Tampa seeks to decriminalize marijuana

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Between 2010 and 2014, 44,860 marijuana possession cases were closed in Miami-Dade County, accounting for 10 percent of all cases filed in the city’s criminal court system.

In response to these numbers, county commissioners took steps to decriminalize misdemeanors and provide officers with the option to forgo an arrest, and instead issue civil citations with a $100 fine for people caught with less than 20 grams of marijuana.

“We have better things to do with our police resources,” said Commissioner Sally Heyman, sponsor of the ordinance. “For goodness’ sakes, we don’t have to destroy the lives of so many.”

Palm Beach County also made similar changes to county code in 2015, sparking a change within the state, leading to more counties looking at options to provide police officers with alternatives to the lifelong stigma of a criminal record, a bar to jobs in law enforcement and the armed services, and eligibility for public housing and some college scholarships.

Tampa is the latest in the state to propose a change; under the proposal, a citation would carry a fine and could require mandatory drug counseling but would hold no more weight than a traffic ticket.

“Usually, we have to go on bended knee armed with loads of data to make a persuasive argument to change the law,” FBI Special Agent National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws

But the cities lie behind other regions of the United States that have used civil citations for decades, said Allen St. Pierre, executive director with the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group. Civil citations were adopted by leaders of many college towns – including Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Madison, Wisconsin -- as far back as the 1970s, St. Pierre said.

The move by Florida communities to adopt citations stems in part from concern about the cost of enforcing drug laws. It also may reflect changing attitudes about use of the drug now legal for recreational purposes in Alaska, Colorado, Oregon, Washington and the District of Columbia.

“Usually, we have to go on bended knee armed with loads of data to make a persuasive argument to change the law,” St. Pierre said. “Almost all the people leading those efforts are baby boomers; they have a much greater propensity to favor non-military generation.”

Marijuana arrests disproportionately fall on black and Hispanic people, a 2013 American Civil Liberties Union study found.

Between 2001 and 2010, there were 8 million arrests, of which 88 percent were for possession.

Group lotto tickets increase as jackpot hits billions

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A $1.4 billion Powerball jackpot with chances of winning the jackpot is 1 in 292 million, becomes a lot more likely once friends, office peers, and family members pool their resources in purchase communal tickets.

Like March Madness, in which office pools capture the frenzy of the nation during the NCAA men’s basketball finals, lottery office pools have been around since the lottery began and ramp up each time jackpots soar.

These pools mostly are informal affairs, where a trusted individual agrees to collect a couple bucks from participants, heads to a gas station or Publix, buys tickets and watches the drawing. The idea is that there are more tickets in the pool and that increases the chances of winning, though infinitesimally. If one of the tickets hits, all share in the jackpot.

This idea is one that is particularly of interest to students who want to participate in having a communal pool.

“For some students, however, the question becomes how fair and how open would the drawing be. I think that having a communal pool is fine, so long as there are established rules as to how the money would be split if we won,” said Eric Watt, a senior studying English.

Experts say there could be some pitfalls to this system, particularly if more than $1 billion is at stake.

“I would say to make sure that everybody is in agreement with doing it jointly,” said Wayne Clark, a South Florida attorney who has written scholarly articles about March Madness office pools. “If 10 people are in, they all have to agree to the terms. Not nine and a friend someone invites in.”

The pool organizer should keep everyone up to speed on details, like when the drawings are, how much is collected, how many people are in. That person also should shoot messages with the numbers of the purchased tickets to everyone in the pool.

“When (the pool organizer) get the tickets, they can just scan them and email those images to everyone before the drawing,” Clark said. “That way, you have a way to prove these are the 10 tickets. And if the organizer buys 10 more tickets for himself and his family, they clearly are not among the ones in the pool.”

Agreements also must be made about what happens to partial winnings; should they be doled out to participants or rolled into future drawings.

If everyone’s in agreement, there likely would not be a need to put it all in the form of a written contract, he said.

“I don’t know if its necessary to put it in writing,” Clark said. Making copies of the tickets available to the pool participants should do the trick, and he said. And that’s easily done with a smart phone.

“Technology has changed so much these days,” he said. “It’s is so much easier to make sure everyone is on the same page.”

SEE LOTTO, PAGE 2

SEE WEED, PAGE 2
Rhino poaching in Zimbabwe soared in 2015, says activist

The number of rhinoceroses poached in Zimbabwe more than doubled last year, the head of a trust dedicated to protecting the animals said Tuesday. At least 50 rhinos were poached in the southern African country in 2015, up from 20 the previous year, Lowfeld Rhino Trust Director Raoul Du Toit told dpa.

“Until 2015, rhino poaching in Zimbabwe actually declined steadily from its peak in 2008,” said Du Toit.

Obama’s pick for FDA commissioner approved

A Senate panel on Tuesday cleared President Barack Obama’s nominee to head the Food and Drug Administration, cardiologist Dr. Robert Califf. While he was approved on a voice vote by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Calif’s close relationship to the pharmaceutical industry still raised concerns. “His extensive ties to the pharmaceutical industry give me no reason to believe that he would make the FDA work for ordinary Americans, rather than pharmaceutical CEOs who are more focused on making obscene profits than saving lives,” Vermont independent Sen. Bernie Sanders, who sits on the Senate health committee, said in a statement Tuesday.

Cruz is fighting back

Conservative commentator Laura Ingraham said Tuesday that she was “clear and straightforward” in an interview on Sunday that the claim that he became a U.S. citizen is “settled law” and on CNN’s “State of the Union” on Sunday said it is “natural-born citizen” eligible to run.

Lowveld Rhino Trust 2015, up from 20 the previous year, Lowveld Rhino Trust in conjunction with other charges so a citation may not be appropriate, said Andrea Davis, Tampa Police Department spokesman.

The Tampa ordinance would have to be approved at two public hearings to become law.

Councilman Charlie Miranda said he has mixed feelings about supporting the reduced penalty for a drug still illegal under federal law.

“If they’re going to take it apart little by little, what’s to say you can’t use it all the time?” he said. “I was raised under a different system. When you did wrong, you pay for it.”

Additional reporting from TNS Staff


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Councilman Harry Cohen, who last week called for a report on how other cities are handling the issue, said the move will likely free up police resources and lower court and jail costs without legalizing the drug.

“This is about what is the appropriate penalty, not if there is going to be any penalty at all,” Cohen said.

Students who have been keeping up with the changes throughout the country as well as the state are looking to a future in which the drug is decriminalized.

“I’d like to see the state legislature reconsider the criminalization of weed, because there are so many resources that are being drained by penalizing users,” said Sofia Barrera, a junior studying anthropology. “At the end of the day, that’s taxpayers money that can be better spent. We can bring the arts back to schools, or improve the quality of textbooks with that money.”

Additional reporting from TNS Staff

In 2012, three employees of a Chicago bakery sued for what they said was their share of a $118 million jackpot from the Illinois State Lottery. They said they regularly took part in the betting pool that began the year before, but didn’t contribute to buy the winning pool ticket because the pool organizer failed to collect from them that week.

The Florida Lottery spokesperson Shelly Geteisen.

“We know there are pools that play and we know pools have won,” she said. “Sometimes we have group claims and sometimes, even through they play in a pool, they just send just one representative to come up and claim the winnings.”

Sales of Powerball tickets are soaring, she said Monday.

Between 6 and 7 p.m. Saturday, a couple of hours before the drawing for what was then a $900 million prize, Powerball tickets were flying out of the computers across Florida at a rate of 42,000 a minute, she said.

Monday morning, she said, 9,763 tickets for Wednesday’s Powerball drawing were being sold each minute.

“That’s high for a million dollar jackpot,” she said. “Closer we get to the drawing, that number will continue to rise.”

Monday, the estimated jackpot was bumped to $1.4 billion, but it likely would jump before the drawing at 10:59 p.m. Wednesday. The winner can opt for a lump sum payout of $868 million, of which taxes would take about 25 percent, Geteisen said.

The Powerball jackpot has rolled 19 times, since the Nov. 7 drawing and now it’s the biggest jackpot ever offered.

Since Powerball first was available to Florida residents in 2009, 10 from the Sunshine State have won jackpots, including Gloria McKenzie of Zephyrhills, who won $590.5 million in May 2013.

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In most cases, the decision whether to issue a citation is left to the discretion of the arresting officer. Buckhorn said juveniles found in possession would be directed to drug court and counseling.

And of the almost 1,000 cases of marijuana possession in Tampa in 2015, many were in conjunction with other charges so a citation may not be appropriate, said Andrea Davis, Tampa Police Department spokesperson.

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Florida’s 13,000 retail outlets put the state among the top-selling Powerball states, with sales that have exceeded more than $3.2 billion since 2009.
With racism and police brutality receiving mainstream attention, it seems as if history is repeating itself. Watching unarmed black citizens gunned down for minor offenses by white police officers and seeing zero justice being served, feels too similar to the days where “white only” signs lined the streets of every community. But in reality, history isn’t repeating itself. The justice system has always been flawed to the detriment of communities of color. To those who have never experienced systemic oppression, conversations of racism and police brutality are quite new. However, as an Afro-latina I can guarantee that many black Americans have had these kinds of conversations and have had their own experiences with systemic racism long before it received mainstream attention.

Why is it that decades after segregation was abolished and our government ruled that minorities must be treated with equality, racism still plagues this country? There are plenty of reasons as to why this is so, but the most basic reason has to do with the way conversations about racism are conducted. As a black person, I have to tiptoe around the certain buzzwords in order to keep the conversation civil with my white colleagues. Words like “white people,” “white supremacy” and “privilege” must be omitted, otherwise my rhetoric is mistaken for a personal attack against white people.

However, it’s important to understand that talking about white supremacy and the way it hurts people of color while simultaneously granting white people certain privileges, is not a personal attack against white people. I am not saying all white people are racist or that all white people live a life of luxury. Instead, I am saying that white supremacy benefits white people and allows for them to have certain privileges.

White supremacy allows for white and white passing people to overrepresented in media. White supremacy allowed a police officer to get away with the murder of a 12 year old black child. White supremacy allows for so many unarmed black citizens to be gunned down for little to no reason by the very people who are supposed to “serve and protect” them.

It’s an uncomfortable truth and it may be a tough pill to swallow, but the strength and history of white supremacy must be included in conversations about racism; pretending white supremacy doesn’t fuel the system that is racism would only be dishonest.

When I say “white supremacy systemically oppress black people,” the response from my white colleagues is almost always “But I’m white and I’m not racist.” I’m glad you have basic human decency to not oppress people based on their race, but that’s not relevant. This isn’t about you. You’re not racist! Great! But white supremacy still exists and it is still harmful. And yes, you still benefit from it. The same way I as a straight woman benefit from homophobia and transphobia. I may not harbor prejudice against gay and trans people, but I still have privileges that allow me to not face the issues they face.

If you’re a white person reading this, know that this is not a personal attack; it’s an honest discussion.

The Growl is a commentary on social justice issues facing college students. Erica Santiago is a staff writer for FIU SFUM, for more commentary email erica.santiago@fiusm.com

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Have something on your mind? Send your thoughts (400 words maximum) to opinion@fiusm.com or drop off our office at either GC 210 or WUC 124. With your letter, be sure to include your name, major, year, and copy of your student ID. The Beacon will only run one letter a month from any individual.

**The Beacon – 3 Thursday, January 14, 2016**

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BYE BYE SPACEBOY
Legend dary musician David Bowie dead at 69

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On Jan. 10 David Bowie - British singer, songwriter, actor, fashionista, and all-around personification of the word “cool” - passed away after a 18 month battle with liver cancer, leaving a vacuum in the world of music that could never possibly be filled.

Over the course of five decades and 20 plus albums Bowie helped to pioneer, reinvent or epitomise virtually every style of popular music from rock to soul to electronica, ceaselessly reinventing himself and his modes of expression to adapt to changing times, technology and trends while somehow managing not to lose his essential qualities as an artist.

No matter what kind of music you like, Bowie has something for you, from the glam-rock of “Ziggy Stardust,” to the crooning soul of “Young Americans,” to the avant garde instrumentalism of his Berlin-era albums like “Heroes,” to the drum & bass fueled anthems on “Earthling,” there is no sound or style that was the same after Bowie laid his long white fingers on it.

Even hip-hop owes something to the man (besides his notion of dressing like Mormons), from Freddie Mercury, “Under Pressure,” providing the driving sample on one of the best beats for one of the worst rap songs, Vanilla Ice’s “Ice Ice Baby.”

Before swag was swag, Bowie had it. Just look at his outfits and stage presence (that sneer, though!) Before Two Live Crew, Bowie was scaring the world with his overcharged sexuality. He paved the way for artists like Kanye West to be able to constantly reinvent themselves and change their image with each release.

Bowie was also the first white person to perform on Soul Train, making it a bit easier for the likes of the Beastie Boys and Eminem to borrow from a traditionally black style of music and actually be respected as peers, bridging a cultural gap that had seemed to have only grown with time.

Heavy Metal too is indebted to Bowie. ‘The Man Who Sold the World’ has some of the earliest, truly “hard-rock,” riffs recorded, and Bowie had shaved off his eyebrows and painted his face white long before Marilyn Manson crawled onto the scene.

But Bowie’s legacy is something more profound than the sounds he left behind - he made it okay to be weird, to take on a persona then discard it, to pull from all places, to sing about high-brow themes like literature and space travel while remaining pop-savvy, to walk in between definitions and preconceptions - he made it okay for a man like Prince to dress like a woman and a woman like Annie Lennox to dress like a man.

He was master of his own fate until the end, using his diagnosis as fuel to reinvent himself one last time on his final release, ‘Blackstar’ which came out on Jan. 8, on his 69th birthday and only two days before his death.

While we mourn the loss of an icon, let us celebrate the fact that in true Bowie fashion, he exhibited total creative control to the end and left us with one final statement and that this swan song is one of his mostly profoundly unique releases and a perfect final chord of sympathy of his life.

Bowie passed in peace. His work, complete, surrounded by his family, the space oddity returned to the ether, ashes to ashes. He is survived by his wife, Laura, his children, Duncan and Alexandria.

This week, we mourn for the world’s loss but as the planet reverberates with a million stereos playing “Life on Mars” let us earthing turn and face the strange changes together - to the starman waiting the sky.
Disney embraces Star Wars franchise, releases themed ‘Disney Infinity’ game

Disney has fully embraced the popular culture juggernaut everyone has at least heard of – the Star Wars franchise. This fact becomes even more apparent with new announcements about Star Wars in Disney parks and Disney characters decked out in Star Wars costumes.

Disney’s wildly popular video game franchise “Disney Infinity” traveled to a galaxy far, far away just last year with their third major update, promising a playset – essentially the equivalent to an actual video game with story modes containing six hours of gameplay – for “The Force Awakens.” Before we move on any further, please be aware there might be spoilers, this is a complete and honest review.

On the movie’s opening day, the playset was out, along with its corresponding characters: Rey and Finn, the protagonists, and Poe Dameron and Kylo Ren. Reminiscent of previously released Star Wars playsets, it’s mission heavy, requiring a lot of fighting and running up.

The interesting part is that much of the gameplay and missions don’t require characters to use the force, allowing a character like Rey to not be force sensitive in order to get the most out of her character. In fact, the story mode doesn’t actually give away any spoilers whatsoever. It follows the basic plot of “The Force Awakens” with Finn and Rey needing to escort BB-8 to the resistance in order to deliver a map with coordinates to Luke Skywalker.

Poe Dameron disappears after the TIE fighter crashes on Jakku, Rey and Finn bump into Han on his freighter with the Millennium Falcon, Rey is captured by the First Order and Finn goes to rescue her from Starkiller Base, which inevitably blows up. Crucial spoilers, like the identity of Kylo Ren, the killer plot twist that ensues because of his identity, and more importantly Rey’s big moment, all are omitted from this playset.

One could argue that it’s more of a general plot designed for those who already watched the movie and just want to have fun – and really that’s what it was. It was entertaining to play with these characters and to see the things they can do. It wasn’t necessary to relive the story, which is really the point of the Disney Infinity franchise.

The gameplay was smooth, while also fairly well complex in each character’s combo attacks.

Though lacking somewhat in diversity in their individual abilities, the playset makes up for it in a variety of activities that require certain characters to achieve three stars on replayable missions. The playset is now available, as well as all other separately sold components. In order to play it, you’ll need the Disney Infinity 3.0 game, which can be bought through starter packs or downloaded to the console.

Lifestyle Points is a weekly column covering various life interests. For questions or comments please email life@fiu.edu. For the complete review visit fiu.edu.

Table for Six encourages student discussion

The Pipeline

Photos Courtesy of

Disney has fully embraced the popular culture juggernaut everyone has at least heard of – the Star Wars franchise. This fact becomes even more apparent with new announcements about Star Wars in Disney parks and Disney characters decked out in Star Wars costumes.

The College of Law has put together a brand new way for fierce in-class discussions to continue in a more intensive setting – Table for Six.

It brings a select professor and five lucky students to share a table at one of the university’s starbucks to cafe.

The series of events began in the spring semester of 2015 and has continued since, once or twice a month during fall and spring.

According to Angelique Omega Fridman, the associate dean for students and assistant professor of legal skills and values at the university’s College of Law, the first event of the semester will be on Jan. 21 from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Starbucks in Mango.

“Is this a way for students to get to know their professors in an informal setting and expand on their in class discussions” said Fridman. These events were a suggestion from a College of Law alumna, and have been a big hit ever since.

“Are we really excited about these sort of events,” said Fridman, “they have been a success for both the students and the professors.”

An email is sent a few days in advance to a student contact list and the first five to respond will secure their spots at the Table for Six. Students who respond after the first five are chosen will be placed on a waiting list.

“We try to make the process as fair as possible,” said Fridman.

For more information contact the college of law.

For the full version of this story, visit fiu.edu.

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PETER HOLLAND
Contributing Writer

University of Alabama once again back on top as they defeated number one ranked University of Clemson 45-40. This will be the Crimson Tide’s fifth national championship victory under their head coach Nick Saban. If you follow both teams or college football in general, we all expected it to be a tough yet intriguing match up. Some experts would even compare this national championship game to the 2005 game when first ranked USC Trojans faced second ranked Texas Longhorns in the Rose Bowl on January 4, California. Clemson, known for their explosive offense led by their quarterback and heisman runner-up Deshaun Watson, was overwhelmed by even though they were underdog and ranked number one in the country. Alabama, however was the more complete team led by running back and reigning Heisman trophy winner Derrick Henry and their unstoppable front seven on defense.

The first half of the game was both teams had much a chess match between the two elite teams. Despite a struggling start by the Crimson Tide, they started to build momentum after Henry ran 58 yards for a touchdown eight minutes in the first quarter. The Tigers however, bounced back with two touchdowns passes by Watson to former walk-on Hunter Renfrow. The highlight of the game was in the second half when Clemson’s secondary forgot how to cover tight ends. Bama’s QB Jacob Coker and tailback with starting tight-end back OJ Howard with two wide open touchdowns passes. One was for 53 yards earlier in the third quarter, and the other touchdown pass was for 51 yards in the fourth quarter. Howard finished the game with five catches for 208 yards and two touchdowns, which is a school record. What was great about senior was that he never scored a touchdown in two years. What a way to end your final game with your first championship in two years. Alabama pretty much held the lead throughout the whole middle half of the game. Clemson kept fighting until the end, but the Crimson Tide closed the deal with one minute left in the fourth quarter when Henry scored on a one yard run for a touchdown. Henry finished the game with 36 carries for 158 yards and three touchdowns. Through, tough, up February 19th with a close with Alabama moved up to number one in the AP polls as the number one team. While tough for Head Coach Dabo Swinney and his Clemson Tigers just coming up short Monday night.

FOOTBALL

Divisional playoffs predictions

If you are an avid football fan like me, you’d know all the drama at the quarterback position in Denver between Peyton Manning and Brock Osweiler. Both have struggled throughout the season, but Manning will be getting the start and a chance at another Super Bowl run.

Denver’s saving grace this season has been its defense. The Broncos led the league in total defense during the regular season and are consistently putting pressure on opposing quarterbacks and starting the run game.

Their opposition, the Steelers were thought to be the dark horse for these playoffs. As the sixth seed, they wouldn’t host a single game, but their explosive offense is top-three in the league and quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is as good as it gets.

In the game against Cincinnati, the Steelers seemed to injure his shoulder, but is likely to play.

The fish in the middle of FIU’s football season is gone now, too, just like my best friend’s lunch. For four of its most productive bats from last season having graduated in Edwin Rios, Brian Portelli, Josh Anderson, and Julian Gaines.

To put this into perspective, the lowest batting average of the four aforementioned players belonged to Rios, who posted an average of .277 with 7 home runs in the spring; second most on the team, to Edwin Rios, who hit 18. As a team, the Panthers batted .277 last season, which, when coupled with a conference championship, doesn’t sound too shabby at all. The problem is that, in the fall, with a schedule consisting of intersquad games and exhibitions against other schools, the team only posted a .271 average, which doesn’t sound too promising for the spring.

The right side, most of Florida International’s pitching will be returning, with the exception of last season’s late blooming closer Danny Doppie, who took his talents to Lakeshore Drive when he was drafted by the Chicago White Sox organization. FIU also managed to scoop up a right-handed pitcher from his most hated rival’s rotation, in Cain Spangler. Spangler was a position player very recently, but managed to finish the fall with a 1.69 earned run average for FIU.

This season looks to be a tough one for FIU, with the rest of the conference looking to dethrone the defending Conference USA champs, and the Panthers not being a posed to defend their crown as one would hope. Head coach Tartle Thomas has roughly a month to get his rotation and batting order figured out, so the pressure is most definitely on the veteran coach. He’ll have to make some tough decisions, with a lot of new faces on the field and some standouts that, according to him, hasn’t seen anything like it in his 39 years in the game.

We’ll just have to sit around and speculate, though, up February 19th rolls around, and FIU travels to Ole Miss to start their season.

The Beacon – 6

fiusm.com

Thursday, January 14 2016

SPORTS

Alabama defeats No. 1 ranked Clemson

For the first time in the history of the NFL, all four road teams advanced past Wild Card. Saturday, Jan. 9, we saw the Kansas City Chiefs march into Houston and dominate the Texans at a 30-0 annihilation. The Pittsburgh Steelers managed to pull out an 18-16 victory at Cincinnati in a dirty, controversial ending later that night against the Bengals.

Sunday, Jan. 10, the Seattle Seahawks, joined by Lady Luck, defeated the Minnesota Vikings 10-9, on a shanked 27-yard field goal by Vikings’ kicker, Blair Walsh. Remember holders, line in. To wrap up the weekend, the nation saw a glimpse at the true Aaron Rodgers, as he led the Green Bay Packers to a 35-18 victory against the Washington Redskins.

These teams will find themselves in a familiar position in the Divisional Round of the playoffs playing on the road. The Chiefs and the New England Patriots will start the weekend playing at 4:35 p.m. while the Cardinals and the Packers will face off at 1 p.m. To finish the weekend playing at 4:35 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 16, the Seattle Seahawks will travel West and face off the Arizona Cardinals. These teams will find two things in common: similar offenses, including the explosive offense is top-three in the league and quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is as good as it gets.

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To put this into perspective, the lowest batting average of the four aforementioned players belonged to Rios, who posted an average of .277 with 7 home runs in the spring; second most on the team, to Edwin Rios, who hit 18. As a team, the Panthers batted .277 last season, which, when coupled with a conference championship, doesn’t sound too shabby at all. The problem is that, in the fall, with a schedule consisting of intersquad games and exhibitions against other schools, the team only posted a .271 average, which doesn’t sound too promising for the spring.

The right side, most of Florida International’s pitching will be returning, with the exception of last season’s late blooming closer Danny Doppie, who took his talents to Lakeshore Drive when he was drafted by the Chicago White Sox organization. FIU also managed to scoop up a right-handed pitcher from his most hated rival’s rotation, in Cain Spangler. Spangler was a position player very recently, but managed to finish the fall with a 1.69 earned run average for FIU.

This season looks to be a tough one for FIU, with the rest of the conference looking to dethrone the defending Conference USA champs, and the Panthers not being a poised to defend their crown as one would hope. Head coach Tartle Thomas has roughly a month to get his rotation and batting order figured out, so the pressure is most definitely on the veteran coach. He’ll have to make some tough decisions, with a lot of new faces on the field and some standouts that, according to him, hasn’t seen anything like it in his 39 years in the game.

We’ll just have to sit around and speculate, though, up February 19th rolls around, and FIU travels to Ole Miss to start their season.
Former student's transfer was 'right fit'

JASON DILL
The Bradenton Herald
TNS Staff

Huesman said his choice with his parents and Braden River coaches before the signing period to the targett to commit to the Mountaineers, which is now a Division I program playing in the Sun Belt Conference. Appalachian State had a quarterback for next year’s class in Zeb Noland, but he flipped to Iowa State during December. That’s the way for the Mountaineers to offer Huesman, who completed 67.8 percent of his passes during the regular season last fall.

“If their fan base is wild,” Huesman said. “It’s in Boone, North Carolina. So it’s a small community and everyone rallies behind the football team. They sell out games and the fans go nuts for them, so that’s a really good environment to play in.”

Huesman said Appalachian State is expecting him to compete for the backup quarterback job as an incoming freshman next season.

“That’s something Huesman, who tossed 14 touchdowns against just three interceptions during Braden River’s unbeaten regular season last fall, enjoys.

“If that’s what you want from me, then that’s exactly what I’m going to do,” Huesman said. “I’m a very, extremely competitive person.”

Appalachian State finished runner-up in the Sun Belt Conference this past year after going 11-2 on the season and 7-1 in conference play. For Huesman, though, switching from FIU wasn’t an easy choice.

“I was on board completely with FIU until, literally, last week when Appalachian State offered me,” Huesman said in a radio interview.

In addition to Huesman’s official visit on Jan. 22, the Mountaineers were meeting with Braden River teammate, tight end Ryan Neuzil, for an official visit on Jan. 23.

Dysfunctional Dolphins

JASON LIESER
The Palm Beach Post
TNS Staff

Dwyane Wade recognized something Monday night, an unfulfilled promise that was used to emanate from the Heat during their run of four straight NBA Finals trips. He saw it in the Warriors faces during game that was undeclared until the last few minutes, and he missed.

“I’ve been there before,” Wade said wistfully. “I know how it looks, I know how it feels and I can see that same look on them, just that same confident swoop. I see it and I’m like, ‘Man, we had that.’ When you don’t have it no more and you’re trying to get back to it, that’s the frustrating part about trying to compete for a championship. But they have it.”

Wade voiced a reality that permeated the Heat locker room after a game in which they did a lot right and still came up short, falling 111-103 to Golden State at Oracle Arena. They had the Warriors to their worst 3-point performance in nearly a month, reasonably contained reigning MVP Stephen Curry and played clean defense, but it was not enough.

It was a harsh confrontation for a team less than two years removed from the Big Three era. They used to do this to the rest of the league. Now they are plucking positives from an eight-point loss.

“They’re an elite basketball team,” coach Erik Spoelstra said. “It’s interesting seeing it on the other side.”

Miami (22-16) came in undeterred by the Warrior’s dominance and undisturbed by the edges of I-95, or Whiteside who sat out with tendinitis in his right knee. The Heat attacked from the onset, jumping to a 15-8 lead in the first six minutes and staying with Golden State (36-2) even after falling behind at the end of the first quarter.

The game was tied early in the third when the Warriors began testing Miami’s resolve. They pushed, pushed, pushed ahead 69-59, and the Heat quickly worked it back to a five-point game. The game centered around Golden State ran up 80-70 in the last two minutes of the third quarter, but Miami countered with seven straight points to close it.

The Heat were on the brink a few times in the fourth, but didn’t fall off the edge. Curry’s 3 with 5 minutes left gave Golden State its biggest lead of the game at 101-88, and Miami fought for a chance in a 3 by Luol Deng at the 2:35 mark.

“We had great poise today,” Chris Bosh said. “When they went on a run, we went right back at them. That’s how it has to be. Nobody got too frustrated or ratted.”

Golden State never wavered, against a superior opponent, as the Heat battled, the Warriors stayed steady.

They have the ultimate confidence in their game.”

Bosh said. “Damn, I miss that.”

It was still a six-point game, 107-101, when Curry ended it on a 3-pointer with 26.9 seconds remaining. He lost Tyron Johnson on a screen and got the shot through. The Buck should get there to help.

There were plenty of plays like that by a Warriors team that won 67 games and ruthless offense in the league. It was good for Miami to get an up-close view of this machine, yet unsettling to experience how overpowering and disorienting it can be.

“We got back defensively and we still made mistakes,” Bosh said. “They make the right plays every time. It’s a lot.

“You just have to know who you’re playing, man. They’re the champs. That’s how it works... Some mistakes you make, they capitalize and, damn, what do you want me to say on that one? I can’t say anything. He made 3 in my face. Damn, that was a hell of a pass. I didn’t even see it.”

Wade played through a shoulder injury to put up 20 points, a team high. Miami has averaged 11 assists and seven rebounds in the last three games. Bosh was solid with 15 points, 12 rebounds and four assists. Four other players scored at least 13.

With Whiteside out, Spoelstra went small and gave rookie Justin Winslow his first career start. He scored seven points and had three rebounds in 26 minutes.

Curry scored a game-high 31 points, but shot 11 for 27 to get there. He made 4 of 11 coming, and the rest of his team combined to go 3 for 12. Draymond Green put together 22 points, 12 rebounds and six assists, and Thompson added 17 points and seven rebounds as Golden State won its 36th straight home game.

It was one of the Heat’s better offensive games of the year to complement a respectable defensive effort. When that type of performance is insufficient, a team must acknowledge where it stands and how it can improve.

“Every team that came in this building left the same way that we’re leaving,” Wade said.
Florida manatees may lose ‘endangered’ species tag

JENNY STALETOVICH
The Miami Herald
TNS Staff

Federal wildlife managers want Florida’s manatee, the whiskered lumbering icon that came to represent the fight to save the state’s vulnerable wildlife, removed from the endangered species list.

In a news conference at the Miami Seaquarium on Thursday, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said that a population estimated at just over 6,000 should be reclassified as simply “threatened” despite a record number of deaths in recent years. They called the down-listing a positive move signaling a recovery and stressed that the change would not reduce protections already in place.

“Based on the best available scientific information, we believe the manatee is no longer in danger of extinction,” said Mike Oetker, the agency’s deputy regional director. “While we’re proposing this change in status, we recognize there are areas we have to do better.”

The decision comes under mounting pressure from developers and the boating industry who have long complained that slow speed zones and other protective measures are too strict. Last year, the conservative Pacific Legal Fund sued federal officials after petitioning for the removal in 2012, arguing that boat collisions and other threats have been largely reduced.

But conservationists say the decision directly contradicts the agency’s plan to save the manatees by not relying on population counts.

Between 2010 and 2013 the population went backwards and they’re not even talking about that,” said Pat Rose, executive director of the Save the Manatee Club. “To suggest the threats are controlled is just not the way to approach it.”

They also worry that the change will be echoed around the state, where endangered species and environmental causes are coming under increasing threat.

In a 2014 response to the proposed down-listing, the group raised concerns about the state’s willingness to protect manatees. State environmental enforcement cases fell by 68 percent in 2013, the Department of Environmental Protection’s budget and staff have been slashed and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission has fallen behind on management plans in key manatee habitats. Even federal wildlife officials ruled a 2007 recovery plan out dated but have yet to revise it.

According to that plan, success should not be determined by “how many manatees exist,” but by how well actions keep the gentle sea cows from harm. Between 2010 and 2013, more than 2,400 manatees were killed, or nearly half the population counted last year.

Critics of recovery efforts also have complained that annual aerial counts conducted by the state are inaccurate. In reaching their decision, wildlife officials used computer models to calculate the risk of extinction to manatees. They concluded over the next century, the odds were about 2.5 percent. However, those models included a factor in the recent deaths from the 2010 cold snap, a red tide event or an increasing number of boat fatalities in 2015 because the information was not available, said Jim Valade, the agency’s manatee recovery coordinator. They also stressed repeatedly that protective measures would remain in place and any new threats to manatee habitat would come under federal scrutiny.

“If they want to get a permit from us, we’re going to ask do you have a manatee protection plan,” said Larry Williams, the agency’s Florida supervisor.

Video: Miami Seawarium veterinarian explains reclassification of manatee

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the reclassification of the manatee from endangered to threatened.

Maya Rodriguez, a veterinarian at the Miami Seawarium, talks about the meaning behind the reclassification.

West Indian manatees, which are found in the U.S. along the southeast coast and Puerto Rico and were first protected at the turn of the century, have long served as a measure of how well booming Florida co-existed with its fragile wildlife. With no natural predators, their biggest threats came chiefly from human activity: Pioneers slaughtered them for hides and modern-day boaters ran them down by the hundreds.

Their numbers started to climb after the Save the Manatee Club, co-founded by Sen. Bob Graham and Jimmy Buffett in 1981, sued the state and federal government in 2000 to force better boating regulations and other measures. In 2007, after counts recorded more than 3,000 manatees, federal managers considered down-listing them but backed off.

The Pacific Legal Fund, a group that advocates for property rights and reduced government regulation, welcomed the announcement but criticized the agency for “silencing” their hands.

“It has taken eight years and two lawsuits to get federal officials to follow up on their own experts’ recommendation to reclassify the manatee,” attorney Christina Martin said in a statement. “We are glad to see that the manatee is doing well, but all taxpayers should demand that the government do much better, going forward, in following the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.”

But conservationists fear the agency is acting too hastily by not including recent deaths in models, which could indicate not enough is being done to protect warm water wintering habitats. Later this year, the U.S. Geological Survey is expected to complete a report that looks at whether the deaths affected the population, Valade said, which will be part of the agency’s final decision at the end of the year.

About 60 percent of the state’s manatees now winter around power plants. Some worry those habitats aren’t sustainable for the future and worry that without manatees to protect them, springs could also come under attack. They also worry the federal decision failed to consider impacts from climate change.

“The manatee is a tugboat species,” Rose said. “They pull and push along protections for the whole ecosystem.”

While federal officials insist existing rules won’t change, Rose said that without the endangered classification, protections could begin to erode. Already, he said legislation has been proposed in Brevard County to undermine the state’s Manatee Sanctuary Act.

State officials at the news conference, including Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioner Liesa Priddy, who has argued to lift protections for the Florida panther, say the state’s management plan remains “adaptive.”

“If things get better or worse, we can change on a case by case basis,” said Ernie Marks, the agency’s south region director.

Rose said the group may consider its own legal action, but first hopes to persuade state and federal officials to come up with a warm water contingency plan and enforce the Manatee Sanctuary Act, which has established low speed zones around the state.

Thurzday’s proposal is now open to public comment for 90 days. A public hearing will be held Feb. 20 in Orlando.