



# FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

### ATHLETICS WORKGROUP

Wednesday, November 18, 2009  
9:00 a.m.

Florida International University  
Modesto A. Maidique Campus  
Football Stadium Club  
Miami, FL 33199

#### MEMBERSHIP

Jorge L. Arrizurieta, *Chair*

Thomas Breslin

Albert Maury

Anthony Rionda

*Gerald Grant, FIU Foundation Board of Directors*

## AGENDA

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Call to Order and Chair's Remarks                          | Jorge L. Arrizurieta |
| 2. Approval of Minutes  | Jorge L. Arrizurieta |
| 3. Discussion/Information Items ( <i>No Action Required</i> ) |                      |
| 3.1 Athletics Overview  | Pete Garcia          |
| 3.2 Community Service Report                                  | Liz Augustin         |
| 3.3 Facilities Impact on the Community                        | Julie Berg           |
| 3.4 Pouring Rights Update                                     | Shawn Thorimbert     |
| 3.5 Naming Rights Update                                      | Jose Sotolongo       |
| 4. New Business ( <i>If Any</i> )                             | Jorge L. Arrizurieta |
| 5. Closing Remarks and Adjournment                            | Jorge L. Arrizurieta |

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**THE FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**Athletics Workgroup**  
November 18, 2009

**Subject: Athletics Workgroup Meeting Minutes, May 28, 2009**

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**Proposed Workgroup Action:**

Adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees' Athletics Workgroup held on May 28, 2009, attached to this Resolution as Exhibit "AW-Minutes," are hereby approved.

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**Exhibits/Supporting Documents:**

- Exhibit "AW-Minutes": May 28, 2009 Athletics Workgroup meeting minutes

**Facilitator/Presenter:**

- Workgroup Chair Jorge L. Arrizurieta

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**ATHLETICS WORKGROUP  
MINUTES  
28 MAY 2009**

**1. CALL TO ORDER & CHAIR'S REMARKS**

The Florida International University Board of Trustees' Athletics Workgroup meeting was called to order on Thursday, 28 May 2009, by Workgroup Chair Albert E. Dotson, Sr. at 8:39 a.m. in the University Park Campus, Football Stadium Club, Miami, Florida.

The following attendance was recorded:

***Present:***

Albert Dotson, *Chairperson*

Jorge L. Arrizurieta

Albert Maury

Trustees Thomas Breslin was also in attendance.

Workgroup Chair Dotson welcomed all Trustees, University faculty and staff to the meeting. He thanked University personnel for their continued leadership and hard work in supporting the missions of Athletics and the University.

Workgroup Chair Dotson announced that construction of the Field House at the FIU Stadium was nearly complete and would soon open its doors.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Workgroup Chair Dotson asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the 13 March 2009, Athletics Workgroup meeting. Hearing none, the Workgroup adopted the following:

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees' Athletics Workgroup held on 13 March 2009, attached to this Resolution as Exhibit "AW-Minutes," are hereby approved.

**3. ACTION ITEM**

**AW1. FIU Athletics Finance Corporation Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation and Amended Bylaws**

General Counsel Cristina Mendoza presented the FIU Athletics Finance Corporation Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation and Amended Bylaws for Workgroup review, noting that the proposed amendments included a conflict of interest policy, conformed to IRS requirements relating

to not-for-profit corporations as well as other revisions concerning the composition of the Board. Trustee Albert Maury requested that an F.I.U. Board of Trustees designee be appointed to the Athletics Finance Corporation Board of Directors. The Workgroup amended the Resolution to incorporate Trustee Maury's recommendation.

After discussion, the Workgroup recommended the following Resolution for Board approval:

WHEREAS, on December 5, 2006, the Florida International University Board of Trustees ("the BOT") approved the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the FIU Athletics Finance Corporation ("the Corporation") and designated the Corporation as a direct support organization of the University to undertake the financing of the construction of the FIU Football Stadium; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to conform to current IRS requirements relating to not-for-profit corporations and to make other revisions relating to the composition of the Board and the conduct of meetings in the best interest of the Corporation, on April 30, 2009, the Board of Directors of the Corporation approved the Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation attached hereto as Exhibit "A," and on May 19, 2009 approved the Amended Bylaws attached hereto as Exhibit "B;" and

WHEREAS, FIU Regulation FIU-1502 provides that amendments to the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws must be approved by the BOT prior to becoming effective;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the BOT as follows:

The BOT hereby (i) approves the Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation and Amended Bylaws as further amended of the Corporation, in the form attached as Exhibits "A" and "B" hereto.

#### **4. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS** *(No ACTION REQUIRED)*

##### **4.1. Compliance Update**

AD Pete Garcia provided an update on Athletics Compliance issues, noting that the Athletics department was continuing to address compliance issues for student athletes in areas such as academic probation, financial aid eligibility, and APR.

He thanked all involved University departments for their support and cooperation in ensuring academic compliance for student athletes and stated that Athletics remained committed to working with University departments in this campus-wide process.

##### **4.2. APR**

AD Garcia and APR Specialist Monique Garcia led the discussion on APR issues. AD Garcia stated that Athletics would continue to ensure their student-athletes achieve academic success at the University and reported that the NCAA commended FIU for its improvement in APR rates over the past two academic years.

AD Garcia added that, due to the success of the University's compliance with APR, the NCAA would be publishing a special article regarding the University's successful compliance process. AD Garcia thanked APR Specialist Monique Garcia and the APR Compliance team for their hard work and dedication to this important issue.

#### **4.3. Naming Rights Opportunities**

Associate AD for Major Gifts Jose Sotolongo led the discussion on Naming Rights Opportunities, stating that there were several opportunities for naming various athletic structures on the University's campus, such as the baseball and soccer stadiums, the fieldhouse and the football stadium. He noted that solicitations for various naming rights were currently underway.

#### **4.4. Pouring Rights**

Associate AD for External Operations Shawn Thorimbert led the discussion on pouring rights for the FIU Stadium, noting that the University was in the process of advertising a Request for Proposals to obtain an agreement for pouring rights that would best suit the Stadium and University's needs.

#### **4.5. Basketball Update**

AD Garcia presented the basketball update, stating that the Athletics Department was currently involved in discussions with other Universities to schedule future basketball games.

AD Garcia commented that he was pleased to report that ESPN network would be broadcasting live FIU Basketball games this coming season. He also stated that recently hired basketball coach Isiah Thomas was in the process of actively recruiting several promising junior college players for the team.

#### **4.6. Spring Sports Performance Update**

Senior Associate AD Julie Berg presented the Sports Performance Update to the Workgroup, providing an overview on the various accomplishments of FIU's student-athletes. She noted that there was a significant improvement overall in Spring sports, adding that women's tennis recently won the Sun Belt Conference for the fourth time in five years, and the program was currently ranked 29<sup>th</sup> in the country, while Belen Buendia was named Sun Belt Conference Freshman of the Year. Senior Associate AD Berg reported that Women's Volleyball Team member Yarimar Rosa was awarded the Sunbelt Conference title of Student-Athlete of the Year, while football quarterback Paul McCall received the Male Sporting Behavior Award of the Year. She also reported that women's track & field placed second in the women's Sun Belt conference, with two athletes set to compete in NCAA regional competitions. She added that Softball and Baseball programs were also experiencing significant improvements in performance for the current season.

**Exhibit "AW-Minutes"**

The Florida International University  
Board of Trustees  
Athletics Workgroup Meeting  
Minutes  
28 May 2009  
Page 4

DRAFT

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

Workgroup Chair Dotson presented the Fieldhouse Naming as a New Business Item to the Workgroup in honor of Trustee R. Kirk Landon, who made a substantial commitment to the construction and furnishing of the FIU Stadium Fieldhouse. General Counsel Cristina Mendoza noted that although the item did not have a formal resolution, the Workgroup would need to review the item so that it could be vetted by the Full Board at the next scheduled meeting. After discussion, the Workgroup approved to bring forth a Resolution to the Full Board requesting approval of the naming of the FIU Stadium Fieldhouse as the "R. Kirk Landon Fieldhouse."

**6. CLOSING REMARKS & ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business, the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees' Athletics Workgroup was adjourned on Thursday, 28 May 2009, at 11:05 a.m.

| <b><i>Trustee Requests</i></b>  | <b><i>Follow-up</i></b> | <b><i>Completion Date</i></b>  |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| <i>1. Trustee Dotson requested that student athletes Yarimar Rosa and Paul McCall be invited to the Full Board meeting to share their experiences with the Board.</i>                               | <i>Pete Garcia</i>      | <i>September 2009</i>  |
| <i>2. Trustee Dotson requested that Athletics determine the possibilities of organizing a trip to Ohio State University so that Ohio State alumni living in Miami can attend a basketball game.</i> | <i>Pete Garcia</i>      | <i>November 2009 trip to UNC</i>   |
| <i>3. Trustee Dotson requested Athletics should consider options for increasing community involvement with non-traditional sports.</i>  | <i>Pete Garcia</i>      | <i>Working with external relations to continue promoting fall sports volleyball and women's soccer</i> |
| <i>4. Trustee Maury requested that student-athletes be invited to Alumni Association Board of Director's meetings.</i>  | <i>Pete Garcia</i>      | <i>TBA</i>   |

*Exhibits: "AW-Minutes", "A" & "B"*

MG  
6.28.09



**THE FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**Athletics Workgroup**  
November 18, 2009

**Subject: Discussion/Information Items** *(No Action Required)*

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**Proposed Workgroup Action**

None. For discussion and information purposes only.

**Background Information**

|     |   |                         |
|-----|---|-------------------------|
| 3.1 | <i>Athletics Overview</i>                 | <i>Pete Garcia</i>      |
| 3.2 | <i>Community Service Report</i>           | <i>Liz Augustin</i>     |
| 3.3 | <i>Facilities Impact on the Community</i> | <i>Julie Berg</i>       |
| 3.4 | <i>Pouring Rights Update</i>              | <i>Shawn Thorimbert</i> |
| 3.5 | <i>Naming Rights Update</i>               | <i>Jose Sotolongo</i>   |

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**Exhibits/Supporting Documents:**

- Athletics' Media Coverage
- 2008 High School Football Game Schedule
- 2009 High School Football Game Schedule

**Facilitator/Presenter:**

- Pete Garcia
- Liz Augustin
- Julie Berg
- Shawn Thorimbert
- Jose Sotolongo

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LIVE  
CNN

## FIU SPORTS: HE'S THE BOSS

TALK TO RICK wars. Stop them & give money to fund insurance for all" S&P ▼ 2.60



# FieldTurf at Florida International University

## Multi-Purpose Venue Increases Value to University

By Carrie Bui



**S**ynthetic turf was the only option for Florida International University's multi-use stadium venue. When FIU in Miami decided to replace the existing synthetic turf surface in the football stadium, the university selected FieldTurf.

FieldTurf has increased the value of FIU's stadium, and by extension, the value to the university. Turf was the only option for FIU in order for the stadium and field to serve as a multi-purpose venue. "It serves as the practice facility and home venue for the FIU football team," said Anthony Mozzicato, FIU Stadium Manager. "In addition, it allows us to bring in outside events such as professional friendly soccer games."

The surface provides the university with the opportunity to host large-scale events such as the CONCACAF Gold Cup in July 2009. The CONCACAF Gold Cup is a championship soccer event for North and Central America and the Caribbean. FIU hosted two international soccer games, bringing in


more than 17,000 fans, nearly filling the stadium to capacity.

Feedback on FIU's new FieldTurf surface has been nothing but complimentary, including positive reviews from the soccer players, who tend to prefer grass over synthetic turf. Mozzicato explained, "Soccer players generally prefer grass over turf because they are constantly sliding on the floor for defensive tackles. The players feel that we have a top-of-the-line turf compared to other international soccer turf fields they have played on over the years."

FIU also recognized that synthetic turf was the most cost-effective option for them, especially when considering the maintenance a natural grass field would have required. "Because the stadium serves as a practice facility for our football team, turf was our only option as grass would have been difficult and labor intensive to maintain," Mozzicato said.

FieldTurf's reputation for superior customer service helped FIU make the decision to switch turf manufacturers. The company proved that reputation when FIU needed help removing paint from their field. FieldTurf customer service representatives promptly assisted them through the process.

"FieldTurf customer service has been great!" said Mozzicato. "We needed help with the removal of paint on the field. Unfortunately, the wrong type of paint for our conference logos was applied. FieldTurf representatives were incredibly helpful in assisting us with the removal of the paint. They talked our grounds guys through the process to ensure proper and safe removal without damaging the field or warranty."

With FieldTurf's outstanding reputation for durability and customer service, Florida International University knows that their new multi-purpose field will be a big asset for many years to come and stand up to repeated use at all levels of play. 



“We’ve identified those who deserve the opportunity, and that’s paid off because they’ve continued to improve. It fits with the model of the Academic Performance Program. It’s not about punishment but improvement.”

— Bill Regan, director of NCAA academic and membership affairs



#### DI ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

## Conditional APR waivers pay off

By Michelle Brutlag Hosick

**W**hen the latest Academic Progress Rate data were released in May, little attention was paid to the success of the conditional waiver process. About 85 percent of the schools granted conditional waivers of penalties last year were successful.

While the conditional waiver process may not be causing the turnaround (the threat of heavy penalties is also motivating), the opportunity certainly gives athletics departments a chance to prove they can help their student-athletes make the grade.

Institutions earning conditional waivers conduct comprehensive research to determine why APR points have been lost and then design and implement an im-

provement plan to address those issues. Waiver requests are generally denied for schools with subpar plans. But once a school receives a conditional waiver, it then has to meet the agreed-upon conditions, which generally are identified single-year APR benchmarks or other demonstrated academic improvement.

Most schools afforded the opportunity met those conditions and were able to avoid scholarship reductions or other serious penalties.

“It’s doing what it’s supposed to do,” said Bill Regan, NCAA director of academic and membership affairs. “We’ve identified those who deserve the opportunity, and that’s paid off because they’ve continued to improve. It fits with the model of the Aca-

demic Performance Program. It’s not about punishment but improvement.”

The incentive-based plans are helping athletics departments refocus how they recruit, examine their transfer policies, improve communication between academic staffs and coaching staffs and take time to identify what they need to do to improve.

Several schools, including FIU and Sacramento State, went through every single lost point for teams in jeopardy of severe APR penalties. They determined why each point was lost and what their schools could do to improve their programs and avoid similar losses in the future.

At Sacramento State, coaching changes played a role in low scores in football, but



other factors came into play. The state of California has a large and open community college system, which means Sacramento State (and other California institutions) often have more two-year transfer student-athletes, a demographic that historically underperforms academically. The school also allows up to a full semester of remediation credits for those who need them, which affects progress-toward-degree outcomes for those student-athletes.

"The APR has been a great tool in helping every institution identify specifically what the issues are on their campus.



**Pete Garcia**



**Monique Garcia**

The work we did has been repeated on a lot of campuses nationwide," said Bill Macriss, deputy athletics director at Sacramento State. "It helped us identify the challenges specific to our institution, which in the long term, five or 10 years, is going to have a positive effect on our ability to graduate student-athletes at a higher level."

FIU's Pete Garcia faced many challenges when he accepted the athletics director position in 2007. One of his first moves was to hire Monique Garcia to be the school's "APR specialist,"

the person he can turn to for input, advice and answers about the program's progress. Support from the president's office was also critical, the athletics director said, as was collaboration from faculty members, admissions staff and other university leaders in the improvement-planning process. Monique Garcia said the improvement plan is the "academic blueprint" the athletics program would use in building its future.

Ultimately, though, she said cooperation from the coaches was the linchpin in FIU's successful conditional waiver.

"You're only as good as your coaches. If the coaches don't have buy-in, it's a lost cause," she said. "It's constant communication. It's keeping track of every one of those kids and getting the entire university community on board. It's a team effort, and if you don't have that, you're not going to be able to reach your goals."

## Broad-based improvement

At Arizona, where the football and track and field teams faced APR penalties a few years ago, opening the lines of communication was key. Gretchen Bouton, Arizona's compliance coordinator, said she now meets weekly with coaches to educate them on the process

## CHECKLIST FOR A SUCCESSFUL CONDITIONAL WAIVER PROCESS

- Get buy-in from coaching staffs throughout the department. They are the best link to the student-athlete.
- Create a broad-based improvement plan specific to your institution with input from all over campus. Think big-picture change, not a quick fix.
- Include voices from faculty, admissions, athletics administration, coaching staffs and university administration in the improvement-plan process. Diversity of perspective is invaluable.
- Set realistic goals and detail how they will be reached.
- Open the lines of communication among coaches, academic support staff, compliance officials and the athletics director. Create an open environment that welcomes questions and suggestions.
- Remember that each case is reviewed individually without a predetermined outcome.
- Use the NCAA staff as a resource. Assistance is available to help with not only the waiver process but also constructing improvement plans.

and to monitor student-athlete progress. The school also shifted reporting lines for athletics academic advising outside the athletics department and implemented a system in which student-athletes earn points for various academic accomplishments.

"If there wasn't an APP, and we were just making these huge changes, I think we probably would have had resistance," Bouton said. "But the coaches, especially those in the sports with issues, we had 100 percent cooperation. It was like coming to a screeching halt and having their complete attention. They realized this wasn't going away, and there will be more penalties in the future if they don't change."

Many schools hire additional academic support personnel to work specifically with teams that are in danger of falling below APR benchmarks, as Cincinnati did when its men's basketball team went through a period of dramatic coaching changes and faced severe APP penalties. But with the coaching changes came opportunities.

"The turnover meant that a different type of student-athlete was being recruited to our institution," said Maggie McKinley, Cincinnati's assistant athletics director for compliance and student

services. "We changed our academic standards."

And the changes didn't stop with men's basketball. The school made broad-based improvements to help the entire program.

"The (conditional waiver) process really made us step back and look at how we can better serve the student-athlete and make them a little more successful," McKinley said. "We want them to get the message that they aren't just here to play basketball or run track or play football. It's a well-rounded experience."

## Not punitive enough?

Critics of the conditional waiver process say it's just another way to let institutions off the hook for the more severe penalties, but those who have been through the process disagree.



**Bill Bryant**

Several teams were granted conditional waivers with the 2006-07 APR, including Ohio State's men's basketball team and North Texas' football team, but failed to meet the conditions in 2007-08 and will take penalties.

"You get the waiver carrot, and then you've got to earn it," said Bill Bryant, special assistant to the general counsel at FIU. "I know how much work and effort went into this process from all of our people. So many people did so much with the idea that we were looking for temporary relief at the same time we were building a long-term solution. I resent anybody who thinks it's just an automatic thing."

Those who have been through the process successfully encourage schools in a similar position to think of the big picture and not get overwhelmed by the work necessary for a successful outcome. They advocate viewing the NCAA staff as a resource that can help with improvement-planning and waiver-submission efforts.

Schools might see fringe benefits from the process, as well. One of the best results for FIU, Bryant said, has been a change in how the rest of the campus community perceives student-athletes. Instead of seeing pampered jocks who skate by in classes because of their athletics prowess, the faculty and university administration see the academic standards student-athletes must meet.

"A whole lot of people on campus find out how difficult it is for student-athletes," Bryant said, "all the different rules they have that don't fit in with institutional bureaucracies, all the different effects of GPA and progress-toward-degree requirements. From that, the whole campus gets a much better appreciation of what it means to be a student-athlete."





## Yankees' 1-2 punch

■ Mark Teixeira and Alex Rodriguez step up for New York, 1C  
■ Angels know how to beat Yankees, 1C  
■ How Yankees and Angels match up, 6C

By Robert Deutsch, USA TODAY  
Bronx Bombers: Teixeira, Rodriguez.



NO. 1 IN THE



## A 'Wild' delight

Where the Wild Things Are is fierce and fun. ★★★ 1/2 movie review, 2D  
Spike Jonze's vision of film, 1D

Warner Bros. Pictures

Fri/Sat/Sun, October 16-18, 2009

## Newsline

News Money Sports Life



At home: Falcon Heene with his mother, Mayumi.

## Falcon never flew the coop

■ While USA watched wild balloon trek, 6-year-old was home, hiding in a box, 3A



## A sense of crisis builds in Pakistan

■ Wave of attacks by insurgents in the past 10 days account for more than 150 dead, 5A

## Federal contracting buoyed by stimulus

First report on government plan shows it helped firms create or save more than 30,000 jobs. 2A.

## Obama hails post-Katrina New Orleans

In first visit as president to flood-ravaged city, he vows to boost aid, continue rebuilding levees. 4A.

## Money: Windows 7 snappier, easier

The Microsoft operating system due out Oct. 22 surpasses Vista, its problem-prone predecessor. 1B.

## Sports: Friends, rival QBs face off

No. 2 Texas' McCoy and Oklahoma's Bradford, the reigning Heisman winner, play Saturday. 7C.

## Life: Holiday airfares down this year

Some tickets are an average of 12% cheaper, especially if you're flexible about when you fly. 1D.

## Weekend gas gauge

|                 | Regular | Mid     | Premium |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Current average | \$2.487 | \$2.641 | \$2.735 |
| Week ago        | \$2.481 | \$2.634 | \$2.728 |
| Year ago        | \$3.125 | \$3.259 | \$3.358 |

Source: AAA.com; arrows show direction of prices from previous day

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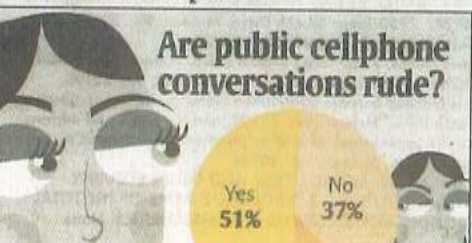


■ Test Drive Hear James R. Healey on the redone VW Golf  
■ Celebrity Heat Index Who's on top?

Diesel: Poised, pricey.

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## USA TODAY Snapshots®



## Battle in Big Easy: Saints vs. Giants

Giants' Eli Manning

■ Unbeaten teams square off in bid for NFC pecking order, 1C  
■ Weekend preview, 8-9C



## In Florida, Thomas' new hoops dream

Thinking big: Isiah Thomas, best known for leading the Detroit Pistons to two NBA titles as a player, says of his new job as Florida International University coach: "My goal is to one day build a top-25 program."

## After N.Y. debacle, he hopes to rewrite legacy

By Marlen Garcia  
USA TODAY

MIAMI — On the sun-soaked campus of Florida International University, Isiah Thomas is a world away from the troubles of his past. Here, he's the Hall of Fame basketball player who led the Detroit Pistons to NBA championships in 1989 and 1990 — the big name who, after a series of public missteps, has arrived to coach FIU's decidedly small-time basketball program. In the process, Thomas, 48, is seeking to build a sports legacy — and remove some of the tarnish from a career that in recent years has been as rough off the court as it was successful on it. Here, the bad times seem distant: his failed attempt at running the Continental Basketball Association, his 4½ years in the New York

Knicks' front office — which included battles with players, losing records and sexual harassment accusations against him — and last fall's accidental overdose of sleeping pills.

As FIU begins practice Saturday for the 2009-10 season, Thomas will set out to rebuild his reputation and rejuvenate a squad that went 13-20 last season. Outside the Sun Belt Conference, this was a little-known school — until Thomas was hired — that averaged 681 fans for home games last season.

## Cover story

"My goal is to one day build a top-25 program," he says in an interview with USA TODAY.

In Division I basketball, there are three tiers of schools: high-major, mid-major and low-major. FIU, which opened its doors in 1972, has never climbed out of the basement save for its lone NCAA tournament appearance in 1995.

"I like getting my hands dirty," Thomas says. "I've never taken an easy job. If you were to ap-

Please see COVER STORY next page ►

## Commander's letter tackles morale

## Message to troops offers glimpse into Afghan front

By Gregg Zoroya  
USA TODAY

WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan — A U.S. Army commander in Afghanistan has responded to concerns about low morale among his troops in a personal letter that assures them they are contributing to the "overall success of the mission" here.

As the Obama administration debates the military strategy in Afghanistan, the letter offers a rare glimpse about how that debate is playing out among troops on the

may not in his mind question why," Haight said. "But if you explain the why very, very clearly, he will not only accomplish the mission, but he will do the mission to a much higher standard."

"Morale is something that varies by person and circumstance," said Army Lt. Col. Mark Wright, a Pentagon spokesman. "But based on conversations with commanders in the field, morale across the force is generally pretty good."

The letter itself wasn't unusual, said Lt. Col. Paul Swiergosz, spokesman for 10th Mountain Division, based at Fort Drum, N.Y. Haight writes a letter every month in the unit's newsletter, Swiergosz said. He said the unit's soldiers remain focused on their mission.

Haight said he wrote the letter after a

## Wages head to 20-year tumble

## Private sector and retirees feel drag

By Dennis Cauchon and Paul Overberg  
USA TODAY

A bad economy and low inflation are starting to drag down wages for millions of everyday workers and freeze benefits for millions of retirees.

Average weekly wages have fallen 1.4% this year for private-sector workers through September, after adjusting for inflation, to \$616.11, a USA TODAY analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data found. If that trend holds, it will mark the biggest annual decline in real wages since 1991.

The bureau's data cover 82% of private-sector workers but exclude managers and some higher-paid professionals.

"Wages are usually the last thing to deteriorate in a recession," says economist Heidi Shierholz of the liberal Economic Policy Institute. "But it's happening now, and wages are probably going to be held down for a long time."

Colorado announced this week it will become the first state to lower its minimum wage since the federal minimum wage law was passed in 1938. The state will cut its rate by 4 cents to \$7.24 an hour Jan. 1, to reflect a drop in the Consumer Price Index.

Retirees are also feeling some pain. Social Security announced Thursday that it will not give cost-of-living increases to beneficiaries next year because prices have fallen in the past year.

Weekly wages have tumbled largely because employees are working fewer hours — an average of 30 per week — than at anytime since the government began tracking the data in 1964.

Hourly wages are stagnant or declining, too. After adjusting for inflation, average hourly wages have dipped a half-percent this year to \$18.67 an hour in September.

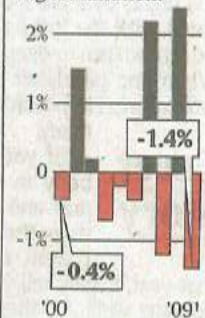
Prices measured by the CPI are down 1.8% from their peak in July 2008. For seven months, the CPI has declined from the same month a year earlier — the longest stretch since 1955.

That trend is upsetting a wide range of wage-and-benefit packages in this recession.

Nearly 80 million people have wages or benefits tied to changes in the Consumer Price Index. Those include contracts for 2 million unionized workers, food stamp payments and some child support checks. The Labor Department said

## Getting paid

Change in weekly wages for private workers after adjusting for inflation:



1 = Figure through September  
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics  
By Julie Snider, USA TODAY

## Scrambling on nest eggs

■ \$250 check stirs debate, 4A



spokesman Al Nash said the park had an average of 20 snowmobiles and 29 snowcoaches last winter.

Nash said the Park Service will keep the 318-snowmobile limit in place for Yellowstone over the next two winters as it crafts a permanent winter-use plan.

For years, disagreement over snowmobile usage has pitted the state of Wyoming and some tourist communities near the park against the National Park Service and environmental groups determined to reduce traffic they say can disturb wildlife and the area's tranquility.

Wyoming's congressional delegation issued a joint news release blasting the federal agency's decision.

"The snowmobile and snowcoach numbers weren't sufficient when the proposed rule came out in July, and they aren't sufficient now," said Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., the state's senior U.S. senator.

Patricia Dowd, Yellowstone program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association, called the Park Service decision a positive step.

"For the past 10 years, both the Park Service and the EPA have looked at noise and air quality and impacts to wildlife and impacts to other park visitors," Dowd said. "So we want the best experience for both park visitors and natural resources of the park."

hired directly by the federal government. The work ranging from small park repairs to multi-billion-dollar nuclear cleanups.

The impact varied widely from state to state. The reports, released by the administration's Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, identified almost 4,700 full-time jobs in Colorado, but fewer than six in Rhode Island, which had the nation's third-worst unemployment rate in August. In Michigan, which had the nation's highest unemployment rate, the contracts created or saved fewer than 400 full-time jobs.

Obama has said the stimulus will create or save 3.5 million jobs by the end

or save about 1 million jobs in its first seven months, a much needed lift in a very difficult period for our economy," he said.

Republicans, who have generally been critical of the stimulus, said the reports offer proof that it has done little to help the economy. "As the American people consider the disappointing results announced today, they are asking, where are the jobs?" said Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind.

The contractors' reports "don't answer the question of what the overall impact of the stimulus is on jobs in the economy," said University of Chicago economist Steven Davis. For example,

| State         | Full-time jobs |
|---------------|----------------|
| Rhode Island  | 5.93           |
| Connecticut   | 20.15          |
| New Hampshire | 22.07          |
| Vermont       | 27.98          |
| West Virginia | 31.02          |

Source: Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board

the recipient reports do not say whether those employed on stimulus projects would have had jobs anyway, he said.

The administration plans to release similar reports covering a much bigger chunk of the stimulus by the end of this month.

# Thomas takes on big rebuilding project in college coaching ranks

Continued from 1A

ply business terminology, I'm into start-ups and turnarounds. This is a program that is very young and really hasn't established itself. But it has a major opportunity."

He will try to do at FIU what he failed to do as president and later coach of the Knicks: win.

"My one regret about New York was they never got to see me at my best, because there was so much other stuff going on," he says.

While he was with the Knicks in September 2007, a federal jury determined that he sexually harassed former Knicks executive Anucha Browne Sanders, though Thomas was not held liable for any of the \$11.6 million in punitive damages awarded her. Madison Square Garden, which owns the Knicks, was held financially responsible for creating a hostile work environment and firing her unfairly. Thomas still vehemently denies wrongdoing.

The case took its toll. Thomas went on to coach the Knicks as they tied a franchise record with 59 losses, his last of two seasons as coach before being reassigned as a consultant.

In October 2008, he was hospitalized for several hours after accidentally overdosing on sleeping pills. Thomas says a year of sleepless nights over the lawsuit combined with the Knicks' struggles led him to turn to sleep medicine. When one pill didn't suffice, he took more. He doesn't say how many.

**Cover story**

"If you put anybody in that position and you send them through what I went through in that year, if they tell you they're sleeping well ... they're lying," he says.

His experience in New York — and the scrutiny he was under in the country's No. 1 media market — has left him more guarded.

"Ask me any tough question you can think of," Thomas says, but getting to him can be difficult. He hired a New York publicist to screen interview requests, and Thomas' interview with USA TODAY was conducted with FIU spokesman Richard Kelch standing a few feet away.

"We've had some bad experiences," Thomas says.

## 'You should take the job'

His mentors, Thomas says, encouraged him to take the plunge into the college game. The advisers included former Pistons coach Chuck Daly, who died from cancer about a month after Thomas took the FIU job in April.

He also turned to Bob Knight, the coach he played for at Indiana when the Hoosiers won the 1981 NCAA championship, as well as St. Joseph High School coach Gene Pingatore, whose team has a distinguished record in the Chicago suburb of Westchester, where Thomas once commuted 90 minutes each way by bus to escape his crime-ridden neighborhood on Chicago's West Side.

Longtime friend Mike Krzyzewski, the Duke and U.S. Olympic coach, gave moral support.

"I was getting great advice from all of them," Thomas says. "They were all saying, 'You should take the job.' They thought I would be good at it, and they thought the change in atmosphere would be good for me. They've all been right."

Pingatore says coaching at FIU,



**Tough days in New York:** Isiah Thomas heads to court during his 2007 trial, during which a federal jury found that he sexually harassed a former Knicks executive. He continues to deny wrongdoing.

where expectations have long been modest, allows Thomas to work without pressure. Thomas will be successful because "besides the fact that he'll be a great coach, his background will allow him to be a tremendous recruiter," Pingatore predicts.

Thomas can connect with teenagers who grew up destitute as he did, Pingatore says, and with those who have NBA dreams.

"NBA players, we don't have trouble getting in people's living rooms, but you still have to close the deal," says Hall of Famer Clyde Drexler, who spent two seasons coaching at his alma mater, Houston, before stepping down in 2000 to spend more time with his family.

Thomas has secured a commitment from highly regarded high school senior Dominique Ferguson of Hargrave Military Academy in Chatham, Va. He has searched the country for high-caliber players who in the past were out of FIU's reach.

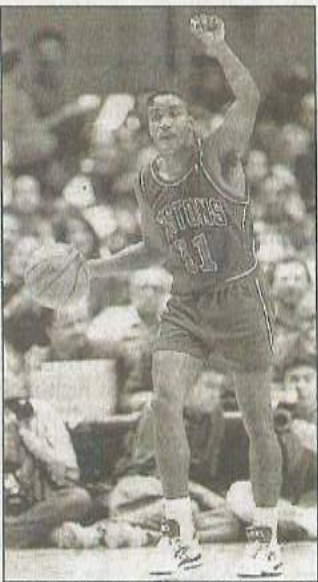
"He's proving he can recruit at the highest level and against the top teams in the country and win," says FIU athletics director Pete Garcia, a longtime friend to Thomas who, after initially bouncing ideas off Thomas on how to improve FIU's program, pursued him for the job.

Asked whether the sexual harassment suit gave him pause on hiring Thomas, Garcia says: "I was asked in a press conference, 'How much research did you do?' Well, we did some, but I didn't have to do as much because it was like, 'I'm hiring someone I know.'"

The hire was made under former FIU President Modesto A. Maidique; current President Mark Rosenberg says he hasn't questioned it.

"I understand that we did the due diligence" researching the lawsuit, he says. "We did the assessments and we didn't pause once we did the assessments. I'm satisfied my predecessors did the right thing for FIU. Now that I have met Mr. Thomas and understand what his passions and commitments are, I understand the fit and I feel very good."

Thomas, who signed a five-year deal worth \$1.25 million, wanted to show he didn't take this post for the money and donated his first year's pay (about \$250,000) to the school.



1992 photo by Robert Deutsch, USA TODAY

**On court:** Thomas' Pistons won NBA titles in 1989 and 1990.

Thomas has the school's compliance office next to his office and available on his phone's speed dial, should he have questions about the intricacies of NCAA rules, Garcia says.

FIU and Thomas attracted some negative publicity last summer by threatening to pull out of a tournament benefiting cancer research when organizers scheduled defending national champion North Carolina for FIU's opener. The school had been promised it would play Ohio State, Garcia says. Thomas had made plans for a reunion with friends from St. Joseph who would also be on hand to support Ohio State standout Evan Turner, a St. Joseph graduate like Thomas.

Thomas and Garcia say they were taken aback when North Carolina released its schedule with FIU on it. Garcia raised a fuss, but Thomas was depicted by some media outlets as a poor sport for complaining. The North Carolina game will be played.

## Often under fire

Thomas has been under fire since his playing days. His Pistons teams were celebrated as the Bad Boys of the NBA for their unrelenting physical play, which Thomas says was eventually wrongly cast by critics as "criminal behavior."

He was skewered for not shaking hands with Chicago Bulls star

Michael Jordan after a game in 1991, which Thomas says stunned him. He says a few years earlier, almost every Boston Celtics starter had walked off the court without extending a hand to him after a Pistons win.

"That's how the torch was passed to the Pistons," he says.

There's also the supposed freeze-out of Jordan at the 1985 NBA All-Star Game, in which Thomas supposedly led an effort to keep Jordan, then a rookie and an All-Star teammate, from getting shots.

There was no freeze-out, Thomas says, adding that Jordan's agent, David Falk, started the rumor. "I should take that back," he says. "Falk sure as hell fanned it."

Falk scoffs at that. "The Chicago media promoted it because it was painfully obvious," he says.

Thomas says he drew ire from players' agents while president of the NBA Players' Association because he led the drive to limit agent commissions to 4% on player contracts.

"I've saved Jordan more money by that one rule than Falk has ever saved him," he says.

Falk disagrees, saying he had been charging players less than 4% and that the setting of the rate allowed him to raise fees.

Those early controversies were a prelude to Thomas' problems as an executive. Yet some believe Thomas gets a bad rap for his actions in management.

Sam Smith, a writer who covered the NBA for 25 years for the *Chicago Tribune* and wrote the book *The Jordan Rules*, notes that Thomas' contemporaries, among them Jordan and the Celtics' Kevin McHale, have been unsuccessful in managing NBA teams.

But it's Thomas who "has a scarlet letter around him," Smith says. Aside from New York, Thomas doesn't understand why many view his off-the-court work as failures.

Thomas' first stint in management was as general manager and vice president of the Toronto Raptors in 1994. He left four years later after a group he led was unable to buy the team.

Thomas points out he signed key players such as Marcus Camby, Tracy McGrady and Vince Carter. Toronto made the Eastern Conference semifinals in 2001, losing in seven games to the Philadelphia 76ers. "How that got turned into a failure I don't know," he says.

He coached the Indiana Pacers from 2000 to 2003, making the

## The Isiah Thomas file

**Born:** Isiah Lord Thomas III, April 30, 1961, in Chicago.  
**Position, height:** Point guard, 6-1.  
**College:** Played two seasons at Indiana under coach Bob Knight. As a sophomore, led the Hoosiers to the NCAA title in 1981 with a 63-50 victory against North Carolina in Philadelphia. He led the team with 23 points in that game and was named the tournament's most outstanding player. He declared for the NBA draft shortly thereafter.  
**NBA:** Drafted second overall in 1981 by the Detroit Pistons. Spent his entire playing career with Detroit, including NBA titles in 1989 and 1990. Named Finals MVP in 1990. A 12-time All-Star and MVP of the game in 1984 and 1986. Retired in May 1994 after suffering an Achilles' injury a month before. Averaged 19.2 points and 9.3 assists in a 13-year career, setting franchise career records for points, assists, steals and games played.

**Post-playing career:** Became part of the ownership group and executive vice president for the expansion Toronto Raptors in 1994 and spent four years with the franchise. After a stint doing NBA commentary for NBC, bought the Continental Basketball Association and owned it from 1998-2000. Succeeded Larry Bird as coach of the NBA Indiana Pacers in 2000. Took them to the playoffs in all three of his seasons but was eliminated in the first round each time. Named New York Knicks president of basketball operations in December 2003 and was appointed head coach of the team in June 2006. Was 56-108 in two seasons before being reassigned in April 2008.  
**Honors:** Named one of the NBA's 50 best players of all time in 1996. Inducted into Basketball Hall of Fame in 2000. His No. 11 jersey has been retired by the Pistons.

USA TODAY research

playoffs three years in a row, but was fired after one-time rival Larry Bird became president. Had he been allowed to stay, Thomas believes he would have won an NBA championship.

"That one hurt because you basically got fired for personal reasons," he says. "That was a really special team."

To coach the Pacers, Thomas had to relinquish his ownership of the CBA, which he had from 1998 to 2000. The NBA ruled that dealings with both leagues would be a conflict of interest. Thomas tried to fight the NBA, but he ultimately put the CBA in a blind trust and it folded.

"It just died a natural death," he says.

Thomas was criticized heavily for failing to sell the league to the

NBA when he had the chance. The CBA since has been resurrected under new ownership but continues to struggle.

His willingness to dump the CBA for a chance to get back in the NBA raises questions about whether he could do it again, with FIU the casualty this time. What would Thomas do if a more attractive job opened?

Garcia isn't worried. He thinks Thomas wants to leave a legacy at FIU the way Knight did at Indiana and Krzyzewski has at Duke.

"They built those programs ... from nothing," Garcia says. "Isiah's legacy in the basketball world is still to be continued. He sees what he can do here, building from scratch. And this will be Isiah Thomas' program. There's no doubt about it."

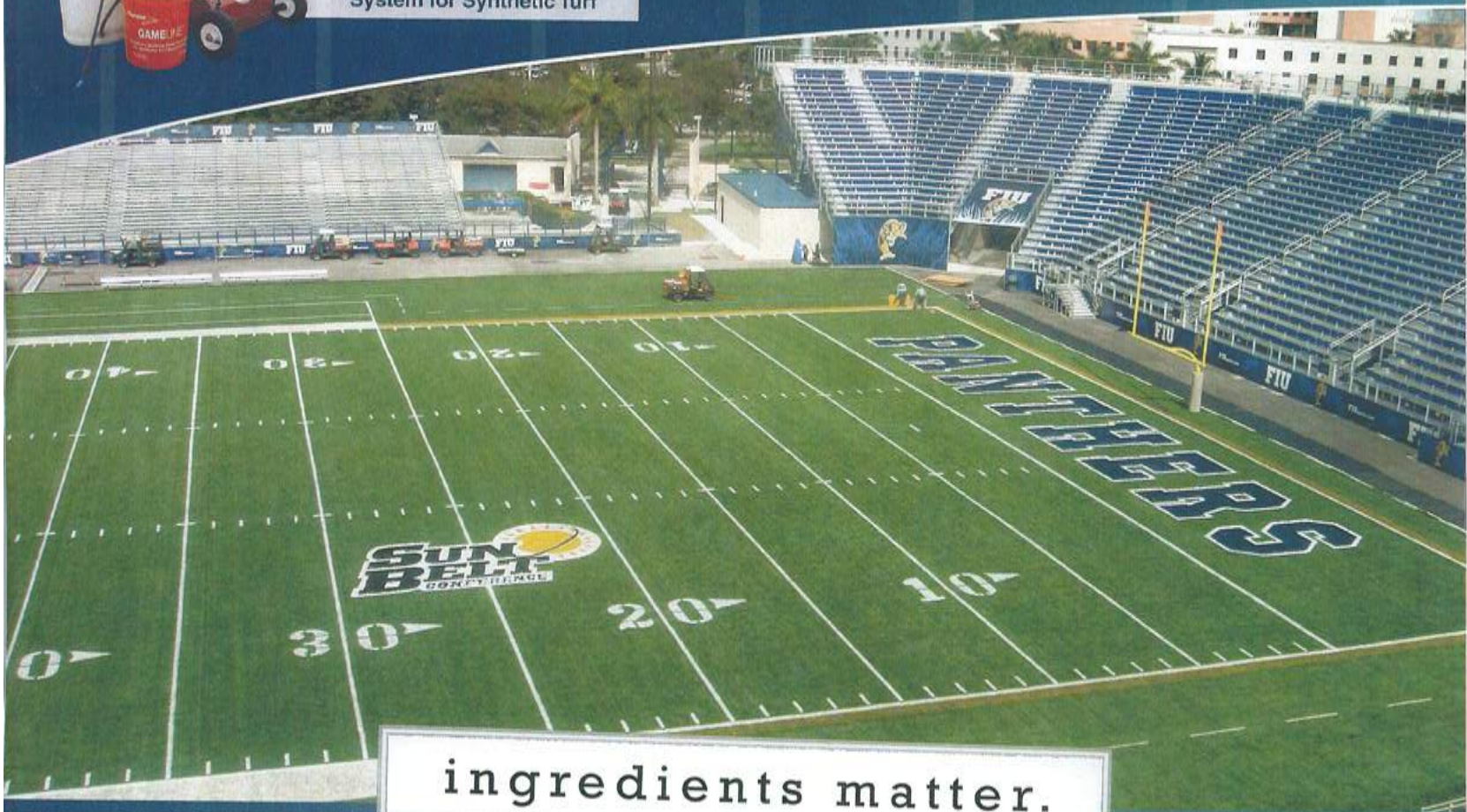
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|--|--------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------|
| 1<br><br>Daylight Savings<br>Time Ends | 2      | 3<br><br>Election Day   | 4                       | 5                          | 6<br><br>Disinfect and groom<br>synthetic turf fields<br>ACT Registration | 7        |
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| S            | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  | S             | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
| 4            | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 1             | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 11           | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 13            | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
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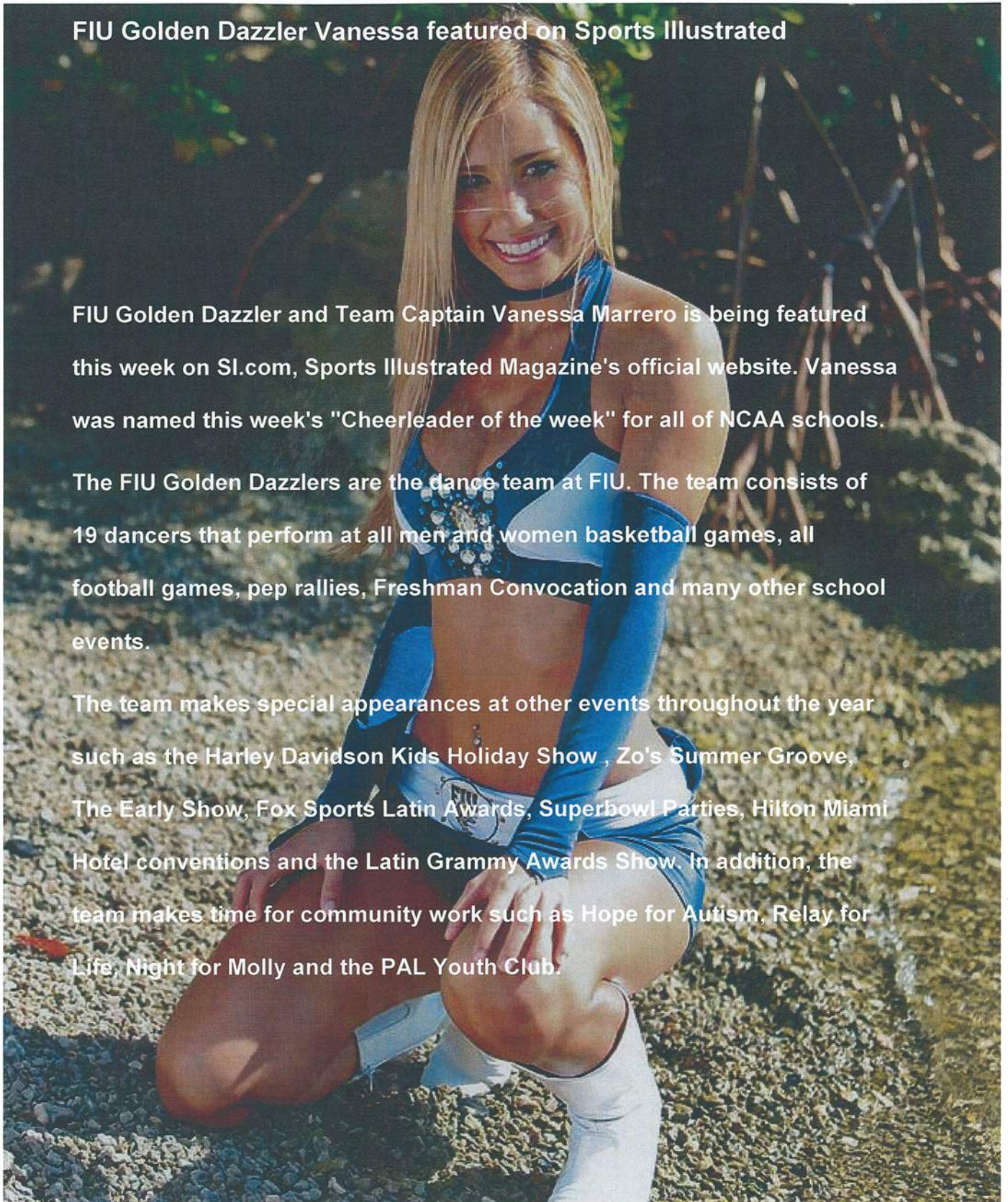


## FIU Golden Dazzler Vanessa featured on Sports Illustrated

FIU Golden Dazzler and Team Captain Vanessa Marrero is being featured this week on SI.com, Sports Illustrated Magazine's official website. Vanessa was named this week's "Cheerleader of the week" for all of NCAA schools.

The FIU Golden Dazzlers are the dance team at FIU. The team consists of 19 dancers that perform at all men and women basketball games, all football games, pep rallies, Freshman Convocation and many other school events.

The team makes special appearances at other events throughout the year such as the Harley Davidson Kids Holiday Show , Zo's Summer Groove, The Early Show, Fox Sports Latin Awards, Superbowl Parties, Hilton Miami Hotel conventions and the Latin Grammy Awards Show. In addition, the team makes time for community work such as Hope for Autism, Relay for Life, Night for Molly and the PAL Youth Club.



| <b>2008 HS Football Games Schedule</b><br><b>As of Monday, December 8th, 2008</b><br><b>Completed by Anthony Mozzicato, Stadium Manager</b> |   | Public: 12 Games<br>Playoff Games: 4 Games |
|---|---|--|
| Date  | Games                                     |  |
| 10/2/2008   | Braddock HS Game                          |  |
| 10/3/2008   | Miami Sunset HS Game                      |  |
| 10/10/2008  | Felix Verela HS Game                      |  |
| 10/16/2008  | Felix Verela HS Game                      |  |
| 10/17/2008  | Gulliver Prep. HS Game                    |  |
| 10/23/2008  | Palmetto HS Game                          |  |
| 10/24/2008  | Ferguson HS Game                          |  |
| 10/25/2008  | Miami Sunset HS Game                      |  |
| 10/30/2008  | Coral Park HS Game                        |  |
| 11/1/2008   | Killian HS Game                           |  |
| 11/6/2008   | Miami Sunset HS Game                      |  |
| 11/7/2008   | Palmetto HS Game                          |  |
| 11/21/2008  | Northwestern vs. Columbus HS Playoff Game |  |
| 11/28/2008  | Palmetto vs. Killian HS Playoff Game      |  |
| 11/29/2008  | Northwestern vs. Central HS Playoff Game  |  |
| 12/5/2008   | Northwestern vs. Killian HS Playoff Game  |  |

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| <b>2009 HS Football Games Schedule</b><br><b>As of Wednesday, November 4th, 2009</b><br><b>Completed by Anthony Mozzicato, Stadium Manager</b> |   | Public: 7 Games<br>Private: 1 Game<br>Potential Playoffs: 4 Games |
|--|---|---|
| Date   | Games   |   |
| 9/4/2009   | Palmetto vs. Columbus HS Game                           |   |
| 9/11/2009  | Belen vs. Columbus HS Game                              |   |
| 10/8/2009  | Northwestern vs. Central HS Game (ESPN 2 - National TV) |   |
| 10/9/2009  | Coral Gables vs. Columbus HS Game                       |   |
| 10/15/2009   | Coral Park vs. Braddock HS Game                         |   |
| 10/16/2009   | Northwestern vs. Columbus HS Game                       |   |
| 11/6/2009  | Palmetto vs. Killian HS Game                            |   |
| 11/12/2009   | Killian vs. Columbus HS Game                            |   |
| 11/20/2009   | Potential HS Playoff Game                               |   |
| 11/27/2009   | Potential HS Playoff Game                               |   |
| 12/4/2009  | Potential HS Playoff Game                               |   |
| 12/11/2009   | Potential HS Playoff Game                               |   |

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