SHUTTLE FEE TO INCREASE

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,” Ken 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’re going from University Park to the Biscayne Bay Campus, so you’re comfortable, you’re relaxed, you can study as well as talk to people, and it’s much cheaper than paying for gas and tolls,” Gelok said.

See INCREASE, page 2

Shuttle Bus Hikes (last four years)

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.

According to Cocina, the purpose of the trip was to see how the Cuban Americans connected with the native Cuban professionals and to discover what they had in common.

“He was very short with us, he wouldn’t get into the discussion and he would give us one word answers,” Cocina said.

However, on the trip Alvarez would agree with the Cuban American’s perspectives and he never gave a sign of his leftist ideals.

“He agreed with all of our anti-Castro sentiments which now I think is weird,” Cocina said. “I thought Carlos was a wonderful, charming man who would fit into an agent profile”

Cocina looks back on her experience differently after the arrests.

“I am really upset. I thought our experience [in Cuba] was going to make a difference and now I really don’t know,” she said.

AN ALUMNA’S TESTIMONY

A former FIU student who accompanied alleged covert agent Carlos Alvarez in a trip to Cuba has changed her perception of the trip since his arrest.

FIU alumna Roxana Cocina traveled to Cuba in February 2004 with Carlos Alvarez under Puentes Cubanos, an organization that takes its young Cuban American professionals to the island to engage in a dialogue between six native Cuban professionals to discuss identity issues.

According to Cocina, the purpose of the trip was to see how the Cuban Americans connected with the native Cuban professionals and to discover what they had in common.

“He was very short with us, he wouldn’t get into the discussion and he would give us one word answers,” Cocina said.

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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 Manno 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.
Shuttle bus usage decreases

POLICEBEAT
FRIDAY • JANUARY 6

"Sometimetime between 4:45 p.m. and 3:30 a.m. a car was broken into and a laptop computer was stolen from it.

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

--- Compiled by Andrew Leins

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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," Yankovich said. "But I think it would be cheaper if FIU [used their own buses]."

Prae 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, driving hours and paying drivers, not to mention benefits.

All this costs money and it’s much cheaper to hire 7871 instead," Prae said.

Lazaro Rodrguez, 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, 89,635 students used the shuttle, compared to 83,321 in the second half, showing a decrease in usage.

Despite these statistics, Gelok believes that bus attendance has actually risen.

“One gas prices went up, there was a spike in the number of students taking 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 con-

"Students were taking an earlier bus in order to take a class at a much later time in order to get to the source on the bus. We took this problem seriously, as students couldn’t miss 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 it on a regular basis.

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BREAKFAST HELD TO HONOR CUBAN HERO

BY CRISTELA GUERRA
Staff Writer

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 in 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 Kuper.

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

“We would like to change this event from a Cuba event to an international event bringing students from all over,” said Vice Provost Raul Moncarz. “[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 revolutions and helped 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 omninews.com.

The breakfast will be held Jan. 28, at 9:00 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) 919-5745.

Hearst Lecture Series may aid with career success

Waiting for Books:

Denise Machin and Jennifer Kovanovich, both juniors majoring in hospitality management, stood in line at the bookstore for over 25 minutes. This is the busiest the bookstore has ever been, according to students.

Long lines and waiting were still an issue for students purchasing textbooks.

THE MEANING OF BURGER KING

A professor from the FIDM, a business school in Los Angeles, spoke at the first lecture of the year. “It’s all about Gossage” is the title of this year’s Hearst Distinguished Lecture Series 2006. With the hopes of helping students majoring in public relations, said Maritza Martinez, a senior majoring in hospitality management, said that: “If you do go, you’re [going to] walk out of there with something… you’ll learn something new from someone who is successful in their career.”

Rafkind agrees that students from other majors should attend. “If you’re a marketing major, come see Russ Klein, president of Burger King Brands [and learn from him],” she said.

Other speakers include Nancy Ruscheinski, president of Edelman Chicago, John Hockenberry, an author and Dateline NBC correspondent and Lucy Pashgian, executive director, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

“Marti’s birthday breakfast” is the theme of the six lectures presented by the Randolph Hearst Foundation.

Funds will go toward the scholarship. To make reservations call (305) 919-9549 or (305) 919-5745.

WHAT: It’s all about Gossage
WHEN: Monday, Jan. 23 at 5 p.m.
WHERE: Miami Ad School

WHAT: Think Creatively
WHEN: Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 9:30 a.m.
WHERE: Wolfe University Center - Main Ballroom, BBC

WHAT: Turning your brand over to the consumer
WHEN: Thursday, Feb. 2 at 6:30 p.m.
WHERE: Mary Ann Wolfe Theater, BBC

WHAT: Hurricane advertising: the good hurricane
WHEN: Monday, Feb. 13 at 6 p.m.
WHERE: Mary Ann Wolfe Theater, BBC

WHAT: The changing world of PR
WHEN: Wednesday, Mar. 1 at 6 p.m.
WHERE: Mary Ann Wolfe Theater, BBC

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WHEN: Wednesday, Mar. 1 at 6 p.m.
WHERE: Mary Ann Wolfe Theater, BBC

WHAT: Managing perceptions: America’s image abroad
WHEN: Thursday, Mar. 9 at 7 p.m.
WHERE: Mary Ann Wolfe Theater, BBC

WHAT: Privacy, terrorism and the public’s right to know
WHEN: Tuesday, Mar. 14 at 6 p.m.
WHERE: Mary Ann Wolfe Theater, BBC
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THE REDUCED FARE COLLEGE BUS PASS:
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• can be used to get to school, libraries, the beach, malls, movies, and more

THE COLLEGE BUS PASS IS FOR:
• Students attending Broward Community College (BCC), Florida Atlantic University (FAU), Florida International University (FLU) and Nova Southeastern University (NSU) ONLY
• and requires current student identification card at time of purchase

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• Main Library
• North Regional Library
• South Regional Library
• Southwest Regional Library
• Alvin Sherman Library (NSU)

100 S. Andrews Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale
1100 Coconut Creek Blvd., Coconut Creek
7300 Pines Blvd., Pembroke Pines
16835 Sheridan Street, Pembroke Pines
3100 Ray Ferraro Jr., Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale

Pilot Program extended to December 31, 2006

Call Broward County Transit customer service at 954-357-6400, or go to www.broward.org/bct and click on “College Bus Pass”.

*Reduced Fare College Bus Pass pilot program ends December 31, 2006
In an absurd move, the University has increased 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 bus 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 wants to have a major that primarily has classes at BBC have to pay to get there? Shouldn’t the fee or she just be able to flash his/her PantherCard 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, I have often argued against including it in tuition.

The university charges many fees including recreational, health and wellness, parking and traffic, and athletics fees which many students do not use or take advantage of. We are called Florida International University, meaning many students from all over the world come here from 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 fee?

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 conflict 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 lifeline 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 several students on the bus for free.

Moreover, some bus drivers sometimes even go without charging an entire bus. They open the bus, go out for a smoke and let students get in. They come back, get on the wheel and drive off – letting 45 people ride for free.

This should be totally unacceptable and controlled by the University. There should be secret riders who keep tabs which drivers are not doing their job correctly. No student, no matter how friendly or good looking they may be, should be allowed on the bus at no charge. This is wrong and needs to be put to an end.

Before the increase is announced, the University needs to take a serious look at this issue. The priority should be to have students get to class on time without the stress of having to worry about money to get there.
Stylish vampire flick fails due to forced acting

BY REUBEN PEREIRA
Staff Writer

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 lycans (werewolves), boasted an alluring concept, was stylishly shot and cut, making it instantly popular. Hitting young and attractive British starlet Kate Beckinsale as the heroine was a very welcomed addition. So how does the sequel match up to the original?

As Underworld: Evolution opens, we are introduced to the ancestors of the two warring species: two brothers, William, a werewolf, and Marcus, a vampire. The opening sequence depicts the capture of William and sets the tone for the rest of the film – it’s dark, stylishly shot, violent, bloody and has some ridiculous over-the-top acting.

As the first film ended, Selene, 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 somewhere in cold and icy Russia 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 acting nonexistent and the story drags out.

“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 online 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.

Although the site’s competitors -- including thefacebook.com – can provide a search with so many results. To put it into perspective, as of November 2003, 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 Internim 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.

“Found some old friends on MySpace and I 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. The perfect year last 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.

Whether you are looking for a former high school classmate or an ex-significant other, it’s likely you can find him or her on MySpace.com.

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

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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. The perfect year last 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.

Whether you are looking for a former high school classmate or an ex-significant other, it’s likely you can find him or her on MySpace.com.

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

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None of MySpace’s competitors – including thefacebook.com – can provide a search with so many results. To put it into perspective, as of November 2003, 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 Internim Media for $580 million in July 2005.

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Poor plot leads to cheap end

From UNDERWORLD, page 6

decision to jump directly into the
crus 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 Brokendown Palace
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 werewolf/vampire 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
and his 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 cinematro-
graphy 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 Echallier are com-
mandable.

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

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

2 1/2 out of 4 stars

CENSURED

What TV actor or personality makes
you change the channel immediately?

Carlos Mencia. Even cable television
will have vulgarility limitations.

4. WHAT’S YOUR TAKE ON THE CARLOS AND
ELSA ALVAREZ CASE?

I say ‘life happens.’ It’s unfortunate but what-
ever misunderstanding took place, will be settled.
Let’s just hope justice is served.

5. WHAT SONG DEFINES YOUR LIFE?

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

CASTING CROWNS

- Compiled by C. Joel Marino

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your friend have a cool campus
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Look for the Life! 5 feature every
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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 an only 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. “So I contacted his coach — I had known him for years — and I asked him if he had anybody good … he told me he had a guy that threw in the mid-80’s with side-arm delivery … very smart kid. We rolled him down the next weekend and he met our team and I asked him, ‘Is this the place for you?’ And he said, ‘Coach, I’ve always wanted to go to Florida and this is where I want to be.’”

Without ever seeing him pitch, Casas knew he was the guy they wanted on their staff.

“We usually never take a guy sight-un-seen,” said Casas. “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,” said right-handed pitcher Chris Siebenaler. “He’s not afraid to go after hitters and his sidearm delivery 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 poise on the mound, makes all of his pitches very deceptive.

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

“I 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 the guys.

“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 ended up starting the last 16 games of the season. But a near-death car accident early on 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 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 be okay. He’s got to be a leader. He’s got to control himself and he’s got to play hard and show us the way … he brings a tremendous amount of energy because he’s been there. 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 has made him a ‘Big Cat’. Q: After living your entire life in Phoenix, how has living over there been different from living in Miami?

I have all my family back there including my two younger brothers. I would think the difference is also within the people and the culture, but Phoenix is a big city and it’s one of the fastest growing cities in the country, so I’m pretty used to it. But it’s still not as fast moving as here.

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?

How strong they are despite every thing they’ve gone through. We grew up in a really tough neighborhood and they did a good job of just keeping us focused and away from that stuff. There were a lot of gangs around us and it would’ve been easy to fall into bad things.

Q: Who is one baseball player that you would pay to see play the game? Probably Pete Rose. Not so much for him being a ballplayer but just the way he played 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 looseness in their coaching staff. When I arrived here I didn’t have to prove myself 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 it 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?

At first I did, but my family and my faith got me through it. If you don’t have faith in God then you can’t do anything.
i try something new every night.

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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 whole-heartedly relate to the previous sentence.

The loss of sophomore pitcher Elih Villanueva, who was projected to be the number one starter, may affect the team greatly.

Also, with the losses of last year’s stars Yahmed Yema, Dennis Diaz, David Ashler and 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, speedster 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 Pollin, 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 DePhillip 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 homeruns 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 homeruns (8) last season, at third base and sophomore Corey Lozano.

The shortstop position, vacated by defensive gem Luis Rivera who chose to forgo 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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