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Charges expected soon in Cole bombing case

ADEN, Yemen (AP) - Yemeni investigators are ready to charge at least two people in the apparent terrorist attack on the USS Cole, a source said Sunday, six weeks after an explosion tore through the warship in Aden's harbor.

Charges are expected to be filed as soon as this week against the two suspects, the source said. They can be sentenced to death if convicted.

But any charges are unlikely to be the end of the probe: U.S. investigators suspect an international conspiracy was behind the bombing.

Seventeen U.S. sailors were killed and 39 more injured on Oct. 12, when two suicide bombers steered a small boat laden with explosives alongside the Cole and detonated it while the destroyer was refueling.

U.S. and Yemeni officials have said the attack appeared to be a carefully planned, well-financed operation, and the bomb materials were expertly prepared.

The Yemeni source close to the investigation would not identify the two men he described as main suspects about to be charged. But other sources have said authorities had detained six Yemeni men they believe were key accomplices - including one who was allegedly in charge of the operation in Yemen.

Adults who survived with Elian feel forgotten

MIAMI (AP) - The woman and her boy friend who survived the perilous and historic journey across the Florida Straits with Elian Gonzalez feel they have been abandoned by the rest of the world.

Ariane Horta said that after she and boyfriend Nivaldo Fernandez were besieged by reporters last November and asthma-influenced Elian's Miami relatives testified to testify in Washington on the boy's behalf in January, they haven't heard from any of them again.

"Everybody has forgotten us," Horta said. "We only see them (Elian's Miami relatives) on TV. They used us."

A year ago, Horta and Fernandez were photographed with politicians and interviewed on radio talk shows. But after the April 22 raid on the Little Havana home that took Elian from Miami, the couple has been virtually out of sight.

To make matters worse for Horta, Estefani, her 6-year-old daughter, is still in Cuba and she returns to the island to visit her. After the pair testified in Congress, the Cuban government painted them as immoral criminals: it said Fernandez was a pimp and Horta a prostitute.

"My mother and father had to read that," Horta told The Miami Herald in an interview. "My parents raised me right. I was a good girl from a good family."

Estefani almost made the trip a year ago, but Horta sent her back home at the last minute because she feared bad weather.

En route to Florida, the boat sank, drowning Elian's mother and 10 other people.

Horta is angry Elian has gotten so much publicity yet her daughter, who is the boy's same age and goes to the same elementary school in Cardenas, isn't spoken or written about.

She wants to bring Estefani to the United States to live with her, and she says the girl's father wouldn't object because he has remarried and begun a new life.

American officials have said they believe the operation was carried out by a network of small cells of two or three people, probably from one or more anti-American Islamic organizations, including Yemen's Islamic Jihad, Egypt's al-Gamaa al-Islamiya and Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden's followers.


Officials have suggested that the Cole attackers were from various Arab countries, including Yemen, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and that they may be operating from both Afghanistan and Yemen.
Anti-smoking program gets $35,000 grant

By Kimberly Scott
Alligator Writer

With $35,000 in its pockets, a UF program primed to
fight tobacco is looking for new people and ideas.

Last month, Student Tobacco Reform Initiative:
Knowledge for Eternity made UF one of 13 Florida
colleges and universities to receive a state grant for
anti-smoking advertisements, promotions and activi-
ties. The funds came from Florida’s share of the re-
cent settlements by the tobacco industry and are to
be used by college students to discourage tobacco
use among their peers.

The $35,000 is the budget for the Spring, at which
time the use will be evaluated and the grant is renew-
able.

Joanne Auth is one of two health educators working
with the program. She said STRIKE is intended to be
run by students and that people are needed to help.

“We fully expect the grant to be renewed,” Auth said.
“There are literally millions of dollars set aside just for
this purpose.”

STRIKE’s strategy uses a 1999 survey by the Cam-
pus Alcohol and Drug Resource Center to see which
students are statistically more likely to use tobacco.

The survey showed Hispanics, freshmen and stu-
dents affiliated with fraternities or sororities are most
likely to smoke while blacks are least likely to smoke.

Certain subgroups of our students do smoke as
much as others,” Auth said. “We need to bottle that
cultural difference and persuade other students to
accept it.”

STRIKE is affiliated with TRUTH and is an extension
of Students Working Against Tobacco, a program de-
dsigned to encourage middle and high school students
not to use tobacco.

UF sophomore Heather Young worked with SWAT
in high school and said STRIKE’s biggest goal is to
change university policies and one day have a
smoke-free campus.

“It’s a really big goal,” Young said. “It’s not going to
happen overnight. We need to take little baby steps to
get there, and we need ideas.”

STRIKE also aims to increase awareness of tobacco’s
harmful effects, to help students quit smoking and to
get more students involved in the effort.

Sophomore Jenny Weigle, who worked with SWAT
in high school, said STRIKE’s biggest challenge will be
getting students who are legally allowed to buy to-
bacco to change their attitudes toward cigarettes.

“We have to find an angle that will make them say
‘Maybe I don’t really want to do this,’” she said.

Why, then, is UF continually ranked a
top party school on the nationwide sur-
veys?

Those surveys are conducted by the
Harvard School of Public Health and are
not scientific studies, he said. Kennard
also said that often the studies are not ac-
curate.

Kennard said Florida actually has a
lower national binge drinking rate than
many other schools around the country.

“The national binge drinking norm is
44 percent, and here at UF, we’re at 46
percent,” Kennard said. “So we’re only
two percentage points higher than the national
norm. There are some colleges that go up
as high as a 70 percent national binge
drinking rate.”

While UF may not have the highest al-
cohol statistics, it remains an issue of im-
portance.

Joe Sharkey, spokesman for the Uni-
versity Police, said that since Jan. 1, 1999
students have been arrested and charged
with driving under the influence. The
first weekend of November, Sharkey said
two DUls were issued. One was given to a
UF student.

However, Sharkey said UPD takes ac-
tions to make people aware of the dan-
gers of alcohol and help reduce the num-
ber of students who drink and drive. Every
semester, UPD holds classes and
seminars to educate people about alco-
hol use and drunk driving.

“We have an entire Community Ser-
division devoted entirely to just
that,” Sharkey said. “They do other
things, but [education] is a large part of
what they do.”

One thing UPD does is talk to students
at Preview about alcohol’s risks, Sharkey
said. UPD also visits sororities and frater-
nities to discuss the dangers of alcohol
and drunk driving, he said.

Kennard also said the alcohol and drug
center is helping make students aware of
the dangers of alcohol. He said the cen-
ter’s new campaign, Social Norms, is try-
ing to correct the misconception that not
all UF students are drinking.

Students need to become aware of al-
cohol’s dangers, especially concerning
young adults, Kennard said.

“Statistics show that if you are injured
or killed as a young adult, it will most
likely be alcohol related,” he said.

Kennard said UF is taking a tougher po-
position toward alcohol than in years past.
For instance, he said the Gainesville Po-
lice’s Party Patrol and the no re-entry pol-
icy at football games are aimed at curb-
ing alcohol use.

“It’s gotten harder over the years, and I
think that the University of Florida is go-

ting to take a harder stance to it,” Kennard
said. “They don’t want UF students en-
dangering themselves or endangering
other students.”

Crafting a tradition

(Above) Liz Gianna helps friends pack crafts from the
Ocala-based company, C&D Gifts, on Sunday after the craft
show at the O’Connell Center. They have taken part in the
show for the last seven years and plan to return next year.

(Left) The craft show, located at the O’Connell Center, has
become a Thanksgiving tradition for Gainesville residents.
The O’Connell Center has hosted the event for four straight
years, though it has been on campus for 29 years.

By Laura Howell
Alligator Writer

The severity of partying, alcohol use
and drunk driving at UF is exaggerated,
university officials said.

“Yes, there is a problem with alcohol
here at the University of Florida, but it’s
not this really big problem everybody
thinks it is,” said Jeremy Kennard, health
educator at the UF Student Health Care
Center.

According to a 1999 survey by the UF
Campus Alcohol and Drug Resource
Center, more than 60 percent of UF
students have four or fewer drinks a week.
In addition, more than one-quarter of those
students surveyed said they do not have
any drinks during the week.

“According to the survey that we’ve
done, one-fifth of our student
population is drinking 60 percent of the alcohol on
campus,” Kennard said. “So most people
either don’t drink or drink in moderation.”

Christina Stuart / Alligator Staff

UF drinking problems exaggerated, officials say

The Craft Show has
become a tradition at
the O’Connell Center
in Gainesville.

Christina Stuart / Alligator Staff

The craft show, located at the O’Connell Center, has become a Thanksgiving tradition for Gainesville residents. The O’Connell Center has hosted the event for four straight years, though it has been on campus for 29 years.
Animal Rights Film Festival comes to Reitz Union

By Teresa Wood
Alligator Staff

A UF organization and a local group are teaming up this week to bring the Animal Rights Film Festival to the Reitz Union.

Student Peace Action, a UF organization, and Vegetarian Events, a nonprofit organization from Gainesville with a mission to convert others to the vegetarian lifestyle, selected three short films to show, said Chas Chiado, Vegetarian Events director.

Chiado said he attended a conference and saw the movies.

"The way it touched peoples' hearts, I thought, 'Well, I've got to show this around Gainesville, especially to students," he said.

The first movie, "The Witness," is about a construction contractor who realizes the injustice of animal exploitation despite how he was raised. It runs 43 minutes long.

"Food Without Fear" is about the meat and leather industry in India. "Skin Trade" runs 15 minutes long.

Chiado said the festival will be an opportunity for people to learn about vegetarianism and the "atrocities" animals suffer so humans can use animals for consumption, research and entertainment purposes.

The festival runs Monday, Wednesday and Friday in Room 875 of the Reitz Union.

"The Witness" will be shown at 10 a.m., 12 p.m., 2 p.m., 4 p.m. "Food Without Fear" can be viewed at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. "Skin Trade" will play at 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. All shows are free.

Teresa Wood can be reached at twood@alligator.org

911 Report

Miami women charged with forgery

Two Miami residents were charged with multiple counts of fraud and forgery on Saturday after using fake ID cards and checks to buy items at local stores.

Betty Youmans, 40, and Kendrell Jackson, 20, have been charged with three counts of uttering a forged instrument and forgery and false identification and resisting arrest without violence, a jail report states.

The women went to Best Buy, 3750 SW Archer Road, Wal-Mart, 3570 SW Archer Road, and Target, 3970 SW Archer Road, and used fake ID cards from Mississippi and checks to buy items. The women were stopped after employees at the stores called the Alachua County Sheriff's Office.

A deputy also found white powder in the women's car that tested positive for cocaine, the report stated.

Both women confessed, the report stated. The women were taken to the Alachua County jail.

Man charged with growing marijuana

A Gainesville man was arrested on Saturday after police found he was growing marijuana in his car.

A deputy also found white powder in the women's car that tested positive for cocaine, the report stated.

Both women confessed, the report stated. The women were taken to the Alachua County jail.

Men charged with armed robbery

Two Gainesville men were arrested and charged with armed robbery on Friday night after allegedly pointing a knife at a man walking on West University Avenue and asking for his money.

Bernard Carston, 25, of 835 E. University Ave., and Steven Lemieux, 45, who is listed as homeless on a jail report, approached John C. Taylor while he was walking along University Avenue and asked him for a cigarette, according to the report.

The men started talking, and Carston pulled out a knife. He got away with almost $70 in cash, the report states.

GPD officers found the men later that night. The men are being held in the Alachua County jail.

— Sarah Myrick

Final stretch

Vehicles coming from Interstate 75 make their way down Newberry Road on Sunday evening after the Thanksgiving weekend.
GOP lawyers argue for inclusion of overseas ballots

By Joe Black
Alligator Writer

TALLAHASSEE - Republican lawyers began contesting the vote counts for military overseas ballots in five Florida counties this weekend in an effort to increase the narrow lead Republican candidate George W. Bush holds over Democratic candidate Al Gore in the race for Florida's pivotal 25 electoral votes.

In the lawsuits filed in Hillsborough, Okaloosa, Orange, Pasco and Polk counties, Republicans claim the reasons the ballots were thrown out by canvassing boards were beyond the control of voters, so the ballots should be included in the state's final totals.

Those totals - certified by Secretary of State Katherine Harris two hours after the Sunday deadline - put Bush as the winner with 2,912,790 to Gore's 2,912,253 - a difference of 537 votes.

The lawsuits stem from a similar case filed in a Leon County circuit court last week that asked the court to mandate 14 counties to include what Republicans say are more than 500 disqualified votes.

The complaint filed stated, "[Canvassing committees] wrongly disqualified and re-fused to count hundreds of overseas ballots.

Bush lawyer Fred Bartlit Jr. said Saturday that counties were taking another look at the ballots, prompting Bush to move the lawsuit from circuit court to the counties.

Bush picked up 55 additional votes in seven counties that decided to accept some of the previously rejected ballots following the litigation in circuit court. Several other counties in the state have also decided to schedule meetings to discuss the ballots again.

Previously, canvassing boards threw out ballots that had no postmark, a smudged or illegible postmark, a U.S. postmark, no hand-written date, no record that a ballot had been asked for or the signature on the ballot was not identical to the signature on the ballot request.

Republicans claimed in their complaint that overriding federal law is inconsistent about ballots requiring a postmark. Bartlit argued in circuit court that the counties certify ballots they rejected last week, arguing he would like that "another look be taken."

However, Circuit Judge Ralph Smith said without any proof that any of these canvassing boards have not complied with the state law concerning ballot validation, "this court is very hard-pressed to grant any relief."

Smith had agreed to not make any ruling on the ballots until after briefs were filed on Saturday.

The complaint last week also argued before Smith that Democrats worked hard following the Nov. 7 election to find reasons to disqualify the ballots since they might be prone to go more in favor of Bush. The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Joe Black can be reached at jblack@alligator.org

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ELECTION

tion results from the polls that had closed only hours before.

Halfway through the meeting, Kamm came in with an announcement - Gore had taken Florida.

Media networks around the nation had Media networks around the nation had announced Gore was the winner in Florida but quickly rescinded hours later.

But then at 3 a.m., as the Florida vote began to fall more in favor of Bush, Gore made a concession call. The call was quickly retracted. Statewide recounts began leaving the state without a winner.

The Gore campaign lobbied for recounts in Miami-Dade, Broward, Volusia and Palm Beach counties the next day. As the Bush lead dropped after the initial recount, the Democrats asked Harris to hold off on her certification of the final ballot until manual recounts could be completed.

Bush lawyers struck hard against the Gore camp's request by filing an injunction to block all manual recounts. In Duval County, which Bush won, election officials say about 26,000 ballots were disqualified due to voter error. The mechanical recount had shown the Republican lead by 280 votes in Florida.

Palm Beach and Volusia counties quickly began manual recounts on a total of 609,018 votes. The Palm Beach recount was stopped because of problems with hand-counting.

Palm Beach and Volusia counties quickly began manual recounts on a total of 609,018 votes. The Palm Beach recount was stopped because of problems with hand-counting.

On the eve of the secretary of state's deadline, Miami-Dade County stopped recounting its ballots, partly because Republican protestors stormed the courthouse when the board was meeting.

This decision to begin manual recounts was appealed and ruled in favor of the Democrats by the Florida Supreme Court, and Harris was barred from certifying the totals until Sunday.

At 1105 W. University Ave. by noon someone will be sworn in as the new president - but who it is will depend on future legal maneuvering.

The legal battles need to be ruled on and completed by Dec. 12 when Florida must settle its electoral slate. If no slate is set, then Florida may not be included, leaving Gore the presidency with his lead over Bush in the electoral vote.

The electoral slates will then meet in their respective state capitals to vote. These ballots will not be open until the new Congress convenes on Jan. 6. Florida, unlike some states, does not allow electors to switch their vote to who they are pledged by the state's popular vote.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Joe Black can be reached at jblack@alligator.org

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Donation must be made at the Alligator Office, 1105 W. University Ave. by Dec. 6, 2000
$5.50 Classified Advertising coupon will be issued at the time of donation. Coupon redeemable through July 31, 2001
Classified Advertising Department Hours - Monday-Friday 8am-4pm
Lessons learned

So, Johnny, you want to be the president when you grow up? Well, you are only six, there are still a few lessons you need to learn:

Be born to a rich and/or influential family. Be it Daddy Bush or Daddy Gore, either one can introduce you to everyone you need to know. From the time you are able to walk, you can begin campaigning. Daddy and his friends can get you into the good schools, even without the grades, and set you up with their friends in Congress for some presubpeensence assistance. Sometimes, however, you may even get one of daddy’s friends to help you out by being your running mate or getting you a slap on the wrist for driving under the influence.

Change your views regularly. If you start this when you are young, the public can only think of you as “flexible” instead of crucifying you as a “waffler” in the dash to the middle after the primaries. Like the Backstreet Boys now, like 98 Degrees next week – it is easy to do.

Be good looking. Kennedy-Nixon – ‘nuff said. Oh, yeah, you have never seen them. Make it Britney Spears-the Grinch.

Learn how to kiss. The previous bit of advice should help with this, and there are always beautiful people out there willing to help – before and after you are elected. Then you get extra points on this lesson if you can integrate a cigar in some fashion.

Make good friends with a high-priced lawyer. And we are talking really high priced, downtown New York, ritzy-glitzy lawyers, not a former student body president. Make friends with him in elementary school and maybe then he will not charge you an arm and a leg during the post-election scramble. If you’re his “best friend,” he may not even charge you at all. Then again, maybe not.

Forget that whole “try harder” mantra. If you can’t get things done in time, follow Miami-Dade County’s lead and just give up. No more college and no more deadlines. You will always have someone else to blame it on.

Marry your siblings off to the governors of other states. A little help never hurt, right? Maybe you can even get those family members to put a little partisan pressure on the chief state elections officials. Novel idea, we know, but it might work.

Join the National Rifle Association. There is no reason to fight, now, is there? This way you get the best of both worlds – peace and an honorable discharge. Influential dudes help with this one too.

Learn the difference between the Supreme Courts. It would be really embarrassing to addresses Chief (U.S.) Justice William Rehnquist as Chief (U.S.) Justice, Hubert H. Humphrey in election campaigns, while begging for more votes. It might, you say, cost you the election. It also does not hurt to have daddy appoint one or two.

Require the country to vote on 1960s Volotomatic machines. The machines are notorious for being unreliable and need to be replaced with more accurate optical systems. By the time you grow up, however, it is likely they will still be used in Palm Beach County.

Love the Electoral College, love the Electoral College. Forget about having 300,000 fewer votes than your opponent; the Electoral College sometimes comes through to help you win, even if you did not.

Have a family member in a high spot in a major news network. A cousin, a wife, a great uncle, whatever. If they can give you up to the minute statistics and call a state early for you, then they deserve to be in your family. Just keep it quiet so it does not embarrass the network or your campaign... oops.

Ignore everything this election has taught you about politics. Instead, take a look at Martin Sheen as President Josiah Bartlet in NBC’s “The West Wing” and learn from television – his character is more presidential than either of the two current bozos.

Time to change Electoral College

In 1876, the problem of how to properly elect a president, along with other matters of equal importance, had frustrated the framers of the Constitution for many months.

The framers had considered, among other things, a direct popular election. This would support the idea of government by the people, they thought, but it would also pose a problem.

In their minds, the lack of information flow from one area to another would result in mass confusion during election time.

Instead of one candidate accumulating a majority of the popular vote, there would be a large number of candidates possessing a small minority of the popular vote, with the candidate being supported by the most populous area winning the election.

Without the backing of a majority of the nation, a new government could not stand for very long. The framers, therefore, opted for what we know as the Electoral College.

The system of election was a milestone in 18th century politics and limitations. We are on the brink of the 21st century, and yet, we still insist on electing the president in the same manner that we did 213 years ago.

“What’s wrong with this?” you might be asking yourself. “It seems to be working fine.” The truth is, it’s not.

This election is not the first time that a flaw in the Electoral College has shown its ugly face to the American people.

The first incident occurred relatively early in the history of the United States. During the election of 1800, which put Thomas Jefferson and John Adams against one another for the presidency, the first major flaw in the current electoral system was discovered.

The Democratic-Republicans, Jefferson’s party, had a substantial lead and had obviously won the presidency, but the problem happened within the winning party.

Jefferson and his running mate, Aaron Burr, due to a flaw in the Constitution’s explanation of the electoral system, received an equal number of votes for president. The vote, subsequently, was taken to the House of Representatives where Jefferson was elected president.

In 1877, the Democratic governor of New York, Samuel Tilden, ran for president against Republican nominee Rutherford Hayes. When the electoral votes were counted, Tilden had received 184 votes, while Hayes possessed 165.

Neither of these occurrences should have been allowed to happen and they should definitely not be allowed to happen again.

The Electoral College was established as a safeguard against the lack of long-distance communication, not as a permanent means of electing a president.

I believe that there is not a person in America who should not know the stain of each presidential candidate and be able to decide which candidate they want to be president.

The electoral system is obsolete and has passed from the people’s eyes as an effective means of electing a president. The only way that we will ever be able to select a president fairly and effectively after this election is by means of a popular vote.

It is, indeed, well past time for a change.

Christopher Barfield is a freshman.

The views expressed here are not necessarily those of the Alligator.
Letters to the Editor

Recount shows UF won game
Editor: I demand a recount.

After review, I believe the Florida Gators actually won 35-30 and am prepared to go to court to prove it.

If you look at the tape, it's clear the Gators intended to score many times more than was counted by the officials. On several occasions, the Gators were inside the 10-yard line. In my opinion, these are Gator touchdowns that should be counted.

Furthermore, I know many fans that attended the game and cheered for FSU, not realizing that they intended to cheer for Florida until after the game was over. This was due in large part to the confusing layout of Doak Campbell Stadium.

This is not a time for partisanship. This game isn't about the score. Rather, it is about the will of the fans. Every fan's voice counts and must be heard. I believe that once officials review the game tape, UF will emerge as the victor of the Nov. 18 contest.

Marty Bielecki
UF Alumnus

Albert attacked, hurt at FSU game
Editor: I would like to make known the incident at Florida State University in which two male FSU cheerleaders attacked UF mascot Albert during the game, badly Engineers his ankle and causing the head to fall off in front of the Tallahassee crowd.

The person inside the mascot is my best friend, and I spent almost five hours with him after the game in the UF emergency waiting room for X-ray results.

What Trace Faye, the FSU cheerleader coach, said about Albert “trippering” and “getting in the way” is so much a lie that I had trouble reading the article in the Orlando Sentinel.

The male FSU cheerleaders went out of their way to literally bull rush our mascot, not unlike some sort of sick football tackle.

I can only hope that a lawsuit is brought because the pain and embarrassment that those members of the FSU spirit program caused should not go unnoticed.

Joe Ketterer
3LS

Our Voice...Our Community

The First in a Monthly Town Hall Meeting Series
Monday, November 27, 7:00 p.m.
CSE 121

"Past Voices: A Historical Perspective of People of Color"

Dr. Jim Scott, Vice President for Student Affairs will facilitate a panel discussion with historical experts and individuals who will speak from their personal experiences during the integration of the University of Florida during the 1960s and 1970s.

Sponsored by the Dean of Students Office, 392-1261
Schools try to lure doctors to teach

The Associated Press

BOSTON - Harvard University and the University of California, San Francisco, hope to lure doctors back into the classroom by paying them enough to offset the time they spend away from patients.

Each school has committed about $10 million and is applying to major foundations for additional funds. If successful, the moves could mark a radical change in medical education, school officials said.

The programs are designed to counteract the economic pressure felt by doctors who double as professors and have less time to spend with revenue-generating patients, The Boston Sunday Globe reported. Support could range from $20,000 stipends to a quarter of a full professor's salary, about $200,000.

Perhaps the most radical part of the idea is simply to pay teachers for teaching, a rarity at most medical schools. Just 278 of Harvard Medical School's 5,463 full-time faculty receive direct compensation for teaching, the newspaper reported.

Some medical experts feel the squeeze on doctors' income could erode the level of training for tomorrow's physicians.

"We are jeopardizing the quality of care our children and grandchildren will get," said Dr. Kenneth M. Ludmerer, a professor of medicine and history at Washington University.

Ludmerer blamed the crisis in large part on the drive for hospital efficiency under managed care.

Jo Shapiro, a head and neck surgeon at Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston, said she enjoyed spending 10 hours each week designing and teaching a course at Harvard Medical School.

But the time spent on the course meant she could not see as many patients at her practice.

"I was actually at the point where I was going to lose money," Shapiro said. She told Harvard she could no longer run the course.

In addition to supplementing the income of doctors like Shapiro, the schools hope the programs will change the balance of prestige at universities that typically place greater emphasis on research and clinical ability than on classroom time.

"This really does alter the structure of the medical school in a very fundamental way," said Dr. Daniel Lowenstein, who came up with the idea at the University of California, San Francisco.

Lowenstein brought the idea to Harvard when he was hired as dean of medical education.

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Study finds health Web sites influence decisions

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When Elise Roelands wanted to find out why her husband had kidney stones and how he could avoid them, she searched health sites on the Internet rather than going to a doctor.

"I learned some of the new treatments, and I learned it wasn't as terrible as I thought," said the 26-year-old hospice volunteer from Silver Spring, Md., who valued the convenience of clicking on Web pages from home.

A new survey of Americans' use of the Internet shows that Roelands is hardly alone in her online quest for medical information. The survey, prepared by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, queried more than 12,000 people about their Internet habits in order to discover how the Internet has changed the way people make health decisions.

"There's tons of anecdotal evidence about this, but this is the first time that anyone's quantified it," said Lee Rainie, director of the project and a co-author of the survey.

Rainie said most of those searching for health information online were seeking material for someone else.

Of those surveyed, 92 percent said their online search was useful, and 81 percent said they learned something new. About 47 percent of those seeking help for themselves said the answers influenced their decisions about treatment, and 36 percent of people looking on behalf of others said the same.

But while several health-centric Web services — such as WebMD and DrKoop.com — have emerged to provide answers to health questions, Rainie said most of the people surveyed had a "scattered, searching activity" that brought them to many sites.

"The vast majority of people are doing health searches on their own," without help from advertisements, doctors, friends or anyone else, Rainie said. "They're going to search engines and just typing in words." Rainie said information seekers most liked sites with broad search engines.

Many respondents were hesitant about using credit cards online and worried about what others could do with their private medical information.

"Clearly, health material is some of the most precious and sensitive stuff that people want to keep private," Rainie said. "They express a generalized concern about Internet companies tracking their movements and then passing on the data."
Israel faces security issues with Lebanon bombing

The Associated Press

KAFAR CHOUBA, Lebanon -- Israel, still engaged in violence with the Palestinians, faced fresh security problems on Sunday in Lebanon, where it rained missiles and machine gun fire in retaliation for a Hezbollah bombing that killed one soldier.

The assault was Israel's first cross-border retaliatory attack since pulling its troops from southern Lebanon in May to end its 18-year occupation of a border enclave there. The Israeli army confirmed striking back with gunfire after the roadside bombing in Chebaa Farms near the Lebanese border. One civilian was slightly injured on the Lebanese side.

Lebanese President Emile Lahoud, in comments on state-run television, called the Israeli raids a "grave precedent that may entail serious repercussions for which Israel is alone responsible."

The violence at Chebaa Farms -- an uninhabited strip of land in the western foothills of Mount Hermon where the borders of Lebanon, Syria and Israel meet -- occurred against the backdrop of continued Israeli-Palestinian confrontations in the West Bank also were reported.

The only fatality was a Palestinian who died in the Gaza Strip from head wounds suffered in a clash six days earlier, Palestinian doctors said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak acknowledged on Israeli radio on Sunday that "never has an Israeli government used such great force against the Palestinians -- rockets, tanks and returning fire when needed."

Barak, who was a general before becoming a politician, pointed to his years in the army and assured Israelis that he knew how to handle the conflict. He said he was pursuing diplomatic efforts to salvage seven years of peacemaking with the Palestinians.

Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami was tentatively scheduled to travel on Monday to Russia for talks on the Mideast crisis.

The attacks in south Lebanon also came a day before the start of Ramadan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar.
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Staff Report

The UF men’s track team announced Wednesday that it had signed four athletes during the NCAA’s early signing period.

Together these four sprinters have combined to win more than 35 high school state championships in their respective classifications.

Last Spring, the Gator sprint program brought home the school’s first-ever NCAA championships in the 100-meter and the 4x100-meter relay.

The relay team posted a UF record time of 38.35 seconds, which was also the fastest time in American collegiate history.

“We are very excited about signing these four very talented athletes during the early signing period,” Coach Doug Brown said. “They will have some big shoes to fill with our graduating seniors, but we feel they have the potential and talent to do so.”

The Gators’ 2001 signing class includes Kyle Farmer from Oakland Hills High in Columbus, Md., Ahmad Jasmine from Christian Life Academy in Baton Rouge, La., Bryan Sears from Liberty County High in Hinesville, Ga., and Josh Walker from Stephenson High in Atlanta.

These four have competed in both national and international competitions and will help fill the void that will be left by the upcoming graduation of sprinter Alan Armstrong, Geno White and hurdler Stephen Jones.

“I look forward to working with these athletes for the next four years,” sprint coach Mike Holloway said of the signing class. “I feel confident that they will continue the tradition that our sprint program has established here.”

UF is coming off a fourth-place finish at the NCAA outdoor championships – its first trophy-winning campaign since 1990 – where it registered a school-record 50 points.

Over the past four years, the sprint group has helped UF become one of the most successful programs in the country.

Since 1996, 35 of the 43 All-America honors handed upon the UF men’s track program have gone to sprinters.

The 2001 Gators open their indoor season at home with the Florida Intercollegiate on Jan. 13 at the O’Connell Center.

Men’s hoops season tickets sold out again

For the second consecutive year, season tickets for UF men’s basketball have sold out before the first home game of the season.

Single-game tickets still are available for a limited number of games. Contact the Gator Ticket Office for more information at (352) 375-4683, ext. 6800.

The Gators averaged a school-record 11,953 fans for Southeastern Conference games last season and overall attendance was 9,783 fans a game, up 3,382 since Billy Donovan’s first year.

Inhabited by “The Rowdy Rebels,” the O’Connell Center is developing a reputation as one of the nation’s toughest arenas in college basketball.

UF is 29-2 in the O’Connell Center during the last two years, with an average margin of victory of 27.0 points a game.

Taylor rushes for 104 yards as Jags snap losing streak

Jacksonville – Fernando Bryant figured a groundbreaking win deserved a high-flying celebration. He named it the Jacksonville Jump.

Bryant’s postgame antics were as memorable as Hollis’ kick, or the 28-yard attempt fans kicked Al Del Greco missed one five earlier.

Bryant needed help getting over the high wall on the north side of Alltel Stadium. The fans gave him a lift, and the second-year comebacker danced in the stands before the Jaguars (5-7) finally celebrated a big win in a season of disappointments.

“They were talking about how this is their house, how they own us,” Bryant said of the Titans. “You take that to heart. They’re coming in and talking about how this is their second home and everything. Jacksonville is my home. Those are my fans. More than disrespecting us, they’re disrespecting our fans. You take that to seriously.”

Indeed, Titans coach Jeff Fisher’s comments at last season’s Super Bowl did not sit well with the Jaguars and their fans.

Fisher likened Alltel to Tennessee’s home away from home, and for good reason. The Titans (9-3) brought a three-game winning streak to town, including a 33-14 thumping in last season’s AFC title game.

Nothing will ever make up for that,” said Jaguars running back Fred Taylor, who ran for 104 yards. “But we’re playing for pride. We’re playing so they don’t get home-field advantage. I’m not going to talk too much trash, but it feels good.”

The Titans fell one game behind the Raiders in the race for the AFC’s best record and saw their 104-41 in their last three victories, and did not sit well with the Jaguars and their fans.

Once again, Del Greco must shoulder the blame.

He missed a 28-yard field goal with 3:08 remaining, eight plays after Derrick Mason’s 35-yard punt return put the Titans in position to win. That error goes on Del Greco’s watch.

AFC West leaders Baltimore now owns the two-game lead over the Jaguars.

While the Titans have the postseason to think about, the Jaguars are merely holding onto hopes of a winning season, and a very remote chance at the playoffs. If not partners, this will surely be the highlight of their year.

“You saw the reaction,” quarterback Mark Brunell said. “We were pretty thrilled. Del Greco doesn’t miss many of those. It’s nice to get a break. We haven’t gotten many this year.”

The Titans had outscored Jacksonville 104-41 in their last three victories, and didn’t ever expect to be in a close game.

“You don’t go into this one thinking it was going to come down to the end,” Fisher said. “We were expecting to score points and move the ball and try to dominate in the same situation had the last couple matchups. We just couldn’t.”

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Taylor pushes for 104 yards as Jags snap losing streak

The Associated Press

Jacksonville Jaguars snapped a three-game stretch of futility against the Tennessee Titans when Mike Hollis hit a 2-yard field goal with no time left Sunday in a 16-13 victory.

Bryant’s postgame antics were as memorable as Hollis’ kick, or the 28-yard attempt fans kicked Al Del Greco missed one five earlier.

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Gators sweep Conference Challenge in final NCAA Tournament tune-up

By Jason Triebwasser
Alligator Writer

The No. 9 UF volleyball team won matches against Tulane and Cincinnati this weekend at the Conference Challenge in Orlando in a warm-up for the NCAA Tournament. The Gators (27-4) are scheduled to open the NCAA at home on Thursday against Arkansas-Little Rock, and the victories this weekend were important to keep their momentum going.

"It was definitely a good experience to play this weekend before the NCAA," sophomore Nicole McCray said. "I think it helped us, there was some good competition down there. It was also fun to play someone different."

On Saturday, UF swept Tulane 15-1, 15-4, 15-10 to finish the four-team Conference Challenge with the only 2-0 record.

The Gators were led by freshmen Jason Triebwasser can be reached at triebwasser@uf.edu volleyball coach Jessica Leigh / Alligator Staff

Mary Wise
UF volleyball coach


The win was an important one in terms of NCAA Tournament seeding for the Gators, as the Bearcats were given an at-large berth into the Tournament after winning the South grouping in Penn State and Colorado State.

"That was a great match for us because some of the things they did we had not seen the likes of, particularly what they did serving," Coach Mary Wise said. "It was very good experience playing a team we were not familiar with in a neutral-court setting."

That was a great match for us because some of the things they did we had not seen the likes of, particularly what they did serving," Coach Mary Wise said. "It was very good experience playing a team we were not familiar with in a neutral-court setting."

"It was very important because the NCAA selection committee tends to exaggerate and forget early-season losses and it is what you do later on [that counts]."

Two of the Gators losses came in their first two games against Penn State and Colorado State.

The leader of the match for UF was Cruz, who had match-highs with 24 kills and 21 digs.

"Aury had a double-double against a very good team," Wise said. "You could sense how into it she was from the first rally."

The strength of the match for the Gators was their defense, as they beat UC 74-48 in digs. Junior Niki Hartley had 19 digs along with 11 each by Bova and freshman Kelli Notestine.

"The digging of Aury Cruz and Niki Hartley was a big part of our ability to beat Cincinnati," Wise said.

Seeding comes as surprise for UF volleyball team

By Debi Jones
Alligator Staff Writer

Even though it assured its invitation a week ago, the NCAA Tournament selections may have come as a bit of a surprise for the UF volleyball team.

After securing a berth to the Tournament last weekend, the No. 9 Gators were selected as a No. 4 seed in the Pacific region. UF will host Arkansas-Little Rock on Thursday in the first round.

"It's about what we expected," Coach Mary Wise said. "Our hope was to be a top-16 seed and realistically we weren't going to be a top-8 seed because the teams that have beaten us were going to be higher seeds." The Gators received an automatic berth into the Tournament after winning the Southeastern Conference Tournament by defeating Louisiana State 3-0 last weekend.

The seeding is the lowest in the Gators' NCAA Tournament history under Wise. In 1987, UF was not seeded in the Tournament. This is the tenth consecutive appearance in the NCAA Tournament for the Gators.

Last season, UF advanced to the East Regional Finals when it was defeated by Pacific 3-0. While the Gators are 10-4 against Tournament teams, two of their four losses came from teams in the Pacific region in Penn State and Colorado State.

Southern California received the top seeding in the region.

Middle blocker Benavia Jenkins said she is not concerned with the seeding but happy that the Gators will be playing at home for the first two rounds.

"I'm glad that we are hosting because we can just take care of business at home first," Jenkins said. "Until we finish that, then we'll look on to more things. Right now, our main focus is Arkansas-Little Rock."

Jenkins added that advancing to the Final Four would show that the Gators deserved higher than a No. 4 seed.

We will keep playing like we have been playing all this time. We want to play a little bit more aggressive, more together and just play strong until the end."

Aury Cruz
UF outside hitter

"We will keep playing like we have been playing all this time," Cruz said. "We want to play a little bit more aggressive, more together and just play strong until the end."

Aggressive play and more team unity may be one key to advance to the second round, but Wise had another key to doing well in the Tournament.

Wise said although she had not seen too much of Arkansas-Little Rock, the Gators would need a bit of luck throughout the next week.

"The teams that make the best run at this have been healthy," Wise said. "From where we started, I think our team has certainly progressed in that we fought through adversity and the ankle sprains."

If UF wins on Thursday night, the Gators will play the winner of the North Carolina-Southeast Missouri State match on Friday. in Gainesville.

Debi Jones can be reached at djones@alligator.org
Hoops to face tougher FAU squad in home opener

By Bart O'Connell
Alligator Writer

The No. 11 UF men’s basketball team will make its 2000-01 home debut tonight and may be in a position to do something it has not done in a decade—start the home season.

To the casual observer, the Gators (1-0) have picked the perfect opponent to keep their streak alive, Florida Atlantic (1-3). The Owls went 2-28 last season, including an 0-18 record in the Trans America Athletic Conference. Florida Atlantic tonight in the O'Connell Center.

Senior Brent Wright and the UF men's basketball team will play Florida Atlantic tonight in the O'Connell Center.

But Coach Billy Donovan, who set aside Thanksgiving weekend to prepare for FAU, said the game should be competitive.

“They've got a lot of new ballplayers,” Donovan said. “I don't think last year's record is any indication of what type of year they are in a position to have this year.”

The Owls lost eight lettermen from last season's squad, returning just one, senior Patrice Reimeris. The current roster includes seven freshmen and four transfer players.

Even so, FAU has improved, Donovan said.

“They're probably a lot more talented than they were last year,” Donovan said. “I fully expect us to be challenged.”

Faced with a 10-day layoff after their 85-70 win against Florida State, the Gators have been hard at work, practicing on Thanksgiving and getting some double-practice sessions in.

UF has not had a day off in a week.

While Donovan has praised the hustle and work ethic of the Gators, he said other things need work.

“We need to maximize this time,” Donovan said last week. “We've got to get better with the mental parts of execution, and that comes within time.”

Mental mistakes, including excessive fouling, poor shot selection and ineffective defense, were factors in the FSU game.

Senior Brent Wright, one of the players whose minutes and statistics were not limited by fouling in that game, said last week’s practices emphasized a variety of areas.

“We’re thinking about getting better as a team,” Wright said. “The things that we are weak in – defense and stuff like that – and [we need to] press better, play our offense better. We need to work on that a little more.”

Wright had 15 points and eight rebounds in 29 minutes against FSU.

He has stayed productive despite the solid play of sophomore Matt Bonner and senior Major Parker, who have been coming off the bench, often in place of Wright.

“My main job is to go out there, play hard, get rebounds, scoring, go out there and do whatever it takes for my team to win,” Wright said.

But for the Gators, playing well and getting better are the main goals, and will remain so throughout the season.

Wright said it takes time to get in a comfort zone.

“We have to be more focused,” Wright said. “As the season goes on, we'll start to get more focused, and we need to get back to playing our style of play.”

Bart O'Connell can be reached at bsocconnell@alligator.org

Women's basketball defeats Harvard, Maine to win Dead River Company Classic title

from page 20

BASKETBALL

"When the lights come on, Vanessa has a game face that she turns on and she comes to play. She did that tonight and really was a force on both sides of the floor.”

For the first time this season, the Gators found themselves trailing, down 13-9 five minutes into the game after a three-pointer by Harvard's Lindsay Ryba.

UF responded quickly, as Hayden scored three straight points to spark a 12-1 run.

The Gators led by 14 at the half, but Harvard got within nine after back-to-back three-pointers with 10 minutes left in the game.

Bell hit a three-pointer to start a 19-1 run over the next six minutes as the Gators pulled away.

The Crimson used the three-point line to keep the game close, hitting 11 of 24 from beyond the arc. Just 12 points came from field goals.

McCain scored 19 points with five assists. Bell scored 11 points and sophomore Jameelah Trimble contributed a career-high 10 points.

Junior Ryba led the Crimson with 21 points, hitting 5 of 6 from beyond the three-point line. Freshman Hana Peljto and junior Katie Gates added 12 points each in their loss.

Three Gators were named to the All-Tournament team, including Cardenas, who played 64 minutes in the two games, Mobley and Bell.

Maine’s Christy Grover and Central Michigan’s Mollie Munn rounded out the team.

UF’s tournament victory marked the third consecutive year Maine has lost its home tournament to a school from the Southeastern Conference.

Ole Miss claimed the 1998 crown, and Georgia took the 1999 title. Both of those games were decided in overtime.

In the consolation game, Central Michigan defeated Harvard 69-52.

Radio broadcasts contributed to this report.

Seth Traub can be reached at straub@alligator.org
The Associated Press Top 25

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ESPN/USA Today Coaches Top 25

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By Douglas Roberts

UF junior offensive lineman Kenyatta Walker was named a third-team All-American by Football News.

Gators defeat host Maine to win weekend tourney

By Seth Trabu

Last weekend the UF women's basketball team came out of its first trip to the Big Apple in program history with a win.

This weekend the Gators went to Maine for the first time to compete in the Dead River Company Classic and came away champions.

Junior Brandi McCaun was named tournament Most Valuable Player as the Gators defeated Harvard in the opening round Friday and host Maine in the championship game Saturday in front of 2,880 at Alford Arena to win the tournament.

We really used our quickness to our advantage against Maine," UF coach Carol Ross said Saturday. "We got a lot of deflections and frustrated Maine in its half-court offense. Overall we played extremely well and this is a great tournament title for us."

This was UF's first tournament championship since defeating California in the Oakland Tribune Classic in December 1999.

Against the Maine Black Bears, McCain led the Gators with 27 points, four assists and six steals en route to the 87-41 win. She was 9 for 18 from the field, including 6 for 11 from the three-point line.

The UF (20-0) defense came out strong in the championship game. The Black Bears (2-1) shot 15.8 percent from the field, hitting just 3 of 19 shots, in the first half, leading the Gators to a 21-point halftime lead.

In that half, the Gators forced 15 turnovers while committing five.

UF began the game with a 16-2 run, led by 8 points from junior Monique Cardenas.

The defense prevented Maine from hitting a field goal for the first seven minutes of the game.

For the game, UF shot 42 percent from the field and 81 percent from the free-throw line.

Maine, who defeated Central Michigan on Saturday to advance to the finals, shot 28 percent from the field and committed 26 turnovers in the game.

Cardenas scored a career-high 15 points with eight rebounds. Junior Naomi Mobley scored 13 while pulling down seven rebounds. And senior Tombi Bell had a game-high seven assists with one turnover.

Ten Black Bears saw significant minutes in Saturday's game, but none scored in double digits and each committed at least one turnover.

Sophomore Christy Grover and junior Lacey Stone led Maine with 8 points each.

Freshman Vanessa Hayden pulled down seven rebounds and scored 4 in the championship game, following a career day Friday, when she led the Gators in their 78-56 defeat of the Harvard Crimson (0-3).

Hayden scored a career- and game-high 22 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in the opening-round win. She shot 9 of 10 from the field, 4 of 5 from the free-throw line and blocked three shots in 21 minutes of action.

"Vanessa continues to grow in practice and in games," Ross said Friday.
UF center Udonis Haslem has learned from the past and remains focused on his future

By Burt O'Connell
Alligator Writer

As a fan, one could go to all the UF games, read all the college basketball magazines, watch all the highlight shows and player profiles, and root as hard as a person can, for or against the Gators, and still never know Udonis Haslem.

Few people know the man off the court because his on-court image has grown to be fierce, respected and admired.

Coach Billy Donovan has called Haslem a potential Naismith National Player of the Year candidate.

And Haslem is known as the ideal teammate.

"He's a very unselfish player," junior Teddy Dupay said. "He is the epitome of a team ballplayer and unselfishness."

When talking about basketball, unselfishness is about the only thing of which Haslem is proud. He has called himself "the ultimate team player," yet never seems thrilled about his own statistics and highlights.

But off the court, Haslem is proud of many things, and ranks one special thing above all others.

"My son," Haslem said.

During Haslem's freshman season at UF, Kedonis was born. He will turn 2 in December.

Although he lives in Miami, Kedonis travels with the rest of Haslem's family to almost every home game, and usually every month Haslem gets some extra time with his son.

Haslem turned to was his stepmother, Barbara Wooten.

Haslem said Wooten, who raised him, gets a lot of the credit for his character. The rest of the credit goes to his late stepbrother, Sam, who passed away last year.

"My stepmother has taught me from A to Z everything there is to know about life," Haslem said. "My stepmother has been the person I've always gone to with problems. She's the person that's always been there for me when I needed her.

"As for my stepbrother, he's the person that pointed me in the right direction. I didn't know what my future was going to be. I kind of went through the 'knucklehead' stage, just basically hanging out, and he wouldn't let me leave basketball," Haslem said.

"He never made me play basketball, but he always let me know I had a future in basketball, and I took his advice. I think I made the right decision."

Growing up

Haslem was not a natural athlete early in life. According to Wooten, it took awhile for Haslem, now 6-foot-8, to utilize his natural gifts.

"He was kind of quiet, kind of shy, awkward and uncoordinated," Wooten said. "He wasn't into sports until he was 7 years old or so."

Instead, Haslem was more of a joker and, so he thought, a chef.

"He was a clown, a prankster," Wooten said. "He would go to another part of the house and call the house from inside."

The first step to increased fan support was granting students free admission to basketball games.

Then UF guard Jason Williams helped turn a mediocre UF team into a winner.

This season could solidify Coach Billy Donovan's basketball program as one of the country's elite, but keeping the Rowdy Reptiles satisfied will be tougher than buying the fans a few pizzas.

Kruger's Gators followed up their first Final Four appearance with a 17-13 record the following season, then went 12-16 the next season.

Instead of sticking with a sinking program, Kruger chose to escape to Illinois.

Enter Donovan, who had been building a reputation at Marshall University for turning underachievers into winners.

Donovan's work impressed UF athletics director Jeremy Foley, who offered Donovan the head coaching job.

In each of his first two seasons at the helm, Donovan was able to increase UF's winning record by one game.

Susie Ogden, Izzy Quild

The Way It Is

During the 1997-98 season, Donovan began to attract fans, after diminished numbers since 1994.

The first step to increased fan support was granting students free admission to basketball games.

The second step was offering UF guard Jason Williams an ultimatum.
UF has something to prove despite last season’s performance

By Bart O’Connell

UF has something to prove despite last season’s performance. The Gators’ experience, however, lies in the frontcourt positions, with two senior forwards, Brent Wright and Major Parker, joined Haslem, with his first name. Haslem was given his name after his grandmother went to Germany and met the UF program is founded in 1906.

Most of his success and failures, Haslem has taken a similar approach to daily life: make the best out of any bad situation.

“I have no regrets about anything I’ve done,” Haslem said. “I think everything is a learning experience, whether it’s a bad experience or a good experience. I’ve definitely made some bad decisions, but what I do try to find the positives out of those things.”

As for the future – the NBA and beyond – Haslem thinks he has found something to fall back on if he does not make it professionally.

“Hopefully one day I can play in the NBA, but if that doesn’t work out, I think a police officer is a role I could play,” Haslem said. “I had an uncle that was a police officer and I got to check out his police car and hang out with him a lot, and it was a lot cooler than I thought it was.”

In basketball, I definitely look to be a role model, start boys and girls clubs and stuff like that, and if it’s not basketball, I thought it was.

“It’s pretty cool now.”

Haslem was given his name after his grandmother went to Germany and met the UF program is founded in 1906.

Now that I think about it, I wouldn’t trade it for the world.” Haslem said. “It’s been pretty good to me.”

Through all his successes and failures, Haslem has taken a similar approach to daily life: make the best out of any bad situation.

“I have no regrets about anything I’ve done,” Haslem said. “I think everything is a learning experience, whether it’s a bad experience or a good experience. I’ve definitely made some bad decisions, but what I do try to find the positives out of those things.”

As for the future – the NBA and beyond – Haslem thinks he has found something to fall back on if he does not make it professionally.

“Hopefully one day I can play in the NBA, but if that doesn’t work out, I think a police officer is a role I could make a difference in. I just want to be a regular old person.”

Bart O’Connell can be reached at bsconnell@alligator.org
Women’s hoops looks to rebound from last season

By Seth Traub
Alligator Writer

It is a season of new beginnings for the women’s basketball team. In March, the Gators sat live on ESPN watching the NCAA Tournament selection show, expecting to make their eighth straight appearance in the Big Dance.

The Gators were not picked as one of the 64 teams.

To prove to the NCAA and to themselves they were worthy, they won four of five games on the road and came just one shot shy of the Women’s National Invitation Tournament Championship, losing to Wisconsin 75-74 in Madison.

UF coach Carol Ross said her team always looks to make the NCAA Tournament and anything else is a disappointment.

“Postseason play and NCAA tournaments are the standard of our program,” Ross said. “There is no question that last year was a disappointment, but it turned into a great opportunity in the WNIT and it left our players with a taste of a championship.”

UF returns three starters from last season’s squad, including senior guard Tombi Bell. Bell said the Gators want to remember that they were one of just four teams to be playing for a championship at the end of the season.

“We are trying not to think about last year,” Bell said. “It was so disappointing to not get into the NCAA Tournament, but we had the opportunity to come together as a team in the WNIT.”

“We were in a championship game and that was great experience, but we want to focus on this year and learn from last year.”

This season’s leadership will come from the senior captains: Bell, center Tamara Stocks and forward Misty Knight. The three are motivating their team to win, and win big.

“We are focused on winning championships,” Stocks said. “We have to win, and losing is not OK. That is the mindset we are in.”

This season, with the Gators looking to improve their 21-13 record and sixth-place SEC finish, they will host three games against teams from last season’s NCAA Final Four.

Although their top-five strength of schedule last season was not enough to propel the Gators into the NCAA Tournament, Ross said she likes the tough schedule because it shows her team’s strength.

Ross said she will not change her scheduling style because the NCAA selection committee changes their minds every year as to whether schedule strength is important.

Facing strong opposition outside and within the SEC, the Gators are focused on defense.

Bell will be UF’s defensive heart this season, Ross said. Bell led the SEC with an average six assists a game.

Adding to the depth at the guard position is junior Brandi McCain, who returns this season after rehabilitating a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee and a broken leg.

In the 15 games McCain played last season, the Gators went 12-3. McCain’s return to the lineup will allow Ross to use a two-guard rotation most of the season.

Perhaps the deepest position for UF is in the paint, where Stocks will lead a group that includes the SEC’s leading rebounder in Naomi Mobley, sophomore Jameelah Trimble and freshman Vanessa Hayden.

Three key role players this season should be Knight, junior Monique Cardenas and Notre Dame transfer Shersha Hills. Hills sat out last season due to NCAA rules.

“Everyone on this team is ready to win, and my role is to be there to rebound and play good defense, or shoot the three,” Cardenas said. “Wherever my team needs me, they know I will be there.”

There are also new faces on the sideline for the Gators this season — two new assistant coaches whose teams, like the Gators, were playing in championship games to end their respective seasons.

Guard Tombi Bell said that despite the disappointment of not being invited to the NCAA Tournament, it was a learning experience for the Gators.

Matthew Mitchell was the graduate assistant for the Tennessee women’s basketball team, which reached the NCAA title game.

Renee Ladner brings 18 years of coaching experience to the Gators. She led St. John High in Gulfport, Miss., to a Class 2A state championship.

Seth Traub can be reached at straub@alligator.org