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Middle school students introduced to STEM with EV3 Robotics program

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The University created a new after school program this year to introduce middle schoolers to the STEM fields.

The EV3 Robotics program hopes to expand the minds of young students and to encourage anyone who is interested in pursuing a degree in a STEM field. Students participating learn the basics of robotics, as well as more advanced components. The students who complete the EV3 program have the opportunity to apply for partial scholarships to the University.

The idea began that every student could be involved in STEM through robotics to learn the sciences,” said Adly Norelus, associate director of the Office of Pre-Collegiate, Grants and McNair programs. “Not only will the students be learning the basics of robotics, as well as more advanced components, but they will also be able to compete in both local and national competitions. Miami Edison Park K-8 Center and North Miami Middle School are currently involved in the program.

Despite this, Norelus and George Simms, the assistant vice president of Student Access and Success, see a bright future of expansion for the program. This is that it will go beyond to reach more students other than just sixth, seventh and eighth graders. "Right now we are in the process of writing a grant to expand the program to high schools,” said Norelus. “Which will cover ninth through twelfth grade.”

The program is also predicted to expand to other middle schools in the area, providing more opportunities to the students of Miami-Dade County.

According to Norelus, not many students show interest in such a young age for the sciences because there are not many opportunities provided that allow them to gain hands-on experience. “These middle school students will feed into these high schools and continue to participate in the program, even during the summer,” said Simms. “The ultimate goal is for these youngsters to continue their education after high school at FIU.”

The EV3 Robotics program also provides opportunities for current students at the University. "We have currently three students involved in the program — as tutors, mentors, and teaching assistants,” said Norelus. As the program expands at the University, it could mean an eventual expansion in the STEM fields, resulting in a larger program with more opportunities for its students, according to Simms. “FIU plays a strong role in the program,” said Norelus. “We meet with students throughout the program, we provide college prep workshops that help [them] learn time management, as well as career exploration.”

During the summer, the middle school students will be on campus to tour the University facilities and explore the college culture. According to Norelus, the only requirement to be in this program is to be interested in learning more. The students who complete the EV3 program have the opportunity to apply for partial scholarships to the University whenever their time to potentially attend the University comes. “Once again, FIU proves that it is worlds ahead,” said Simms.

Students at Edison Park K-8 Center are partake in the EV3 Robotics program, intended to raise interest in STEM among middle schoolers. Only Edison Park K-8 Center and North Miami Middle School are currently involved in the program.

University announces its current travel policy towards study abroad in Cuba

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Even though the federal government has announced changes regarding regulations on traveling to Cuba, the University will not be changing its travel policy toward the country.

These federal travel changes allow academic travel to Cuba without requiring a special license from the Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control. In other words, the new regulations allow all students enrolled in degree programs at accredited United States academic institutions to access programs to study abroad in the island nation.

The new regulations were created with the purpose of facilitating travel to Cuba for U.S. citizens. Despite this, acts implemented in Florida prohibit the use of University funds for travel to the Caribbean country. In 2006, the University Senate and individual faculty members from the University and other universities in the state joined the American Civil Liberties Union to challenge the constitutionality of Florida statutes 1011.90(6) and 112.061(3)(e), which essentially prohibits state universities and agencies from using funds from any source for travel or travel-related costs to countries designated by the U.S. Department of State as state sponsors of terrorism.

Sebastian Arcos, the associate director of the Cuban Research Institute at the University, explained that new travel regulations to the country were modified this year due to Barack Obama’s presidency. “It is easier for American tourists who have no family connection with Cuba to travel to the island by simplifying the permit process, which was complicated before,” Arcos said.

On Tuesday, April 14, President Obama informed Congress that Cuba would be removed from the state sponsor of terrorism list. He cited that the island nation has not demonstrated any type of support for international terrorism in a period of the last six months, according to the Associated Press.

He also added that Cuba has assured that it will refrain from demonstrating any support for any act of terrorism in the future. When the official change of removing Cuba from the list is made, the Florida statutes prescribing the travel will no longer apply and University funds may be used for going to the island. In addition, both countries are taking steps toward stabilizing political relations.

“This is happening as a result of the agreement reached by the two countries, announced Dec. 17, 2014,” said Arcos. “They are moving to normalize diplomatic relations [and the] United States announced to eliminate most of the restrictions to Cuba.”

Javier González, a graduate student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, agrees with Arcos about the changes to diplomatic relations. "The political and social relations among Cuba and the United States are getting closer," González said. “We are seeing changes in the travel restrictions to the island. Americans can go and do tourism.”

But González believes that this is not the time for modification to the statutes in Florida or to the University’s current policy. “I think that FIU must keep
Worry grows at UN over civilian casualties in Yemen

The United Nations’ top human rights official on Tuesday joined the growing chorus of senior U.N. officials calling on Saudi Arabia to take greater care not to target civilians or civilian buildings in its bombing campaign against rebels in Yemen.

Prince Zeid Ra’ad al Husseir, the U.N.’s high commissioner for human rights, warned that some of the actions may amount to war crimes — a caution other officials have made in recent days. But Prince Zeid’s comments may carry special weight because he is a member of Jordan’s royal family. Jordan is a member of the Saudi-led coalition carrying out the bombing campaign with U.S. support.

“Every hour we are receiving and documenting deeply disturbing and distressing reports of the toll that this conflict is taking on civilian lives and infrastructure,” Prince Zeid said.

One year after kidnappings, Nigerian president can’t promise schoolgirls’ return

As Nigeria marked a year since the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from the northeastern town of Chibok by terrorist group Boko Haram, President-elect Muhammadu Buhari said he could not promise that his government would be able to find and rescue those still in captivity. But he said if they were alive, his government would do its best to save them.

Buhari said his government would take its own approach, different from that of the previous government that has ruled Nigeria for 15 years, and would listen to citizens’ anguish and take action.

“This new approach must also begin with honesty. We do not know if the Chibok girls can be rescued. Their whereabouts remain unknown. As much as I wish to, I cannot promise that we can find them.”

“But I say to every parent, family member and friend of the children that my government will do everything in its power to bring them home,” Buhari said.

How long can Pakistan stay out of Yemen fight in face of Saudi pressure?

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, under heavy pressure from Saudi Arabia and its allies to take a more active role in the Yemeni conflict and provide forces to help neutralize the Saudi-led coalition fighting rebels in Yemen, has until now held back from taking part. But Sharif, who owes his political career and perhaps his life to Saudi intervention in Pakistan affairs, didn’t suggest that he intended to confront forces now — in spite of angry denunciations by Saudi critics of the Pakistani move to sit out the conflict.

Instead, he tried to parry the criticism by saying Arab Persian Gulf nations were misinterpreting the intention of Parliament’s resolution, which called for Pakistan to remain neutral in the Yemeni conflict and provide forces only to defend Saudi Arabia. The resolution passed unanimously.

Cuba travel policy notice from University

President Barack Obama told Congress on Tuesday that he is removing Cuba from a list of state sponsors of terrorism, the latest in a drive to normalize relations with the island but one that paves the way for a showdown with Congress.

Obama has not provided any support for international terrorism in the past six months and has given him assurances that it will not do so in the future, the two conditions necessary for a country to be removed from the list, which also includes Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

Obama removed Cuba from the list, “consummating the symbolic value, its practical impact may not be great. Cuba remains under a U.S. economic embargo, and efforts to lift that embargo are gaining little traction in the Republican-controlled Senate and House of Representatives. A series of Cuba-specific sanctions imposed by the Treasury Department over the years also remain in effect. Obama has ordered the State Department to review Cuba’s presence on the terrorism list, where it had been placed in 1982 _ on Dec. 17, when he and Castro announced plans to normalize relations, which were severed in 1961.

“As the president has said, we will continue to have differences with the Cuban government, but our concerns over a wide range of Cuba’s policies and actions fall outside the criteria that is relevant to whether to rescind Cuba’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism,” White House spokesman Josh Earnest said in a statement. Tuesday’s action brings condemnation from many Republicans and support from Democrats and some in the business community.

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The 2016 presidential election is slowly approaching and political parties are getting ready to choose the best of the best to represent them. This election, like any other, decides the course the nation will take for the next four years. Despite familiar names like Bush and Clinton, it’s exciting to hear new and inspiring stories of our potential candidates.

Over a dozen candidates from both parties have shown interest in becoming the 2016 presidential nominee, but only a few have officially announced their participation. The Democratic Party has one candidate who has officially announced her running: Hillary Clinton. Although I would love to see a woman as president, I don’t think Clinton is the candidate for that role. To see another Clinton or Bush become president would be more like a monarchy run by a royal dynasty than a democracy. Frankly, Clinton’s story doesn’t strongly influence her husband. She is not exactly the prototype for a strong female leader. I think Obama’s administration broke the cycle of male WASP domination over the presidency.

With two hispanic hopefuls and a woman in the running, chances are we’ll be seeing a change to the status quo. Rubio may not be the obvious choice, but as we have seen in previous elections, it’s sometimes the least obvious choice that comes out of nowhere and wins over the hearts of millions of ordinary Americans.

I love parking in Panther, now to wait for the tram.

People should not have to justify why they prefer one type of music to another. Appreciating music does not mean people have to be a fan of every sound that is made—it’s more about respect. There are endless sound possibilities with different fans and interpretations. Musical diversity should not be a bad thing. If two people disagree about a certain band, artist or genre, neither of them is necessarily right or wrong. Their respective musical preferences are their own and they should be proud of them. Is there still such a thing as ‘good’ music?

In the world of music there is no such thing as good or bad, there are only differences of opinion. As long as there are fans listening and relating to it, nothing else matters.

There are two sides to music. On one side, music is a unifier. At a party, any combination of people will come together to chant along to Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believin’” or Britney Spears’ “Oops!.. I Did It Again.” Iconic songs like these take the listener back in time to when they first heard it. As diverse as these iconic songs are, they all have one thing in common: they were popular.

At some point in time, those iconic songs were the prevalent sounds a mass majority of people listened to. This leads to the other side, where music causes separation. A lot of people are often criticized or even bullied for their choice in music if it is not widely known or liked. Punk music is seen as kiddie rock, metal is satanic and pop is the drones of mindless moneymaking. No matter what genre someone listens to, there will always be a critic saying that it is not “good music.” But really, what is “good music?” If the lyrics resonate and the sound makes people move, why not listen to it?

The only rule in music is that there are no rules. Music, like any art, is about self-expression. Not everyone is going to like the same music, but this creates endless possibilities with different fans and interpretations. Musical diversity should not be a bad thing. If two people disagree about a certain band, artist or genre, neither of them is necessarily right or wrong. Their respective musical preferences are their own and they should be proud of them.

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In today's pop culture, you'd have a hard time finding anyone not pulled in by either Netflix or the Disney/Marvel superhero dynasty that has commanded movie theaters, television, comic books, and now, the Internet.

"Daredevil" is another step taken with Marvel to cement the fact that it doesn't matter how strange the concept, what the medium, or how bad the stigma towards a particular series might be (I'm sure I'm not the only one who remembers the 2003 Daredevil film starring Ben Affleck). If you put the Marvel name on something, two things are guaranteed: People will flock to it and it will be fantastic.

"Daredevil" tells the story of Matt Murdock, played by Charlie Cox, a lawyer who was blinded in his youth while saving an old man from a truck.

Over time, he learned to hone his other senses to the point where he can hear a heartbeat across a room or smell the cologne of someone two stories up from him. Using this, he fights crime in the courtroom during the day and, at night, dons a mask and deals out his own form of justice on the streets.

Personally, I’ve dismissed Daredevil as a superhero for a long time; as far as I could tell he was just a blind ninja with the power to see. Essentially his power made him a regular guy.

With the addition of his suit and red hue, however, there's a new story to tell that is not only visually compelling but also an emotional journey that resonates with those unfamiliar with comics.

The storyline of "Daredevil" is a perfect example of the true meaning of the devil, as it is just as much the origin story of the Kingpin, one of Marvel’s most intimidating and dangerous villains.

D’Onofrio plays Fisk with a childlike personality. He’s awkward, seems to force words out when speaking. He’s a romantic, he’s something of an artist, he’s lonely and conflicted. And when someone makes him angry, he will grab their head and bash it in until they’re nothing more than a bloody mess.

As exceptional as Cox’s performance is, the series would be incomplete without D’Onofrio’s interpretation of Fisk as something more than just pure evil.

By the end of the series, you know exactly why people are afraid to even mention his name at the beginning.

The Kingpin is one of those few villains who is openly committing crimes and evil acts, yet no one lifts a finger against him. "Daredevil" shows us exactly why.

The supporting cast manages to really bring a level of quality and emotion to the show that you might not expect from a superhero series.

From Deborah Ann Woll and Elden Henson, playing Murdock’s two associates Karen Page and Foggy Nelson, to Fisk’s inner circle of Leland Owlsley, Vanessa Mariana, and James Wesley, played by Bob Gunton, Ayelet Zurer, and Toby Leonard Moore, you truly get a feeling that there is more to the setting of the show than just the conflict between Murdock and Fisk. Each of these characters are unique, with their own lives and their own agendas.

The standout performance, in my opinion, comes from Vondie Curtis-Hall, who plays journalist Ben Urich, a character that comic fans should be familiar with. An aging reporter, struggling with his desire to tell important, groundbreaking stories with his need to care for his ailing wife and the safety of himself and his sources. He makes for such a compelling character that if the series was only following him, I would still enjoy every moment of it.

Of course, there is more to the series than just the acting. The use of color is particularly strong, with frequent shades of yellow and red following Murdock and his associates, and black and white being near constant colors surrounding Fisk.

The city is almost alive, with noises coming from all around, dirt and grime and violence is around every corner.

You’re left wondering why these people care so much about the city, why they work so hard to save it from itself, yet through it all you can’t help but root for them in the hopes of seeing the outcome of all their efforts.

And, of course, there’s the comics.

Every superhero changes their costume from time to time, from Iron Man and Spiderman, who go through new variations every few years, to even Moon Knight and The Punisher, who have had a change or two over the years.

Daredevil however, with the exception of his early yellow costume and a brief stint in a black mask, he’s pretty iconic for his sleek red suit.

And the Kingpin, more or less, hasn’t been outside of his white suit and cane throughout the years.

Murdock stays as the man in the black mask and Fisk is seen wearing black or gray suits. For those costume aficionados out there, I can give you a bit of good news: by the end of the series, you will see Murdock in red and Fisk in white.

The series poses one of the most interesting conflicts seen in a crime series. Two characters with the same goal of cleaning up Hell’s Kitchen. On one hand, there is a man with such power and influence, he has nothing standing in his way, nothing to be afraid of.

On the other side of things, Murdock is facing his ultimate threat in the form of Wilson Fisk, played by Vincent D’Onofrio, the large, ruthless kingpin of crime.

As such, "Daredevil" is the origin of the hero, it is just as much the origin story of the Kingpin, one of Marvel’s most intimidating and dangerous villains.

Each of these characters are unique, with their own lives and their own agendas. Only one can succeed, but neither are the type to quit.

Over the course of 13 hours, "Daredevil" makes you feel exactly what the characters are feeling, whether it’s their hope, their desperation, their hatred and admiration. You root for people who are pure evil, against those fighting for good, at times even wishing the heroes would give up for their own safety.

And if you’re a fan of the comics, you’ll be in for a suble reference or two and should assume yourself that just because a character is alive or important in the comics doesn’t mean they’ll survive on screen.

But whether you’re a fan of comics, superheroes, or just enjoy a good crime show, "Daredevil" will be among your favorites of 2015.
The Beacon – Friday, April 17, 2015

Future of education includes video game in classrooms

BRIAN CRECENTE
Polygon

A lot of modern students spend as much time playing video games as they do attending school, according to research by the University of Indiana.

Some may view that as a shocking affirmation that video games are eroding the education of an entire generation, but the U.S. Department of Education sees it as an opportunity, a chance to reinvent education in a way that makes it more relevant to today’s students.

“If you look at the life of a student ... a lot of students play on average about 10,000 hours of video games every year,” said Richard Martin, the U.S. Department of Education’s Games for Learning lead. “You can imagine a lot of the time which of the two activities they spend more engaged in or more relevant.

“If you can take that experience of getting outside of school and make it feel just as relevant and just as compelling when they’re in school learning stuff and doing stuff and doing something that’s interesting and educational, that’s that bridging we want to sort of provide.”

Later this month, the U.S. Department of Education holds its first Games for Learning Summit in New York City, a gathering of educational experts, students, teachers, game publishers and developers. Summit organizers hope to use the event to help break down the barriers that exist between the interests of game developers and needs of educational games.

One outcome, organizers hope, will be new ways to make and distribute engaging and educational video games to classrooms.

“Part of the message we are trying to send here is, if you’re building and designing games for learning, you have to connect and work with teachers and with school leaders to make sure you are building games that are meeting the needs.”

Among the sessions are two from massive game-maker Ubisoft. The publisher will have developers at the summit to talk about its rhythm-meets-education guitar game “Rocksmith” and its benefits of dance game “Just Dance.” Perhaps most surprisingly, the publisher will also be talking about its incredibly popular action, assassination game “Assassin’s Creed” and a game it published about the first World War.

“At the very first ‘Assassin’s Creed’ game, which took place during the Thirty Years’ War,” said Michael Bille, associate director of public relations at Ubisoft, “over the years we’ve heard of universities across the U.S. using the game to engage students, compare the in-game history with the history they learned in class or simple to show students what periods of history looking like visually.”

 eventual summit is the latest sign that the Department of Education recognizes the potential for games for learning. And, Culatta says, the department is committed to fostering a broader adoption of high quality games for education.

In fact, he says it’s an inevitability that games will become an important part of educational instruction.

The summit is a direct response to President Barack Obama’s ConnectED initiative, a push to provide, among other things, Internet connectivity to schools across the country. That connectivity made the idea of using games to transform learning possible.

“Along with that comes this challenge of what do we do with that connectivity?” said Culatta. “How do we use it to do more than just passaged or climbed?” he said. “History is a core component of the Assassin’s Creed franchise and one that we know has taught millions of players over the years about key characters and historical events through experiencing pivotal moments in history.”
FOOTBALL

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Football is back. Well, sort of.
The FIU football team will be strapping up Friday, April 17 at 7 p.m. at Ocean Bank Field.

This season should be a make or break year for Head Coach Ron Turner. This will be his third season with the Panthers after finishing the last two seasons below .500.

Yet, he managed to add new but proven assistant coaches, recruiting heavily in the state of Florida, and having majority of their key starters back on both offense and defense.

As we are counting down the days until the official spring game, here is what to expect for Friday night’s game.

QB’s

It’s pretty clear that Alex McGough will be the starting quarterback for this coming season, and we all expect this true sophomore to take first team reps Friday night. However, the backup position is up for grabs, and it will come down to either Redshirt Freshman Bud Martin or early enrollee Christian Alexander.

Martin, so far, has been really competitive throughout the whole spring, and he definitely knows how to throw a spiral compared to other QBs.

After losing back to back C-USA series against Florida Atlantic University and University of Texas San Antonio, the Panthers need every available player on the roster for the rest of the season because it is going to take the entirety of the team to finish as a top seed.

There’s Juwan Caesar and his 6-foot-5 219 pound frame, who’s finally going to seek action after sitting out for the entire season because of NCAA transfer rules.

There’s also senior starter Clinton Taylor who has also been having a productive spring as he has been the most consistent player in the receiving corp.

There’s also the freshman sensation Anthony Jones, who has been wowing the coaches with his breakaway speed and elite athleticism. Expect this true freshman out of Miami Central to fly around the whole entire game with a position of his own called “Rocket.”

DEFENSE

Everybody knows that the Panthers biggest strength is their defense, that finished in the top 35 in the country. Majority of players are back, including our star cornerback Richard Leonard, who decided to withdraw from the NFL and stay for his senior season.

Expect this defense to fly around and make turnovers and make big hits Friday night. Defense wins football games.

Overall, I expect the Panthers to be more explosive than last year and make the game fast pace. With majority of the players coming back, plus adding some young players in the mix, I won’t be surprised if the Panthers become a huge threat in the conference.

This will be a great opportunity for all students, alumni and parents to come out and get a good taste for what’s to come this season.

The annual spring game starts this Friday at 7 p.m.

I expect a huge crowd during this Friday Night Lights at Ocean Bank Field.

BASEBALL

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Coming into the season projected to finish second and currently at eighth place in the Conference USA standings is not what the baseball team expected to be at this point in the season. They have been struggling as of late which has been costly to the team.

As of now, they still have a chance to do a complete 180 and finish this season on a high note. There are 18 games left in the season with the bulk of the games against conference opponents. That’s what the team has to focus on now because that C-USA record is what matters the most.

This Friday, April 17 the Panthers take on Western Kentucky University at 7 p.m. at Ocean Bank Field.

Senior outfielder Brian Portelli swings and makes contact at the game against the University of Southern Florida on Tuesday, April 7.

Kentucky University for a three game weekend series. Every game from here on out is crucial.

This series can determine the direction of the team as WKU is a conference opponent and is one spot away from FIU in the standings.

Both teams have the same record at 7-8 but what determines is that WKU is ahead of the Panthers in overall record. WKU has a 17-16 record while FIU is below .500 with a losing record of 16-20.

After losing back to back C-USA series against Florida Atlantic University and University of Texas San Antonio, the Panthers need every available player on the roster for the rest of the season because it is going to take the entirety of the team to finish as a top seed.

Some players that need to lead the charge are seniors Brian Portelli, Julius Gaines and junior Edwin Rios. Offensively, all three swung the bat well last series against FAU.

Portelli improved his team-leading batting average to .338 and Rios hit his team-leading 11th home run. Gaines had a great series with the glove too as he anchored the defense infield alignment. These three players need to carry this successful play into the series versus the Hilltoppers.

While sweeping the Hilltoppers might be too much to ask for, taking two out of three is a must for FIU. Doing so, they climb the standings and can go ahead of WKU and even University of Alabama at Birmingham. This would put them in the top half of the standings with 15 games left to play which is enough time to finish at an even higher seed.

Let’s hope for the best for the Panthers as they have to scratch and claw to make it to the top.
SAND VOLLEYBALL

The heat's 2014-15 season was not a waste

If there's one thing I can say confidently about the 2014-15 Miami Heat season, it's that almost none of my predictions came true. In the beginning of the season I believed that the Heat were a top five seed in the East. Although they were LeBron-less after the offseason, I thought that they would have enough experience behind All Stars Chris Bosh and Dwayne Wade to be competitive.

For a short time, I was right: the Heat jumped out to a 5-2 record and even led the Eastern Conference for a bit. Then I was really wrong. Three issues held the Heat back in the first half of the season: they had no true center, no true point guard and no depth. Although Pat Riley would fill the first two holes with point guard Goran Dragić and center Hassan Whiteside, the Heat's lack of quality bench players and a host of other problems caught up to them.

I don't think anyone can pinpoint exactly when the Heat went up in flames. Injuries to key players were tacked on every few weeks. The defense slowly corroded as the season dragged on. Somewhere along the way, the Heat lost their "clutch" gene and started blowing double digit leads early.

This season was so out of left field that even Riley couldn't right the ship. Just when he acquired Dragic from the Suns, Bosh was admitted into the hospital. Just when it seemed that the Heat pulled off the steal of the century in signing Hassan Whiteside, the center flared his maturity issues.

Now, the marathon that is the NBA regular season is finally over and with it the Miami Heat's chance at defending their Eastern Conference title.

The Heat were officially eliminated from playoff contention on Tuesday night when the Pacers defeated the Wizards, but that has yet to happen. A long list of losses in which the Miami Heat dropped the ball deserve the blame first.

If you're a Miami Heat fan, you can view this season as either a train wreck or a gift from above.

The basketball gods plagued the Heat with injuries; Bosh, Wade, Josh McRoberts, Shabazz Napier and Luol Deng all missed significant playing time. As a direct result of those injuries, however, players like Whiteside and Henry Walker received playing time and were able to come into the fold.

Without the bad this season, the pieces that the franchise needs for the future may have never been discovered.

I say "So what if the Miami Heat have to watch the playoffs from the outside this year?" They've made the postseason in all but two years in the Dwyane Wade era. Maybe the Heat deserve to rest for a while, which might not be too difficult to do knowing that they can expect a starting five of Dragic, Wade, Deng, Bosh and Whiteside next season. The future is bright.

The most important thing to remember about 2014-15 is that it was not a waste of time just because they missed the playoffs but spent the year developing chemistry and adding pieces that will pay off in a big way one day.

In the meantime, it's all up to the Marlins now to make sure that South Florida doesn't go for a full calendar year without playoffs.

Now that's a future that terrifies me.

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Marlins disappoint fans at start of 2015 season

After another firewoks show of an offseason, the Miami Marlins seem to be to up to their old tricks.

The Marlins have a bad habit of that has yet to be broken in their 22 years of existence.

They like to throw flashy stars, flashy play, promotions, new stadiums and even a couple World Series Championships at their fans, just to pull a trip of door open from under them milliseconds after.

The Marlins' faithful fans have barely had a chance to celebrate. Although it seems earlier, being dropped right back down into Miami Sports Fan Purgatory, where the team's love and loyalty to their entire life should be good, and repay you for your loyalty, but they just don't, and you're left wondering why you ever thought that anything would change.

Although it's obviously much too early to look upon the 2015 season retrospectively and speak on whether it was a failure or success, I think everyone would agree that Opening Week didn't go at all as expected.

Not only did the Fish lose both opening series, but they were swept by none other than their long-time NL East Division rivals, the Atlanta Braves.

This was embarrassing on many levels, one of which being that the 2014 Braves weren't expected to even contend for the division crown. That crown is supposed to be between the Washington Nationals, and yes, the Miami Marlins.

After dropping the opening series so dramatically, it follows that following up with being lose of two three games to in-state-but-out-of-league rivals the Tampa Bay Rays, the Marlins need to right the ship quickly, if for nothing else, to keep attendance and revenue up.

Anybody with a working pair of ears heard the explosion that the Fish have put up, half as many runs as their pitching staff has given up, and has already been shut out twice in six games.

Face-of-MLB Giancarlo Stanton is going to have to but a bit higher than his current .158 average, to help his team sit somewhere near the .500 mark.

Until at least mid season when the Marlins ace, and former Rookie of the Year Jose Fernandez steps back onto the field after his surgery, if they have any hope of playing baseball in October in south Florida, for this first time since 2003, and pull the South Florida fant out of Limbo, for at least one more post season.

Some of those expectations may be a bit too optimistic, but as the Miami Marlins have shown so many times as the MVP hopeful also has no a-trade clause for the first seven of the thirteen years on his contract.

Jrue Holiday seems to be the player to be dealt, with potential A VCA teams and 5-1 dual matches as well. Both duos, No. 1 and No. 2, have fueled the team throughout the season.

The Panthers are set to return to the AVCA National Championships in Gulf Shores, Alabama. The team was eliminated last season by PSU in the first round and will be looking to improve.

The Panthers will need the leadership of their top two duos to make a deep run in the tournament and bring the program's first championship.

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The sand volleyball team has finished the regular season with a record of 18-1, best in program history, and are set to return to the AVCA National Championships in Gulf Shores, Alabama. The team was eliminated last season by PSU in the first round and will be looking to improve.

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BRINGING BIG CHANGES: SGC-BBC PRESIDENT CONQUERS

I FEEL LIKE A LOT OF THE CHALLENGES THAT WE’VE HAD, WE’VE CONQUERED THEM.

JAZMIN FELIX
PRESIDENT SGC/BBC

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BBC Managing Editor
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At just eighteen years old, no one expected a freshman to thrive in the student government. Camille Williams, SGC-BBC Chief of Staff, said Felix changed her heart. Sibony thought that when she entered SGA, there was going to be no room for friends because it’s a serious job. “But, she got me this small cute box of chocolates on Valentine’s Day and she goes, ‘Will you be my Valentine?’”

She has so much on her plate, she never loses her cool, she’s always relaxed, she’s always having a great time. It’s inspiring for me because that’s what I strive to be like. I absolutely love her,” Sibony said. Jazmin Felix didn’t even want to be in student government.

Coming to the University as a nursing student, Felix had her sights focused on studying and no campus life involvement. Yet, after being Student Government President in middle school and Vice President in high school, being in SGA-FIU was inevitable.

“I walked passed the SGA office and it was like, ‘Jazmin, Jazmin, apply…’ and I was like, ‘no, no, no,’ and I kept walking and I turned right back around and I picked up an application,” Felix said.

Her passion for helping others and putting students first triumphed. She began as a Lower Division Senator, then a Nursing & Health Sciences Senator and Speaker of the Senate.

At just eighteen years old, no one expected a freshman to thrive in the SGA at such a fast pace. “She believed in what student government stands for and to this day, she believes that and it makes it easier for her to follow up with her convictions. It is rare finding students that dedicated that early,” said Rafael Zapata, interim director at the BBC Office of Campus Life.

“It didn’t surprise me that she would potentially be president,” Zapata said. Felix soon became the BBC Student Government Council President her junior year in spring 2014. As part of her platform for SGC-BBC President, she used the acronym BBC, Bringing Big Changes and that’s what she did. “I feel like a lot of the challenges that we’ve had, we’ve conquered them. I was very aggressive with my goals and I knew what I wanted to do – I had such an amazing team,” Felix said.

During her tenure, the council funded the renovation of the Wolfe University Center.

The $4.2 million construction process included changes in the BBC Panther Square and the Panther Plaza and its addition of a panther statue. They also added phone charging stations, lockers for student storage and a computer lab in the second floor of the WUC.

“I think the greatest achievement over the past five years is the funding and purchase of a panther statue,” said Alexis Calatayud, SGC-MMC president.

“During her tenure, Jazmin has taken a role in advocating for the Biscayne Bay Campus in budget deliberations,” University committee and state advocacy. These tools, when utilized well, are invaluable to the betterment of student experience,” Calatayud said.

In terms of having a stronger collaboration between MMC and BBC, Calatayud, who was re-elected president for the 2015-2016 school year, said topics that directly and equally impact both campuses will be discussed. However, she said it is important to understand that sometimes their unique goals and needs must be met individually.

Camille Williams, vice president of the SGC-BBC, said she appreciated the way Felix adapted to working differently with each individual she worked with.

“She’s really a great person at bringing out the best in people,” said Camille Williams, vice president of the SGC-BBC.

“We all managed to work very well with the other campus councils and we got the job done and that was a great accomplishment because we all worked together despite our differences,” she said.

Williams referred to the new partnership started by Felix, to address student needs between SGA and the rest of the BBC’s major student organizations.

Williams said that Felix’s humor brought life to the council. “She can make anybody laugh. She could talk to a brick wall and it would talk back. That’s the character she brought to every meeting that we had and it was always very easy, but also very focused,” said Williams.

Felix is the youngest out of six brothers and sisters and a family from Turks and Caicos Islands in the British West Indies. “I’m the baby, but you know, it’s funny because people would think I’m supposed to be the brat, right? I’m the last one, but my mom has always instilled in me good work ethic so I’ve never been like a bad brat… I’ve been a good brat,” said Felix.

Larisa Adames, SGA coordinator at the BBC Campus Life, said she always involved everyone in the council when decisions were made. “She always thought of others so that kind of made her stand out. Once she puts her mind to something, she goes ahead and does it,” Adames said.

“Don’t wait for anything, or anyone. Once she sets her goal, she goes and she does it,” said Adames. Elina Sibony, SGC-BBC Chief of Staff, said Felix changed her heart. Sibony thought that when she entered SGA, there was going to be no room for friends because it’s a serious job. “But, she got me this small cute box of chocolates on Valentine’s Day and she goes, ‘Will you be my Valentine?’ and it was just so cute. She really made SGA like a family to me and it altered my heart,” Sibony said.

“Jazmin Felix was the brat. She’s the baby, but you know, it’s funny because that’s what I strive to be like. I absolutely love her,” Sibony said.