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Florida International University

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Online glitch brings back paper ballots

DAVID BARRIOS
Senior Staff Writer

Technical difficulties plagued the 2009-2010 Student Government Association elections. Online voting, being held through PantherSoft, experienced several problems throughout the elections which were held April 1-2.

Students who tried to vote for Student Government Council at University Park candidates through PantherSoft were only allowed to vote for the presidential ticket and ratification of a new SGA constitution; senatorial candidates’ names were not available online throughout the entire process. Jose Toscano, SGC-UP advisor cited “coding issues” as the main reason for the errors. According to Toscano, colleges and majors for the now defunct School of Social Work, Criminal Justice and Public Affairs, were not properly encoded into the elections system.

“This was fixed however, on Tuesday morning,” he said. “Then bumped majors like political science, history and international relations. Many students were not able to vote. This is when we went back to paper ballots. Up to this point, they’re still trying to figure out what happened.”

Due to the online glitches, students were told to go to the Graham Center computer lab, where they could cast their votes on paper ballots. At the GC computer labs, students had to submit their Panther IDs and log into their PantherSoft accounts to prove to members of the elections board that they were experiencing difficulties.

“Then voters would be handed paper ballots, and they would be asked information including college and academic year. From there we’d determine what candid...
ELECTIONS, page 1

I think it was ridiculous and should've prompted FIU to hold elections at another time.

Pricilla Mojica, junior

Election process raises concerns

News of the newly implemented Web site has not yet reached all organizations on campus.

Ben Badger, a member of the Greek Student Organizations, did not know about the new social networking service.

“As a CSO member, I have not heard of this new social networking site. I do know that CSO is planning a new Web site system for clubs and other documentation but, right now, the CSO clubs only use Facebook and Gmail as far as social networking sites are concerned,” said Badger, who represents Anything Goes Anime in CSO.

While SocialWorld is a social networking site geared toward the promotion of club organizations, students still have the opportunity to have exclusive organizations with the same benefits.

Students can decide whether they want their organizations to be made exclusive, because the voting is done within the school network.

“It allows students to communicate, collect dues, raise funds, make friends, post events, share pictures and much more. Log on to www.facebook.com and all the buzz is about,” Shah said.
Filmmakers expose child slavery in Uganda

MEENA RUPANI Contributing Writer

In the spring of 2003, three young filmmakers journeyed to Africa and began their fight to save children from being abducted and used as child soldiers in Uganda.

As a result, they created the documentary, “Invisible Children: Rough Cut,” aiming to bring awareness and opening the eyes of people all around the world.

Today, the Invisible Children Organization is present in cities nationwide and has recently started a chapter at FIU.

Dorian Santos, president of the Invisible Children chapter at the University, developed the chapter along with the assistance of her sorority in the Fall of 2007.

Santos’ main goal is to spread the word about the organization and what it can do for children.

“I want students to be aware of the situation in Uganda; then it is hard for them to ignore what is happening,” said Santos, a sophomore psychology major.

The Invisible Children Organization, members argue, is different than other organizations that are trying to help out in Africa.

Ana Diaz, the fund-raising chairwoman, said she believes other causes are not aimed solely at the children.

“While most of us grow up having a childhood of playing around and being cared for, these children are abducted from their homes and minds get filled with violence and abuse,” said Diaz, a freshman journalism major.

Sarah Morgan, member of the organization, said that one of the distinct characteristics of Invisible Children is that it is not just another organization run by the government.

“I think the main thing that makes this organization stand out is the fact that not only was it started by a group of young people, today it’s still made up of mostly high school and college students,” said Morgan, a junior international relations major.

“I believe we can help these children by ending the war and giving them education and their families with the best psychatists possible. Since they are only children, they still have opportunities for normal and amazing lives.”

Members of the organization said they’re looking forward to their upcoming event called The Rescue, which will be held April 25.

Christa Lupo, for example, said she is hoping that this event will change the situation in Uganda.

“The Rescue is basically a demonstration to show to them what these kids in Africa go through. On the morning of the 25th we ‘abduct’ ourselves and travel to a location, there we leave behind our pictures for our families and friends, symbolizing leaving them for good,” said Lupo, a freshman international relations major.

During The Rescue members walk to several different locations and “while walking we have all our possessions for the night, and we all follow along carrying a rope ... symbolizing the chains the abductees are attached to,” Lupo said.

“The Rescue is occurring in more than 100 cities across the world and, according to Santos, it is the largest event the organization has ever hosted.

It is a way of showing others how these children and their families are helpless when they become abducted.

Santos said she wants Invisible Children to be a solid organization at FIU long after she graduates.

“The other members of my board are younger than me, I want to teach them the ropes of the organization and trust them to keep it moving after I leave,” Santos said.

The Invisible Children at FIU has a Facebook group already and a Web site on the way, which is scheduled to launch in the Fall.

“We do more than just raise money; we actually get up and help these children. If you care enough, do something about it and come out and support and join our events and causes,” Lupo said.

Luda’s sold-out performance pleases crowd

SOLDAÑAYS MUJICA Staff Writer

Up to 2,200 students gathered in the soccer field to see Ludacris’ sold-out performance in the annual Up-Roar Concert held April 2.

The Student Programming Council organized and paid for the event.

Joshua Brandon, SPC co- director, Cristina Rodriguez, vice-president of external affairs and Rionda were taken to the fountain and tossed in two seats in the senate for the College of Communications.

After the announcements both Figueiredo and Riedel were taken to the fountain and tossed in two seats in the senate for the College of Communications.

Not only was it fiscally successful, it was also considered popular by University employees.

According to a recent memorandum released by Maidique, a survey was conducted of all summer employees with the schedule and about 80 percent approved of the system.

He proposed that two reasons for this opinion are the savings associated with getting to the University and the increased free time in a three-day weekend, making it easier to balance employees’ work and personal lives.

President and VP tossed in fountain

Jose Toscano, SGC-UP advisor, said that this was due to “coding problems.”

For the upper division senator seats, Helene Figueiredo, Stephanie Jimenez and Yuniel Molina were elected. Ramirez and Jimenez are currently SGC-UP senators and Molina is a new member of student government.

Winners for the lower division senate seats were Daniela Maria Gonzalez, Michael Chahja, Daniel Ybanes and Alex Lastra.

Haider Hachem and William Velez won two seats in the senate for the College of Engineering.

The new proposed constitution also passed.

After the announcements both Figueiredo and Rieda were taken to the fountain and thrown in, fulfilling a tradition.

Four-day workweek returns this Summer

BRIAN ALONSO Staff Writer

The University will once again adopt the four-day workweek this coming summer as a cost-saving initiative.

According to a memorandum sent by President Modesto A. Maidique, employees working on campus in the summer will work 10-hour work days from Monday through Thursday in order to reduce costs.

The effort is being spearheaded by a team in the Department of Human Resources called the Summer Schedule Task Force.

This schedule will be adopted for seven weeks between June 19 and July 31. The schedule will revert back to regular hours of operation on Aug. 18.

However, it will not be implemented on certain services such as the bookstore.

This proposal is not new as it was implemented last year and was regarded a success.

The savings from the schedule were estimated at around $250,000.

Not only was it financially successful, it was also considered popular by University employees.

For photos of the Ludacris concert, please see page 8.

Long-awaited lecture refunds are underway

JULIA CARDENUTO News Director

Students who bought tickets for John Legend’s performance will be able to get their refunds two months after the performance was canceled.

Refunds will be made available Friday April 8-10 and April 13-15, from 9 a.m. to p.m. at the Bursar’s Office, located in PC 120 at the University Park campus.

In order to receive a refund, students need to present their ticket to the Bursar’s Office.

The event was supposed to happen at the U.S. Century Bank Arena on Feb. 11.

Legend canceled his appearance at FIU on Feb. 9 after the death of his grandfather.

“A Evening With John Legend,” was part of the Student Government Council at University Park Lecture Series.

On behalf of SGA and myself, I apologize that the refunds took so long,” said Jose Toscano, SGC-UP advisor. “Again, there were several university policies that we had to abide by. It’s just part of the process.”

Long-awaited lecture refunds are underway
Neistein, Battle win elections by small margin

Jeffrey Bustos, a freshman philosophy major, voted for Neistein and Remedios on the ballot. He was enthused about the win, but disappointed for the loss.

"I see Sholom a lot around campus and he’s always trying to get people involved," he said. "He was the only candidate involved in all of the clubs and actually cares about everyone. He’s actually looking out for the welfare of the students."

For Remedios’s loss, Bustos thinks that it "stings, he looked very compassionate about the student body."

Paul also kept her running mate informed about the things that went on in SGA in the past year but, as for Neistein, she believes "he’s going to be jumping to the executive board when there is a lot more to it than meets the eye."

As stated in his platform, Neistein’s main reason for running as president was "to ensure that the BBC students receive the proper representation with complete transparency so that students are knowledgeable to what SGA is doing."

In Battle’s platform she states that she wants to "strive to uphold the duties and obligations of student government, putting students in her No. 1 priority," forming a government that is built upon student interests and needs.

"Our priorities are a little different, but we’ll work through them hopefully and do what is best for the student body," Battle said. "But a part of me is torn because my running mate didn’t make it."

Remedios, who is currently the Student Services chair, is not discouraged by the defeat and is looking forward to working with the new administration.

"We both have a lot of values, experience and strong leadership skills to bring to this organization," Remedios said. "But now we know who’s going to lead us into tomorrow, and with them leading us [SGC-BBC] is going to be a force to be reckoned with.

Although the Neistein-Battle partnership for the executive board of SGC-BBC was unplanned, both sides are willing to collaborate and become one team.

"The first thing I want to do is sit down with Sholom and talk about the issues, because it’s not just me, but our ideas, and we have to be on one accord," Battle said.

"I did not run with Cici; however, that doesn’t matter;" Neistein said. "Politically aside, we both want the best for the students, and that’s what will unite us."

But Paul thinks it will be challenging for the partnership to coincide.

"It’s going to be difficult since they were our opposite ticket, but everyone in SGA works well together," said Paul. "They both have so much to learn, so it’s going to be a learning experience no matter what."

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University looks to ‘cough out’ student smoking statistic

MIKIALA C. TENNIE
Staff Writer

Senior nutrition major Elizabeth Donahue knew all the side effects of smoking, but it wasn’t until recently that she became part of the 24 percent of young adults that smoke in America.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supports a program that is close to a quarter of adults who smoke are between the ages of 18 and 24. To bring down these rates, the University is making strides to help its students who belong to that statistic quit smoking – for free.

By partnering with the Miami-Dade Area Health Education Center, the University has begun a smoking cessation program on both the Biscayne Bay and University Park campuses.

“I had the freedom to choose between going cold turkey or using the patch. It was up to me; it wasn’t like some strict regimen,” Donahue said. “It gave me the opportunity to set my goals as to what I would do between classes when I would normally smoke.”

Tobacco specialist Katie Greco works with the Miami-Dade AHEC and meets once a week with students who want to quit smoking.

“It’s very convenient,” she said. “If something is interesting there are referral forms.”

Before the first meeting, participants are asked to fill out a referral form that can be obtained on the Miami-Dade AHEC Web site or can be picked up at the Wellness Centers on either campus.

The form asks questions about smoking history, frequency and triggers. This information helps smoking cessation specialists, like Greco, to get an idea about the best way to help each smoker.

Greco meets with students by appointment (the BBC Wellness Center is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. to engage individ-

uals in programs that will help them quit according to their personal needs. She also works at the UP Wellness Center on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Greco said that quitting generally takes about five to seven attempts before achieving success, and she believes it is the support and accountability of the program that helps many smokers persevere.

“The lack of motivation and support is a huge deal to people,” Greco said. “Support can make 100 percent of a difference.”

The aim of the program is to provide that support for the participants during a four to six-week program consisting of one session per week.

Donahue finished after four sessions.

Donna Walcott, assistant director of the program at the BBC, has seen people struggle with quitting first-hand.

“A lot of students talk about quitting, but they chicken out or decide they aren’t ready,” she said. “We have a hard time getting people to commit.”

Although Greco cannot tell participants what to do, she is equipped to educate students on the best cessation options.

Greco recommends quitting aids such as the patch, gums and lozenges to put nicotine back in the body without the thousands of toxic chemicals that smoking a cigarette entails.

“There are more than 4,000 chemicals in a cigarette. Cigarettes can be the hardest to quit even with heavier drugs,” said Greco, referring to illegal drugs. “It’s definitely a challenge when they’ve done it for so long.”

According to Greco, many people choose not to quit because of the stress and weight gain after cessation.

“You can’t really say it helps with stress because their body is really going through withdrawal,” said Greco. “It’s the same kind of thing with other drugs. When they’re stressed, they go to cigarettes to get that buzz or high to suppress it.”

The age of a smoker, according to Walcott, is also an excuse that some use to delay quitting.

“A lot of smokers are young and they’re not in the ‘let-me-quit-mode,’ and they are not understanding of the long-term effects,” she said.

The CDC reports that some of the long-term effects of smoking include cancer, heart disease and some respiratory diseases.

The program makes an effort to educate participants on method strategies to help manage stress and the weight gain that happens after cessation.

“Hopefully, when they do come every week, it’s an incentive,” said Greco. “I’d like to get the word out to the faculty and staff.”

For more information, go to the Wellness Center Web site at http://www.fiu.edu/~health/wellness/smokingcess.htm or to the Miami-Dade AHEC Web site at www.MDAHEC.org. Katie Greco can be reached at (305) 919-9265.
Nothing, absolutely nothing, can be more stressful or annoying than the transition to PantherSoft and trying to solve your own problems. Even if FIU has upgraded PantherSoft, I can't seem to navigate it with any ease. I should have been blocked from registering for classes. I should have been notified that my registration date was not displayed. This really scared me. I didn't know why my registration date was not displayed.

The next day, I went to complain to the registrar's office that my registration appointment did not show. I showed them my Web accessed grades and clicking the link. As Geico says, it’s so easy a caveman can do it, right? Wrong. I'm a technology-savvy student of the 21st century. I went to the registrar's office and explained how to navigate the site properly. I don't know whether it was the hours spent wading through the hoops of the registrat- er’s brilliant white screen that somehow made my vision worse or that I’m a very distracted person who can’t read for the life of me. The fact was that I thought I regis- tered correctly for Summer term graduation. This was not the case. When March 25 came, one of my good friends called to ask whether my regis- 

I had hoped that we’d have more students who would get involved in SGA," said Jose Toscano, Student Government Council at Univer- sity Park advisor. "We spent $4,000 of our marketing budget to get the word out about PantherSoft throughout the year … Maybe it’s a reflection of what people felt due to John Legend.

"I cannot answer as to why 1,482 voted in a school that has over 36,000 students … I still can’t answer why students don’t vote.

The low turnout can be attributed to different factors. The SGA registration campaign was the only one for the '08 elections, Carlos Ordóñez, told The Beacon last year that the record high of 1,482 was a result of the fact that there was more than one candidate for president and also students were able to vote online. This year's SGC-UP presidential candidate running unopposed and prob- lems with the online voting system likely contributed to the low turnout.

A glitch in the voting system resulted in students only being able to cast their votes online for the SGC-UP presi- dential ticket and the ratifica- tion of an amended constitu- tion; students were unable to cast their votes for senatorial candidates. Student Media reported on the problem, as did current SGC- UP senators and students alike. Even so, the problem persisted throughout both voting days and had to choose between cast their votes on paper in the Graham Center computer lab. Many students did not know that they could do so, however. More of an effort should have been made on the part of SGC- UP to make students aware of how they can vote, and it likely contributed to a turnout of less than 4 percent of the student body.

A University-wide e-mail to students may have solved this problem. SGC-UP controls and allocate more than $10 million in student money, it is only fair to the students, then, that elec- 

The next proposed scenario was that of the online voting issues were due to "coding problems." Such excuses are not valid. The Beacon understands that Panthersoft is untested and even untested. This is what makes communicating with students such an ineffective, even if it means personally leading them to the main voting site. Many candidates did it, but, there is only so much one can do with so many people to contact in less than two days.

In some circumstances, those candidates with organiza- tions behind them have an over- whelming advantage. They simply have the human power to do so. This results in candidates basing their campaign on how many people they know rather than their stance on the issues.

The way the new proposed scenario was presented was also an issue of concern. The new constitution, which was passed, was available for vote online. The Beacon also heard that little effort was put into informing the student body about the proposed changes.

Even though the constitu- tion was available online during voting, SGA is asking students to read both versions of the document and hunt for changes, which is asking too much. Any changes should have been highlighted and explained in layman’s terms, rather than keeping it as if I accepted that April 16 registration appointment, I would be guaranteed NOT to graduate on time. I imagine all those people in similar situa- tions would receive one class to go and with the last possible registration date. Frustrated, I returned back to the regis- 

SGC-UP presidential candidate running unopposed and problems with the online voting system likely contributed to the low turnout.

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A University-wide e-mail to students may have solved this problem. SGC-UP controls and allocate more than $10 million in student money, it is only fair to the students, then, that elections for representatives go off without a hitch; the online voting system should have been tested and retested weeks prior to elections. Had there been such widespread problems in a real election, it is very likely that students would have revolted. When voting was approached by Student Media, Toscano said the online voting issues were due to "coding problems." Such excuses are not valid. The Beacon understands that Panthersoft is untested and even untested. This is what makes communicating with students such an ineffective, even if it means personally leading them to the main voting site. Many candidates did it, but, there is only so much one can do with so many people to contact in less than two days.

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However, I shouldn't have had this problem in the first place if PantherSoft could scan the SASS report for missing classes and inform students when they are eligible for graduation, life would be sweet. It would be even better if discrepancies like seniors with one or two classes shy of gradua- tion be the first ones to register. I wouldn't want somebody in my shoes. If you are a graduating senior facing the same problem as I, please don't hesitate or be compliant with your registration date: complain.
CouchSurfing 101

Travelers satisfy wanderlust with free accommodations

CHARLIE GRAU
Senior Staff Writer

When Will Bradwell and his friends were planning a cross-country road trip three years ago while at the University of Florida, they couldn’t figure out how to do it. With the cost of hotels, gas and food, it seemed impossible for three college students.

But then one of his friends suggested CouchSurfing.

“It sounded kind of haphazard but on a whole different level. It’s a really smart way to travel for people our age who are trusting like that and don’t want to spend all their money on hotels,” said Bradwell, 24, of Miami.

CouchSurfing is a hospitality exchange networking Website where people offer free lodging at their home. Launched Jan. 1, 2004, members can search through other members’ profiles when planning a trip. When opening an account, you can choose to host, surf, show travelers around without hosting or do all three. Membership is free.

The thought of staying at a stranger’s house may scare many, but those involved say the CouchSurfing community share a love for traveling and meeting new people.

“[These] are people a little bit outside of the box as far as how to look at the world,” said Rick Murphy of Fort Lauderdale who has hosted more than 100 times. “They want to spend time with people in a city where they can be shown around either by maps or can be taken to see cities from an inside’s view versus a tour book or the inside of a Hilton Hotel.”

When receiving an inquiry to crash at his place, Alejandro Sepulveda, an FIU junior majoring in biochemistry, said he checks out that CouchSurfing’s profile to see if they are legit or not.

And when checking into a profile, Sepulveda looks at comments left by others on that particular CouchSurfer’s profile. Comments can be negative or positive, depending how well behaved a surfer was or whether a host was hospitable.

“It makes you feel a little more comfortable about opening your home to a stranger,” said Sepulveda, 24, of Kendall. “You can usually kind of tell what type of person they are after looking at their profile. So I go off of that and then the rest is just chance. Life is full of opportunity. You might as well take a chance.”

Crystal Murphy, public relations team leader and global ambassador, said the site also has two other safety checks. Although not required, CouchSurfers can become verified members by making a donation to the site with a credit card. Verification helps confirm a surfer’s identity and address. This verification system is meant to strengthen the security of the community.

Members can also vouch for others and leave recommendations on their page.

“Before you can vouch for a person, you have to receive three vouches yourself,” Murphy said. “But most of all use common sense. That’s the biggest thing we stress. You shouldn’t let someone stay at your house who just started a profile yesterday or contacted you in a shady way.”

Once everything checks out for Sepulveda, he then exchanges e-mails and talks to the person over the phone to set up parameters for the visit.

“You usually talk before hand so you’re able to explain, ‘Hey I have a job and can’t show you around at this hour or this hour, but when I get out I can show you the town,’” Sepulveda said.

The not for profit Website registered in New Hampshire was developed by Casey Fenton, Sebastian Giao Le Tuan, Daniel Hoffer and Leonardo Bassani da Silveira. Fenton first thought of the site after taking a trip to Iceland. Before heading on his trip, Fenton e-mailed 1,500 students from the University of Iceland asking if he could stay with them. In 24-hours, he received more than 50 e-mails from students to come crash with them.

“We first started the site to facilitate intercultural understanding and enable people to have adventures and new experiences they would not otherwise encounter,” Hoffer said. “But we did not expect it to get this way.”

As of April 2, there are 1,037,847 registered members from 229 different countries. The average couchsurfer’s age is 27, but CouchSurfing doesn’t discriminate.

“As a gay couple, we didn’t know how many people would want to stay with us,” said Murphy, 55, who lives with his partner John Devine, 45. “CouchSurfing is not a gay thing or a straight thing. It’s a people thing.”

University books Ludacris, redeems years of bad acts

I appreciate the effort. Honestly, I do.

I realize how much work is put into setting up these acts, so I understand that schedules often don’t match up and demands are difficult to meet.

And I’m sure that the people who attended the show, for the most part, had a good time during the hour plus that it lasted.

And certainly, this was a marked improvement over the acts in years past, which included a one hit wonder, a guy who hadn’t had a hit since most of FIU’s students were in high school and a side project.

With all of these things considered, last Friday’s Student Programming Council Spring concert, featuring Ludacris, has to be considered a success, and for the most part, it was.

Starting from the booking, getting a Grammy Award-winning, multiple platinum selling artist with 19 “Hot-100” singles is a big win for SPC. The lack of a legitimately exciting opening act is a little bit of a disappointment, but it’s rare that anyone goes to concerts for the opening act.

The show itself went off without any noticeable hitches. There wasn’t too big of a lull between the sets, which is to be applauded, given the fact that the stage was set up in a few days on a soccer field.

Chris Bridges did his best to put on a good show and get the crowd into it, and judging by the middle fingers flying and the “boo’s” being thrown, it was a great success.

So why the pessimism in the opening? Well, frankly, this is the first win SPC has had since my class has been here. Last year’s concert offered little for students to look forward to. Very few stayed until the end of the show, waiting simply to hear a few choice songs by Fabolus and OneRepublic.

And the year before, with Jack’s Mannequin as the headliner was even more of a head scratcher, as at least Fabolus and OneRepublic had some sort of weight to them on the collective strength of a few hits. Jack’s Mannequin elicited a big “who?” from a good portion of the student body.

I understand that SPC is made up of students working with a limited budget and resources, so they can be forgiven for some of these shortcomings. One hopes that a pretty sizable crowd at this year’s performance can put them in the right direction going forward.

This is, after all, Miami, a city not known for its acceptance of smaller acts. This isn’t really your typical college campus, and as such, the approach of these events has to be a little bit different. People aren’t going to go check out an artist they’ve never heard, or heard sparingly. It’s all about the event in Miami, and Ludacris is the type of act you can make into an event.

Student apathy is a big concern for any organization here, as even our most successful and well funded sporting events struggle to draw respectable crowds.

If SPC can learn anything from this event it is that you have to cater to your audience. Most people in Miami can find something better to do than going to see OneRepublic for free, but Ludacris did and did legimate excitement.

For the first time in a few years, SPC got it right.

Pop & Circumstance examines all things pop music every week.

TOP 10 COUCHSURFING COUNTRIES

1. USA
2. Canada
3. France
4. United Kingdom
5. Australia
6. Brazil
7. Germany
8. Italy
9. Spain
10. Mexico
1. Lil Fate (left) performed onstage with Ludacris (right).
2. Ludacris headlined SPC’s 2009 Up-Roar Concert.
3. Itagui Correa, Locos por Juana’s lead vocalist, belts out a note.
4. Chamo Love, bass guitarist for Locos por Juana, gets into the song.
Greeks aid Special Olympics

Just a couple of weeks after some of the men of the Interfraternity Council participated in a track and field event for the Special Olympics, they helped out again at the Miami Area Special Games Competition, where they were accompanied by members of the Multicultural Greek Council and Panhellenic Council.

About 31 Greeks participated in the event, where they helped coach the soccer players, took on water-boy responsibilities and refereed tennis games.

“Greek attendance for the second Special Olympics event more than doubled from the first event, and the Special Olympics staff members knew we were Greeks from FIU without even having to ask. IFC President Mario Medina got this ball rolling with our Greek community and the Special Olympics and I am proud to be a part of it,” said Adam Johnson, a member of Pi Kappa Alpha, who participated in both Special Olympics events.

This event was even more special to Greeks since a family member of Delta Phi Epsilon’s Giselle Quesada was there. She is a Special Olympian from the Beijing Special Olympics. Her name is Valeria Vargas and she was diagnosed with Niemann Pick Disease Type-C, which results in lipid storage in the brain and body.

She has proven to be an inspiration by many by becoming a great swimmer, and in the summer of 2008 she qualified for the Beijing Special Olympics, in the 25-meter freestyle and the 25-meter backstroke.

She took the Gold Medal in both competitions.

“Seeing my uncle in tears on national TV because his daughter had just won her first gold medal in Beijing is a moment I will never forget and the reason I knew I had to be a part of this event,” Quesada said.

“Seeing the young athletes at this event have such a positive outlook on life given their individual circumstances serves as such an inspiration. I’m glad I was given the chance to be a part of this event and an opportunity to meet such hard-working kids.”

GOAL! Jerry Campos, of Tau Kappa Epsilon, and Francisco Martinez, of Pi Kappa Alpha and the FIU soccer team coach soccer for the Special Olympians.
They responded with a five-run sixth to tie the game. Mollica took a third strike with a 3-2 count and was called out on strikes. A Lammar Guy three-run homer capped off an early series lead as they lost 5-4 vs. the Western Kentucky University Hilltoppers at University Park Stadium on April 4.

This was the closest comparison to a pitching duel the Golden Panthers were involved in all season. For the Golden Panthers, Tom Ebert kept the conference’s best offense in check and off balance through 7 1/3 innings.

“He mixed up his pitches well,” said head coach Turtle Thomas. “I thought Tom Ebert did a great job going deep in the game.”

He allowed three earned runs and was involved in all season. For a team to turn around this quickly, you have to have a lot of players step up and perform, and especially some guys you might not have expected have to contribute. Not many people expected such a quick turnaround, and that has to be the biggest surprise of all.

FINAL RECORD PREDICTION: 36-20

A mirror image of last season’s record, and a vast improvement for a team still looking to rebuild. With its top two starters and a lineup as strong as this one, 1-9, this team could certainly make some noise in the Sun Belt Tournament in May in Troy.

Abundant surprises ignite hot start

BIGGEST SURPRISE: HOW ABOUT EVERYONE?

Is it Junior Arrojo’s emergence as a legitimate second leadoff hitter at the bottom of the lineup? Is it the pitching staff lowering its ERA by three runs to lead the conference? Is it the emergence of the recruiting class as early contributors? Frankly, on a team that has already outperformed last year’s squad, you can’t pin down one surprise.

For a team to turn around this quickly, you have to have a lot of players step up and perform, and especially some guys you might not have expected have to contribute. Not many people expected such a quick turnaround, and that has to be the biggest surprise of all.

SLIDING BY: Junior Arrojo scores against Western Kentucky as he is cheered on by Tyler Townsend.
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SERGIO BONILLA  
Asst. Sports Director

Ryan Mollica had the chance to send his team to victory in the final at bat of the game in the first two games against the Western Kentucky University Hilltoppers.

In the first game, he made his team go crazy as his teammates chanted, “This is our house!” in the home team locker room.

However, the second game of the series did not culminate in a euphoric celebration, but in a third strike call on Pablo Bermudez to get to him. Mollica said. “I wanted to pick it up there. I hadn’t done anything all night.”

Down 8-7 with the bases loaded and two outs, Mollica was 0-for-4 during the game heading into the at bat. He hit a sharp groundball in between first and second base. He sprinted toward first base before diving safely for an infield single.

This brought in Garrett Wittels to tie the game. The Hilltoppers’ defense did not immediately throw to home and this allowed Lammar Guy to slide in for the game-winning run.

The Hilltoppers' offense from reaching the Golden Panthers managed to keep the Hilltoppers' offense from reaching their season average of nearly 10 runs per game.

Coming off a bullpen implosion vs. Jacksonville University, relief pitcher R.J. Fondon kept his team in the game after Scott Rembisz lost control of his pitches and the game.

Fondon entered the game with a 7-6 deficit in the top of the sixth and two outs. He pitched 3 1/3 innings and gave up just one unearned run.

“He’s been a little bit up and down this year,” said head coach Turtle Thomas. “But the last couple of times out, he’s thrown consistently hard.”

Western Kentucky came into the game with the Sun Belt Conference’s best offense, but just the sixth best team against Western Kentucky. The Panthers snapped a five-game losing skid vs. WKU.

One of the most difficult defensive positions on the field is the hot corner, and all of the chances this year at third have been taken by freshmen.

Garrett Wittles and Raiko Alfonso have platooned at third base, and while Wittles has committed seven errors, he’s also shown quite a bit of range, and a very strong throwing arm in the field.

Alfonso has made just three errors in 26 games down and 28 to go, what we’ve seen from FIU’s baseball team is, when classified as a whole, very refreshing.

From where the team was last year through 26 games (9-17), and allowing more than eight runs per game, any type of turnaround is refreshing, but what makes this one different is just how it’s getting done.

In this case it’s pinpoint power pitching that’s preventing certain types of poor performances.

With the top three starters for FIU a combined 9-2, with two conference Pitcher of the Week awards and a 2.81 ERA with a 6.5-to-1 strikeout-to-walk ratio, it’s been smooth sailing on most afternoons and early evenings for the starters.

Add four complete games in 18 starts, and you’ve got the makings of a dominant conference pitching staff.

What’s more is that you’ve got a team batting well over .300 and with four everyday players batting over .340, you’re going to find runs in nearly every game.

The improvements that have been made up and down the lineup and on the front line of the starting rotation are night and day from a year ago, and with an 18-8 start, through April 4, this is a very strong team.

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The evolution of this team’s personality can be seen by games played Lammar Guy and Junior Arroyo sliding into hype-circles before games, and the team taking up a new dance routine, the Cha-Cha slide, in the middle of the fifth inning.

A greater aspect of team, and a sprinkling of newcomers, have taken the Golden Panthers from a .157 team to a 1.692 team that’s well on its way to making the conference tournament, following a one-year absence.

A strong second half will be expected, and the expectations will be welcome, as they come with success. A trip to take on Sun Belt leader Middle Tennessee will be perhaps the toughest test of the season for FIU, and will go a long way in showing just how far FIU has come in the last year.

TOWERS, page 10

New kids add refreshment to team

COMMENTS

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TOWERS, page 10

Early returns promising for improved baseball team

In some ways, assessing the FIU baseball team presents an interesting challenge unlike some of the school’s other sports this past season. Sure, like the football team, they were lead by a second-year coach coming off an abysmal season.

However, the baseball team’s successes, standing at the midseason point with an 18-8 record, can be appreciated on their own rather than just in the context of the previous season’s struggles.

And on the other hand, we’ve seen a couple of other sports share similar success, but none have done so in quite the same fashion as the baseball team, which has prominently featured 23 new faces.

The baseball team must be assessed on its own terms, then.

BEST HITTER: TYLOR TOWSEND

A case could be made for a number of players, including fellow sophomore all Sun Belt pick Ryan Mollica, but Townsend’s mixture of power and patience has him pacing the team in both slugging percentage and on base percentage.

He has produced consistently from day one. He has truly lived up to the hype and developed into one of the Sun Belt’s top hitters in his junior season.

BEST PITCHER: TOM EBERT

Ebert and fellow Juco transfer Scott