grimace
and look unbelievably
sexy, which is probably what the
film makers had in mind for their
target audience in the first place.

Speedman as Beckinsale’s boy
toy and sometime conflicted vamp-
ire is worse. A dramatic scene with Beckin-
sale where Michael tells Selene how
much he loves her is ruined as Speed-
man is unable to convey the emo-
tions required by his
character. Apart from grunt-
ing and growling,
Speedman’s char-
acter, Michael, is
essentially wasted. At least in the
original he was an important link in
the plot.

The best thing to say about him is
that he makes a very good werewolf
in this transformation scenes are
cool, to say the least.

However, most of the visual effects
sequences aren’t well done. You
can tell that editor Nicolas De Toth
had to up the pace during action
sequences to make the uneven effects
less obvious.

Not all is evil in the Garden of
Eden, as there are praiseworthy
aspects to the film. The cinematogra-
phy by Simon Duggan is gorgeous.

From the first scene on, we know
we are living in a cold, dry and pale
world inhabited by strange creatures
of the night.

The action sequences, although
repetitive, are more or less spectacular
and very well done and the makeup
effects by Joel Eckthaller are com-
merdable.

Overall, UNDERWORLD: Evolution
isn’t a bad film, but it isn’t a par-
ticularly good one either. If you
enjoy cheap thrills, gratuitous action
sequences with gore, blood and a
decent plot, check it out, but make
sure you rent the original before
watching it. It will certainly make
your experience much more reward-
ing.

UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION
★★★

2 1/2 out of 4 stars

Starring: Kate Beckinsale, Scott Speed-
man, Bill Nighty
Directed by: Len Wiseman

Cast: Michael, Bill Nighty, Kate Beck-
insale, Scott Speedman, Selene

Underworld: Evolution
★★★

Overall, UNDERWORLD: Evolution
★★★

At LEAST SHE’S HOT: Kate Beckinsale’s performance
proves certain actors are meant for certain parts. ‘Selene’
doesn’t need a track for the ladies. This has been
highlighted with Beckinsale’s acting abilities.

By Harry Coleman

Editor in Chief

Rapper breaks through stereotype

BY HARRY COLEMAN

Editor in Chief

Street rap and gangster flow are
back.

That’s what you can expect from
the third album of Los Angeles emcee
Omni titled Ballyhoo.

With a rap style similar to a young
Dr. Dre and a lyrical flow comparable
to Ludacris, Omni delivers a first class
album that many times seems 15 years
too late.

What’s best about Omni – who is
also part of the infamous L.A. hip-hop
group Gershwin BLX – is that he stays
true to the music by rapping straight
through most of his songs. He does
too worry about catchy choruses
which sometimes seem to be an entire
song for many of today’s rappers.

The opening track titled “Back at
it,” is the album’s best lyrical song
and one that will keep your head banging
with a deep bass that demands a sub-
woofer. Omni raps, “Never turn my
back on where I got my love from/it’s
not when you thought it was/you
don’t know who you can trust/I
already know.”

On “City 2 City,” Omni talks
about how his rhythm brings him the
adrenaline needed to succeed in every
city, not just his hometown. However,
the problem with this song is just that.
Like many rappers, he call out differ-
ent cities in the U.S.,
calling for their sup-
port. This has been
done over and over
again, it’s unorigi-
nal lacks creativity.
It’s an easy way
to get clubs in different
cities to jam to their
songs, such as tracks
by Jermaine Dupri
and Petey Pablo.

Despite having
plenty of hardcore
songs, in “Cheeba Remix,” Omni has
a track for the ladies
where he is desper-
ate for a woman. He
explains that being
with her and touching
her is like putting his
hands on his
Cadillac.

And of course with every
woman you can’t forget the rapper’s bling
that catches her attention. Omni raps
about the woman, “Kissing on my
neck looking for the platinum.”

While he raps about violence, sex,
and drugs and women on most of the
songs – like most rappers do – Omni
shows he’s not about glitz and glam-
our. He talks about his ‘hood’
and how to direct an action
sequence, without putting any
damage control with that.

Donald Trump. Because private jets,
personal assistants and board of direc-
tors are fun things
to have.

3. WHAT TV ACTOR OR PERSONALITY MAKES
YOU CHANGE THE CHANNEL IMMEDIATELY?

Carlos Mencia. Even cable television should
have vulgarity limitations.

5. WHAT SONG DEFINES YOUR LIFE?

“Lifesong” by Cast-
ing Crown, because
everything I do is for a
purpose.

Look for the Life! 5 feature every
Monday issue.

Art: Omni
Release date: Jan. 24, 2006
Genre: Hip/Hop
Price's team looking to thrive with chemistry, hard work

PREVIEW, from page 12

Alfonso comes highly touted out of Christopher Columbus High School, after hitting .350 through-out his career. Junior Batista was a NJCAA All-Star last season and earned all-conference honors as a freshman at BCC.

“Luis Rivera is a big glove to replace, but we're hoping Batista and Alfonso can fill those shoes,” Price said.

However, it may be Lopez, who started at second base for most of last season and hit .346, who will start at short early in the season, due to injuries to both newcomers.

Batista will be sidelined for 4-5 weeks with a knee injury and Alfonso is recovering from an injury to his throwing arm.

As for first base, Lopez, who started all but one game at the position last season, is expected to see playing time there.

However, one of the reasons for his move to the outfield is to include the bat of junior Kurt Crowell, who hit .329 with six home runs and six doubles to earn second-team all-conference honors for East Los Angeles Community College last season.

“I've been playing first for a while,” Crowell said. “I played at my junior college, so I've got some experience there and I just hope to come in, produce and do good for the team.”

Crowell's teammate at ELACC, Mike Diaz, can also see some time in the infield. Last season, he batted .333 with 33 RBI and eight doubles.

The catcher position is to include the returning number one starter. Last season he recorded a 5-1 record with a 2.89 ERA, 23 strikeouts and 18 walks in 44 innings pitched over 18 appearances.

“Chris Siebenaler threw a lot of innings last year and he's gonna be counted on,” Price said.

Redshirt junior Walker Whitley, out of Spartanburg Methodist Junior College, is expected to be the number two starter in the rotation. The 6-6 Whitley, who sports a side-arm delivery, went 8-1 last season at Spartanburg.

The other prominent returnee for the pitching staff is senior Frank Gonzalez, who led the team in appearances with 29 and tied for the lowest ERA of 2.70. The All-Sun Belt Conference Second Teamer, who pitched a career-high 66 and two-thirds innings last year, is looking to fill the role as closer, as opposed to his long relief role of last year.

“When you got the game on the line and you're up one run and you're going into the ninth inning, you want the best that you got, who's got experience,” Price said. “Frank's the guy we're gonna back off of anybody. He's gonna go in and get after them and that's the only thing you can ask from a closer.”

The three and four spots in the starting rotation are up for grabs, with newcomers Kyle Preshong and Eduardo Elias expected to fill them.

Infielder Mike Diaz might also see some time coming out of the bullpen as he posted a 5-2 record with a 2.70 ERA last season at ELACC, which earned him the team's Best All-Purpose Athlete Award.

Left-handed returnee Les Rodriguez, who pitched only five innings last season, along with newcomers Eric Horstmann, Miguel Alfonso, Michael Clayton and Jorge Ramos are all expected to contribute out of the bullpen as well.

“I'm really pleased with the 12 guys we have now,” Casas said. “All these guys, they can come in late in the game, early in relief or they can start for you. So it's good. There's a lot of flexibility on our staff.”

We believe everyone's more successful in a flexible environment.

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Sports

PITCHING

The biggest story with the pitching staff is the loss of Villanueva. The projected number one starter in the rotation was deemed academically ineligible prior to the Spring semester.

“It's a big loss, but I'm a true believer that somebody's gonna step up,” said pitching coach Tony Casas. “There's a lot of talent [and] there's a lot of good arms in the staff. It's just giving them some confidence and getting them out there and letting them throw.”

Lefty Chris Siebenaler, who is the only pitcher to have started a game last season, is expected to be the new number one starter. Last season he recorded a 5-1 record with a 2.89 ERA, 23 strikeouts and 18 walks in 44 innings pitched over 18 appearances.

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The other prominent returnee for the pitching staff is senior Frank Gonzalez, who led the team in appearances with 29 and tied for the lowest ERA of 2.70. The All-Sun Belt Conference Second Teamer, who pitched a career-high 66 and two-thirds innings last year, is looking to fill the role as closer, as opposed to his long relief role of last year.

“When you got the game on the line and you're up one run and you're going into the ninth inning, you want the best that you got, who's got experience,” Price said. “Frank's the guy we're gonna back off of anybody. He's gonna go in and get after them and that's the only thing you can ask from a closer.”

The three and four spots in the starting rotation are up for grabs, with newcomers Kyle Preshong and Eduardo Elias expected to fill them.

Infielder Mike Diaz might also see some time coming out of the bullpen as he posted a 5-2 record with a 2.70 ERA last season at ELACC, which earned him the team's Best All-Purpose Athlete Award.

Left-handed returnee Les Rodriguez, who pitched only five innings last season, along with newcomers Eric Horstmann, Miguel Alfonso, Michael Clayton and Jorge Ramos are all expected to contribute out of the bullpen as well.

“I'm really pleased with the 12 guys we have now,” Casas said. “All these guys, they can come in late in the game, early in relief or they can start for you. So it's good. There's a lot of flexibility on our staff.”
Transfer wanted to play in Florida; embraced by team

BY ALDEN GONZALEZ
Staff Writer

Don’t be surprised if on opening-day weekend you see a lanky, towering figure trot towards the mound firing sidearm pellets during warm-ups. It’s probably Walker Whitley, the Golden Panthers’ new right-handed pitcher.

Whitley is attending his fourth university since graduating from J.H. Rose High School in North Carolina, where he grew up in the scarcely populated city of Greenville.

“I grew up in a really small town,” Whitley said. “It’s got everything you need in it. Plus, it’s a very big baseball town so there’s a lot of good ballplayers around and the competition is tough.”

Whitley grew up as a one child and, at a very early age, was really into playing the guitar, but always got nervous when it came time to play in front of people.

One day it all went away.

“I was in my hometown and my girlfriend and I were in a bar listening to this great blues cover band play,” Whitley said. “As soon as I got here I loved the environment. The coaches [treat] me good and I get along great with all my teammates as well.

The junior righty has not only caught the eye of his coaching staff, but fellow teammates as well.

The movement he gets on his pitches, a fastball, a sinker, split-finger and slider. The junior righty hasn’t wanted in travel far from home and Florida was a place where he had a special interest. Then, one day he walked into his room and saw his golden opportunity saved on his machine. It was a message from FIU pitching coach Tony Casas.

“We were looking for some pitchers this summer and we were focusing primarily on the junior college level,” Casas said. “But since the coach was a very close personal friend of mine, we knew he wasn’t going to recommend somebody that wasn’t going to be productive.

This guy has been outstanding so far though man, knock on wood, he’s been great.”

The junior righty has not only caught the eye of his coaching staff, but fellow teammates as well.

“He’s a very hard-working guy that just [goes] after hitters and his ability to pitch inside, makes all of his pitches very deceptive – he’s a great add-on to this pitching staff.”

Whitley has good amount of pitches to choose from – a mid- to high-80 mph fastball, a sinker, split-finger and slider. The movement he gets on his pitches, combined with his pose on the mound and his ability to pitch inside, makes him especially tough on right-handed hitters.

But just where will he fit in with the rest of the pitching staff?

“Right now we’re looking at him as a starter,” Casas said. “Since we lost [Elih] Villanueva, we had to change things around. We were originally looking for a long reliever or take on the closer role because he’s just something different to see in the middle of the game.”

So finally, after growing up in North Carolina, being red-shirted in South Carolina, traveling to Georgia to play at Young Harris, then traveling back to South Carolina to play at Spartanburg Methodist, the 6-6, 210-pound business major seems to have found the home he’d always wanted to come to Florida because of the warm weather and the great baseball that’s played here,” Whitley said. “As soon as I got here I loved the environment. The coaches [treat] me good and I get along great with all of my teammates.

“I think it’s going to be a great year.”

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Third baseman adds energy and leadership to team

BY ALDEN GONZALEZ
Staff Writer

During the 2005 season, the baseball team made a lot of great catches and came up with many timelapse hits as they marched into the Sun-Belt Conference tournament. But their biggest play came in the off-season as they acquired third baseman Nick Cadena, a transfer student out of Arizona State University.

Cadena grew up in Phoenix and attended Apollo High School where he broke Paul Lo Duca’s record for home runs in a career. After finishing off his senior year with a 490 average to go along with 18 home runs and 45 RBIs, Cadena turned down being drafted by the Kansas City Royals in the 41st round and elected to attend nearby Arizona State.

As a freshman, Cadena was used solely as a pinch-hitter in the first half and elected to attend out of Arizona State University. But a near-death car accident early in his sophomore season made him a medical red-shirt. He bounced back in his junior year and ended the season hitting .329, putting up a .493 slugging percentage and stealing 15 bases. He was named to the Aéropastle Sun-Belt Conference All-Tournament Team after hitting a .467.

It is because of his big success and winning attitude on the field that head coach Danny Price looks to him for direction. “He’s one of the guys that I classify as a ‘Big Cat,’” Price said. “He’s got to bring a tremendous amount of energy play hard and show us the way … he just brings the consistency and the ability to go out and perform.”

With one week to go before the big season-opener against the University of Miami, The Beacon sat down with Cadena to talk about what he made him a ‘Big Cat’.

Q: After living your entire life in Phoenix, how has living over there been different from living in Miami?

Q: What was a character trait that your parents instilled in you while you were growing up?

My parents are extremely strong people and their only concern is [their kids]. They directed my attitude of ‘school first and then ball’. They taught me that baseball is not going to be there forever but my education will.

Q: What is it about your parents that makes you admire them so much?

Q: Who is one baseball player that you would pay to see play the game?

Q: You signed with ASU right out of high school and struggled a bit there. Now you come to FIU and you’re one of the top players in the conference. What contributed to this huge turnaround?

At ASU, I wasn’t given the opportunity to play. I never got the opportunity to be a full-time starter because of the beginning. It was just pinch-hitting. When I ended up starting in the conference, I dominated but then when I got hurt it brought me down again … I just needed an opportunity to play everyday.

Q: Talk about the huge car accident you went through as a sophomore that made you miss the entire season.

The first day of practice I got t-boned – blind-sided – and I twisted my back and put me out for the season. We flew 85 feet, broke the windshield and totaled both vehicles. The driver actually broke his knee.

Q: Did you think you would never play baseball again?

My plan to play this game as long as I possibly can. I’ve been in contact with a few different [pro] teams but I had a bond with coach Price that if I didn’t get drafted high enough, I’d stay here and play for him.
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Leadership will carry team’s many newcomers

BY XAVIER VILLARMARZO
Sports Editor

The start of a new season, regardless of the sport, brings a heavy dose of uncertainty. The 2006 FIU baseball team can wholeheartedly relate to the previous sentence.

The loss of sophomore pitcher Elih Yamauchi and freshman closer Yamauchi’s number two pitcher, sophomore Luis Rivera to the Major Leagues, the team is looking to fill many holes.

But the uncertainty surrounding this year’s team is no different than that of last year’s team, who came off the worst season in program history.

“I think both teams are a lot alike than they were last year at this point,” said Danny Price, who is entering his 27th season as the team’s head coach. “We lost some good players, but we brought in some good players and you don’t know what you’ve got until you play some games.”

And when the Golden Panthers begin those games, they will play the most difficult four-week stretch in the history of the program – including the season opening series against Miami (Jan. 28-29), a home series against Central Florida (Feb. 4-5) and road trips to Southern California (Feb. 10-12) and Alabama (Feb. 24-26).

“We’re gonna be tested early and we’re gonna have to get tough early and stay tough all season,” Price said.

The team returns 14 players from last season and has 16 newcomers.

“New is good if you’ve got leadership coming back,” Price said.

Leadership is one department the team will not be lacking in, as co-captains Nick Cadena and Michael Lopez hope to carry over their stellar performances from last season. And they are just two example of what Price calls his “Big Cats.”

“You’re only as good as your Big Cats,” Price said. “If your Big Cats are okay, then you’re Little Cats are gonna be okay.”

OUTFIELD

There are four players vying for the three starting spots in the outfield. The most surprising of them is Lopez. The left-hand batting senior has played first base throughout his entire FIU career and has a legitimate shot of taking some playing time left field.

As for center and right field, specialist Chris Dunn and sophomore James McOwen might interchange between the positions.

McOwen, a consistent producer as a freshman, finished last season second on the team with a .351 batting average and added 11 stolen bases. Dunn batted .229, albeit having only 35 at-bats, but did manage to steal 11 bases.

All three of those players have great speed – stealing a combined 32 bases – and athletic ability and could play every position in the outfield.

“Coach Price is saying we have three center-fielders out there and there’s no doubt about it,” Dunn said. “That’s gonna be huge when it means stopping singles from turning into doubles and doubles turning into triples. It’ll save a lot of runs and help the pitchers out [by] shortening their innings [and] shortening their pitch counts.”

The fourth player, redshirt junior Bryan Pulliam, who was fifth on the team in batting last season with a .284 average, will see time in the outfield, but will most likely see playing time as the designated hitter.

Newcomers DrPhillip Mason and Chris Key hope to provide more speed to this already speedy outfield, as well as bring help with the bats. Both freshmen are highly touted offensively. Mason – out of Monsignor Pace High School – hit over .300 in each of his four seasons in high school, while Rey – a two-sport athlete at Gulliver Prep – hit 400 with five home runs and 33 RBI his senior year. Both players have earned All-Miami-Dade recognition.

“I think we have a very good defensive outfield and one that’s gonna hit as well, so I think it’s definitely gonna help,” Dunn said.

INFIELD

The only definite starters are Cadena, who was second on the team in stolen bases (15) and home runs (8) last season, at third base and sophomore Corey Lozano.

The shortstop position, vacated by defensive gem Luis Rivera who chose to focus his senior season and signed a free agent contract with the Chicago Cubs, will be a battle between freshman Alex Alfonso and Broward Community College transfer Maros Batista.

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