

HURRICANES

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2025
YEAR IN REVIEW EDITION

DEVOUX DEYSEL
2025 NCAA OUTDOOR TRACK & FIELD
MEN'S JAVELIN CHAMPION

CHIARA PELLACANI
2025 NCAA SWIMMING & DIVING
WOMEN'S 1-METER CHAMPION



A CENTURY OF PRIDE

A LEGACY OF CHAMPIONS



For nearly a century, University of Miami Athletics has thrived because of passionate supporters like you. This unwavering spirit of generosity has provided vital scholarships, advanced academic programming, and cutting-edge facilities — enabling our student-athletes to excel on and off the field.

You can play a vital role in ensuring that we can continue to empower student-athletes for the next 100 years by naming Miami Athletics a beneficiary of your will or trust, retirement or other financial asset, or of a life insurance policy.

A bequest is a simple yet powerful way to leave a legacy that will help fuel the success of future champions. Together, we can preserve Miami Athletics' proud tradition, ensuring it inspires generations to come.

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A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS



It was another memorable year for Miami Athletics that saw our Hurricanes crown national champions, break records, excel in the classroom, inspire the community, and embrace this new era of college athletics with passion, purpose and determination.

Our football team won 10 games for the first time in seven years and in Cam Ward produced both a Heisman Trophy finalist and the first overall selection in the NFL Draft. Our baseball team advanced to its first Super Regional since 2016 under head coach J.D. Arteaga. Chiara Pellacani captured the NCAA women's one-meter diving title, which propelled our swimming and diving team to its best NCAA team finish in 14 years. Devoux Deysel won the NCAA men's javelin title – Miami's first men's individual outdoor track and field championship since 1996. Overall,

13 of our programs earned postseason berths, and UM produced 16 All-Americans and six ACC individual champions.

The future looks bright for the Hurricanes. Our 2025 football recruiting class once again ranked first in the ACC, and our 2026 class is currently ranked in the nation's Top 10. We hired Jai Lucas as our new men's basketball head coach, and he immediately retooled our roster through the high school ranks and the transfer portal. Tricia Cullop and her women's basketball staff signed the 10th-best 2025 recruiting class. Our quest for success is the result of a collective effort -- the commitment of our 400-plus student-athletes; the dedication of our coaches and staff; and the continued support we receive from our university leadership, donors, alumni and supporters throughout our South Florida community and around the world.

Our student-athletes are UM students first and foremost and they put together another impressive year on the academic front. Our cumulative grade point average for the Spring 2025 semester was 3.37; 76 percent of our student-athletes posted a GPA of 3.0 or better and 59 of those student-athletes had a 4.0 GPA.

We earned an NCAA Graduation Success Rate of 93 percent, and our NCAA Academic Progress Rate score was 992. It was the ninth consecutive year and 12th year in the past 13 that UM has earned a four-year average GSR rate of 90 percent or higher, and 12 UM programs achieved APR perfect scores of 1,000 for the 2023-24 academic year. I am proud of our student-athletes for the work they do in the classroom, and I am also grateful to our coaches and academic services staff for their commitment to helping our student-athletes succeed in their academic efforts.



We encourage a servant leadership mentality across Miami Athletics and our student-athletes take that mindset to heart. In 2024, for the third time in school history, we captured the NCAA Team Works Community Service national championship. Ninety-nine percent of our student-athletes participated in at least one community service event and totaled 7,398 service hours over the course of the competition. Our student-athletes also continue to take advantage of the numerous leadership, professional and civic engagement opportunities offered through our Student-Athlete Development office.

Miami Athletics received \$36.4 million in gifts and commitments from more than 7,000 donors during the 2024-2025 year – the second-highest annual total in school history and more than \$9 million ahead of the next best year. The year included six gifts of \$1 million or more, with two ranking among the top four in UM Athletics history.

Support for women's athletics (\$1.75 million) and our Olympic sports (\$1.25 million) both reached record highs. The launch of the U Standard initiative positioned our fundraising efforts to meet the needs of the new college athletics landscape, including the debut of the Victory Fund to support revenue sharing with student-athletes. Donor support exceeded \$13 million toward the expansion of the Carol Soffer Indoor Practice Facility and a new football strength and conditioning center.

This collective generosity also propelled us to surpass our \$225 million goal as part of the University's Ever Brighter Campaign, which concluded this spring as The U celebrated its centennial.



Football season ticket sales are already pacing 20 percent higher than last year, and our total season tickets will exceed 40,000 this year, further evidence that our fan base is excited about the direction of the program under Mario Cristobal. Thank you to all our supporters for shaping the next chapter of Miami Athletics and making a difference in the experience for our student-athletes!

On the facility front, we broke ground in April on a 42,000-square-foot expansion of the Carol Soffer Indoor Practice Facility, which will include a regulation-size indoor field, new football weight room and sports science lab. We are also exploring renovations to Watsco Center to upgrade our team spaces and premium seating areas.

On June 6, 2025, Judge Claudia Wilken granted final approval to the House v. NCAA settlement in the U.S. District of California. Athletics departments are now able to directly share revenue with student-athletes, and student-athletes will have more opportunities than ever to financially benefit during their participation in intercollegiate athletics.

The House settlement creates much-needed structure and stability for college athletics going forward. From the outset, Miami has been committed to providing opportunities for our student-athletes and supporting them at the highest level. We look forward to seeing our programs thrive on and off the field in this new era.

Thank you for your continued investment in Miami Athletics. Your generous support is now more important than ever, and it helps our student-athletes pursue their dreams of competing for championships while earning a first-class education and building relationships that last a lifetime. We hope to see you cheer us on throughout the 2025-26 academic year.

Go Canes!

Dan Radakovich

Vice President / Director of Athletics

IT'S
ALL
ABOUT
THE U

YEAR IN REVIEW

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YEAR IN REVIEW: 2024-25

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

There were plenty of memorable wins and record-breaking individual performances for the Miami Hurricanes over the course of the last 12 months.

For the second straight year, two Hurricanes were crowned individual national champions in their respective sports. Several newcomers made an impression, not just on their teammates in Coral Gables and their opponents across the ACC, but nationally, too.

And whether they notched dominant victories, comeback wins, or upset nationally ranked foes, from the fall to the spring, the Hurricanes found ways to make headlines.

Former Miami quarterback Cam Ward dazzled on a weekly basis in the fall. His record-breaking campaign helped the Hurricanes put

together their first 10-win season since 2017 and earned him a trip to New York as a finalist for the Heisman Trophy. Four months later, the All-American signal caller stood onstage with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell as the top pick in this year's NFL Draft.

Diver Chiara Pellacani – who red-shirted last year to prepare for the 2024 Summer Olympic Games in Paris – returned to collegiate diving and immediately made her presence felt, winning both an NCAA title on the 1-meter springboard and an ACC championship on the 3-meter.

And in June, thrower Devoux Deyssel became the second Hurricane men's track and field athlete to win a national championship when his 81.75-meter throw in the javelin bested the competition at

the NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships. Deyssel, who won two national titles while at Angelo State before transferring to Miami, also became the first student-athlete in history to win NCAA javelin titles in both Division I and Division II.

The Hurricanes baseball team put together a thrilling late-season surge, winning five straight ACC series and 10 straight conference games before earning a berth in the NCAA Tournament, winning the Hattiesburg Regional, and advancing to Super Regionals for the first time since 2016.

Here, with summer in full swing and the Hurricanes looking forward to the seasons that await, a look back at the year that was in Miami athletics...





GRIFFIN HUGUS

BASEBALL

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW**By James Knable**

- Finished the year with a 35-27 overall record and a 15-14 mark in ACC play, posting a 22-9 record at home.
- Earned a berth in the NCAA Baseball Tournament and won the Hattiesburg Regional to advance to Super Regionals for the first time since 2016.
- Third baseman Daniel Cuvet, outfielder Max Galvin, and pitcher Griffin Hugus were named to the All-Regional team, with Cuvet earning honors as the Hattiesburg Regional MVP.
- Had three players earn All-ACC honors including Cuvet (first team), Hugus (second team) and pitcher AJ Ciscar (ACC All-Freshman Team).
- Cuvet earned multiple All-American nods and became Miami's first ABCA/Rawlings First Team All-American since 2023.
- Cuvet, who led the ACC with 84 RBI, was one of 25 Golden Spikes Award semifinalists.
- Ciscar was named a second-team Freshman All-American by Perfect Game.
- Both Cuvet and Ciscar were invited to the USA Baseball Collegiate National Team Training Camp.
- Won five consecutive ACC series between April 4-May 4 and won 10 straight conference games, the longest such streak since 2014.
- Ciscar was named ACC Pitcher of the Week on May 5 after allowing just one run in 6.2 innings against No. 13 NC State.
- Cuvet was named ACC Player of the Week on May 5 after hitting .833 with two home runs and eight RBI in the NC State series.
- Hugus was named ACC Pitcher of the Week on Feb. 17 after an 11-strikeout performance against Niagara.
- Two Hurricanes, both pitchers, heard their names called in the 2025 MLB First-Year Player Draft: third rounder Griffin Hugus (Mariners) and eighth rounder Brian Walters (Phillies).

MATTHEW CLEVELAND

MEN'S BASKETBALL

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW**By Megan Barnes**

- Finished the season 7-24 and 3-17 in ACC play.
- Guard Nijel Pack was named a Preseason All-ACC First Team honoree.
- Pack earned ACC Co-Player of the Week honors on Nov. 11.
- Forward Brandon Johnson reached the 1,000-point mark for his career against Coppin State on Nov. 17.
- Jim Larrañaga stepped down as head coach on Dec. 26, 2024 and, at that time, ranked sixth among active coaches in career wins (744).
- Associate head coach Bill Courtney took over as interim head coach for the remainder of the season.
- Courtney won his first game as interim head coach on Feb. 1, a 63-57 victory over Notre Dame at the Watsco Center.
- Guard Matthew Cleveland eclipsed the 1,500-career point plateau against Louisville on Feb. 8.
- Guard A.J. Staton-McCray reached 1,000 career points against Virginia Tech on Feb. 23.
- Forward Brandon Johnson slammed home a buzzer-beating dunk to lift Miami over NC State, 72-70, on Senior Day.
- Cleveland earned All-ACC Team Honorable Mention.
- Cleveland finished the season sixth in scoring (17.6), first in number of 30-point games (three), fourth in field-goal percentage (.511) and fifth in number of 20-point games (14) among all ACC players.
- A program-record five Hurricanes – Jalen Blackmon, Brandon Johnson, Lynn Kidd, A.J. Staton-McCray and Austin Swartz – earned All-ACC Academic Team honors.
- Jai Lucas was named the Hurricanes new head coach on March 6, 2025.

HALEY CAVINDER

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Trevor Marbut

- Finished the season with an overall record of 14-15, including a mark of 4-14 in ACC play under first-year head coach Tricia Cullop.
- Started the season with seven straight wins, scoring at least 71 points in each game.
- Defeated rival Florida in Gainesville, 83-73, on the strength of a 31-point performance from guard Haley Cavinder.
- Haley Cavinder was named the USBWA Ann Meyers Drysdale National Player of the Week on Nov. 19 after averaging 21.5 points, 4.5 rebounds and 4.0 assists in Miami's wins over Jacksonville and Florida.
- Won the Miami Thanksgiving Tournament after an 83-74 overtime victory over Quinnipiac in the tournament's championship game.
- Haley Cavinder was named MVP of the Miami Thanksgiving Tournament, while forward Cameron Williams earned first team All-Tournament honors.
- Went 2-0 at the 2024 Maui Classic, earning wins over Nevada and Oregon State.
- Haley Cavinder was selected MVP of the Maui Classic and Williams garnered first team All-Tournament honors.
- Haley Cavinder was named ACC Player of the Week on Dec. 23, 2024 following her sensational performance at the Maui Classic where she had a game-high 25 points and 12 rebounds against Nevada and 20 points and 12 rebounds against Oregon State.
- Went 10-1 in non-conference play, marking the best record in non-conference play under a first-year head coach in program history.
- Beat Pittsburgh, SMU, Virginia and Wake Forest in ACC play.
- Haley Cavinder surpassed 2,500 career points and 1,000 career rebounds.
- Guard Jasmyne Roberts eclipsed 1,000 points for her career.
- Hanna Cavinder surpassed 500 career assists.
- Guard Darrione Rogers surpassed 1,500 career points.
- Williams finished the season ranked second in the ACC and 14th in the nation in field goal percentage (58.6 percent).
- Haley Cavinder was an All-ACC Second Team selection.
- Set a program record with eight Hurricanes being named to the All-ACC Academic Team (Aurora Almon, Haley Cavinder, Hanna Cavinder, Leah Harmon, Lemyah Hylton, Natalija Marshall, Jasmyne Roberts, and Cameron Williams).

CORMAC O'BRIEN

AUSTEN CANNON

CROSS COUNTRY

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Evan Roberts

- The women's cross country team placed 16th at the NCAA South Regionals with 515 points, while the men's team finished 20th with 557 points.
- Cormac O'Brien clocked a personal best time of 31:35.2 in the men's 10K – a new personal best and the third-fastest 10K time in school history.
- Thirteen members of the cross country team were named to the All-ACC Academic team.
- At the ACC Championships, the men's team finished 17th with 498 points, while the women's team scored 511 points to place 17th.
- Austen Cannon clocked a new school-record time of 24:05.7 in the men's 8K.
- O'Brien improved on his personal best with a time of 24:07.7 – the second-fastest time in school history for the men's 8K.
- Enrique Borrego also cracked the school's top-10 list after finishing in 24:52.1, good for seventh all-time.
- Maddie Scheier registered the first win of her career, capturing the title at the FAU Invitational with a 5K time of 17:44.22, the seventh-fastest time in school history.

CAM WARD

FOOTBALL

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Camron Ghorbi

- Finished the regular season with a 10-2 record, marking the second 10-win season at Miami since 2004.
- With a perfect 6-0 mark at Hard Rock Stadium, Miami finished undefeated at home for the first time since 2002.
- The Hurricanes ended the season ranked No. 18 in the AP Top 25 – only their second finish that high since 2005.
- Miami won a “state championship” in 2024, posting wins over Florida (41-17), Florida State (36-14) and USF (50-15), while also topping Florida A&M (56-9). The 2024 season marked the first time since 2003 the Hurricanes beat Florida and Florida State in the same season.
- Miami’s offense – the top-ranked unit in the country in both yards per game (537.2) and points per game (43.9) – was spearheaded by QB Cam Ward, who was the first ACC Player of the Year winner in the program’s history.
- At the conclusion of the regular season, Miami was one of only seven teams in all of FBS that ranked in the top 25 in both total offense and total defense.
- Ward won both the Davey O’Brien Award and Manning Award as the nation’s top quarterback and finished fourth in the Heisman Trophy balloting.
- Ward was picked No. 1 overall in the 2025 NFL Draft by the Tennessee Titans. He was the third No. 1 NFL Draft pick in program history.
- Ward was one of two consensus NCAA All-Americans, joining wide receiver Xavier Restrepo, who became the first player in program history to post back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons.
- Restrepo became Miami’s all-time leader in receiving yards (2,844), while kicker Andy Borregales became Miami’s record holder in career points scored (405).
- Miami’s seven draft picks in the 2025 NFL Draft were its most since nine players were selected in 2017.
- For the third straight year, head coach Mario Cristobal and his staff signed the No. 1 ranked recruiting class in the ACC and one of the best in the nation.

REBEKAH GARDNER

GOLF

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Megan Barnes

- Won a pair of tournaments in the fall, the Mercedes Benz Collegiate and the Hurricane Invitational.
- Miami shot a season-best 852 (-12) as a team to win the 2024 Hurricane Invitational.
- Qualified for the 2025 NCAA Regional Championship, placing eighth out of 12 teams at the Lexington Regional.
- Olivia Grønborg finished tied for fifth among all golfers at the Lexington Regional.
- As a team, Miami recorded five top-five finishes in 2024-25 and totaled five rounds of par or better.
- Grønborg led the Hurricanes with five top-10 finishes and six top-20 showings.
- Grønborg won the 2024 Hurricane Invitational with a score of 208 (-8).
- Five different Hurricanes recorded the best finish on the team across 11 tournaments.
- Miami signed two-time DII All-American Stella Jelinek for the 2025-26 season.
- Miami alums Sara Byrne and Daniela Darquea earned their 2025 Ladies European Tour Cards in December.
- Miami alum Dewi Weber earned her 2025 LPGA Tour Card in December.
- Head coach Janice Olivencia was named an associate coach for Team International for the 2025 Arnold Palmer Cup. Team International clinched the 2025 Arnold Palmer Cup in June.



AALIAH DAWSON

ROWING

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Trevor Marbut

- Competed in nine total events throughout the year.
- Won the Head of the Black Warrior River to close out the fall portion of the season.
- Had all six boats advance out of the preliminary rounds to qualify for the Grand Finals at the Sarasota 2K, the first event of the spring season.
- The Third Varsity Eight and Second Varsity Four crews each earned third-place finishes in the Grand Finals of the Sarasota 2K.
- The First Varsity Eight defeated No. 16 Duke at the Big 10 Invitational.
- The First Varsity Eight and Third Varsity Eight each set program records at the ACC Championships. The First Varsity Eight crossed the line with a time of 6:22.325, while the Third Varsity Eight smashed the previous record by nearly eight seconds, finishing with a time of 6:48.725.
- The Second Varsity Four earned a second-place finish in the Petite Finals at the ACC Championships with a time of 7:28.684, defeating Louisville, Notre Dame, Boston College and SMU.
- Aaliah Dawson earned third-team All-ACC honors.

GIOVANA CANALI

SOCCER

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Trevor Marbut

- Finished the season with a 5-8-4 overall record and a mark of 1-6-3 in ACC play under first-year head coach Ken Masuhr.
- Defeated SEC foe Missouri 2-1 to secure the first victory of the Masuhr era.
- Closed the non-conference portion of the schedule with three straight wins, marking the program's longest winning streak since 2017.
- Recorded a shutout to secure a 0-0 tie against RV/No. 8 Pittsburgh.
- Earned a 3-1 victory at Syracuse, with the three goals marking the most the program has scored in a conference road game since 2022.
- Giovana Canali was named the ACC Offensive Player of the Week on Sept. 3, 2024, after scoring two goals to help lead the Hurricanes to wins over Missouri and FIU.
- Claireese Foley was named the ACC Defensive Player of the Week on Oct. 8, 2024, after recording back-to-back shutouts against Virginia Tech and FAU. She made a career-high seven saves against Virginia Tech.
- Emilie McCartney was named the ACC Co-Defensive Player of the Week after an outstanding defensive performance to help Miami earn a draw against Pittsburgh.
- Canali garnered third-team All-ACC honors and ACC All-Freshman Team honors after scoring a team-high nine goals. She was the first Miami soccer player to earn All-Conference recognition since 2018 and became just the fourth freshman in program history to earn a spot on the conference All-Freshman team.
- Twelve players were selected to the ACC Soccer All-Academic Team.

CHIARA PELLACANI

SWIMMING & DIVING

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Camron Ghorbi

- Finished with a 7-2 record in meets this year, including a perfect 7-0 mark in home contests at the Whitten Center Pool.
- Swimming head coach Andy Kershaw saw three women qualify for the NCAA Championships – veteran Giulia Carvalho, as well as freshmen Ashlyn Massey and Simone Moll.
- Miami's swimmers combined for a number of lifetime bests and school records, including Carvalho improving her own records in the 50-yard freestyle, 100-yard freestyle and 100-yard butterfly; a top-two time in the 500-yard and 800-yard freestyle by freshman Marissa Inouye and a school-record time from Massey in the 200-yard fly.
- Chiara Pellacani was named ACC Women's Diver of the Year and CSCAA Diver of the Year after capturing the national championship in the 1-meter springboard at the 2025 NCAA Swimming & Diving Championships.
- In his first season as the head diving coach, Dario di Fazio was named the ACC Women's Diving Coach of the Year.
- Including Pellacani's national title-winning performance, Miami's two women's divers pulled in four combined NCAA All-America honors; Pellacani also earned the honor in the 3-meter springboard, while Mia Vallée earned the honor in both springboard events.
- Men's diver Max Flory earned NCAA All-America recognition in two events and was also a gold medalist on the men's platform at the ACC Championships, while Pellacani and Vallée added multiple medals at the conference meet.

MARTIN KATZ

MEN'S TENNIS

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Macy Parmer

- Finished the 2025 season with a 13-11 overall record and a 6-7 mark in ACC play.
- First-year head coach Alex Santos guided the Hurricanes to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2022 and the 30th time in program history.
- Earned five ranked wins.
- Went undefeated at home, going 13-0 with two top-25 wins.
- Concluded the season with a singles and doubles entry in the final ITA rankings; Martin Katz at No. 28 and Antonio Prat and Katz at No. 41.
- Katz qualified for his first NCAA Singles Championships after a successful fall campaign.
- Katz earned his first conference honor on the All-ACC second team after a 25-10 overall singles record, an 8-2 conference record and posting a 9-7 mark against ranked opponents.
- Katz was a CSC Academic All-District honoree and was a finalist for All-America honors.

WOMEN'S TENNIS



ALEXA NOEL

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Macy Parmer

- Finished the 2025 season with a 10-13 overall record and a 4-8 mark in ACC play.
- Advanced to the third round of the ACC Championships.
- Concluded the season with two singles and one doubles entry in the final ITA rankings: Alexa Noel at No. 20, Raquel Gonzalez at No. 106 and Noel and Gonzalez at No. 35.
- Noel earned her fourth ITA All-America recognition after posting a 15-1 singles record with nine ranked wins and a perfect record at home.
- Noel earned a first-team All-ACC nod following a 15-match win streak.
- Noel notched her second career CSC Academic All-America honor.
- Head coach Paige Yaroshuk-Tews and the Hurricanes had at least one Miami player earn ITA All-American accolades for the 12th straight year.

SOLOMON STRADER

INDOOR TRACK & FIELD

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Evan Roberts

- The Canes broke 10 school records and placed sixth at the ACC Indoor Championships on the men's side and 12th on the women's side.
- Three Hurricanes earned All-America honors, with Edgar Campre (heptathlon) and Gabriella Grissom (800m) earning first-team distinction and Solomon Strader (400m) earning second-team recognition.
- Campre placed third at the NCAA Indoor Championships with a school-record total of 5,934 points in the heptathlon.
- Grissom broke the school records in both the 600m and 800m while placing sixth at the NCAA Indoor Championships in the 800m.
- Strader placed ninth in the 400m at the NCAA Indoor Championships.
- The men's 4x400 relay team of Lance Ward, George Franks, Ace Malone and Strader took home first place at the ACC Indoor Championships with a time of 3:06.59, the second-fastest time in program history.

DEVOUX DEYSEL

OUTDOOR TRACK & FIELD

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW

By Evan Roberts

- Devoux Deysel became the second Miami men's track and field student-athlete to win an outdoor national championship when he won the javelin title with a throw of 81.75 meters.
- Deysel became the first student-athlete to win NCAA javelin titles in both Division I and Division II. He previously won two national titles while at Angelo State.
- Deysel won his second straight ACC championship in the javelin when he recorded the nation's longest throw at 82.35m. The mark set a new school record and is the 13th-longest throw in NCAA history.
- Sanaa Hebron won the ACC Championship in the 400m hurdles and earned two first-team All-America honors (400m hurdles, 4x400m relay). At the NCAA Championships, Hebron placed fourth in the hurdles while the relay team finished eighth.
- At the ACC Championships, Hebron won the 400m hurdles title with a time of 55.21, the second-fastest time in program history.
- Four Hurricanes and the 4x400m relay team earned All-America honors at the NCAA Championships including Desmond Coleman (discus), Kennedy Sauder (high jump) and Christina Warren (triple jump) garnering second team distinction.



ALANY'S VIERA

VOLLEYBALL

2024-2025
YEAR IN REVIEW**By Macy Parmer**

- Finished with a 22-11 overall record and a 12-8 record in ACC play.
- Qualified for its fourth straight and 13th overall appearance in the NCAA Tournament. The tournament appearance marked the eighth time head coach Jose "Keno" Gandara has led the Hurricanes to the tournament.
- Advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament after sweeping South Dakota State.
- Earned the program's highest ranked win after upsetting defending national champion and top-ranked Texas in a reverse sweep in Austin. The loss marked the Longhorns' first at home since 2014, while the win was the 200th of Gandara's career.
- Notched ranked wins against No. 5 Stanford, No. 15 Georgia Tech, and No. 25 Arkansas.
- Two Hurricanes earned a spot on the AVCA All-America list, with Flormarie Heredia Colon earning third-team honors, and Grace Lopez being named an honorable mention selection.
- Heredia Colon, Lopez and Ariana Rodriguez were named to the AVCA East Coast All-Region team.
- Heredia Colon was a first-team All-ACC selection, while Lopez earned a second-team nod.
- Eight Hurricanes collected individual ACC weekly honors throughout the season.
- Rodriguez reached the quarterfinals of the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris while playing with the Dominican Republic national team.

2024-25 ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

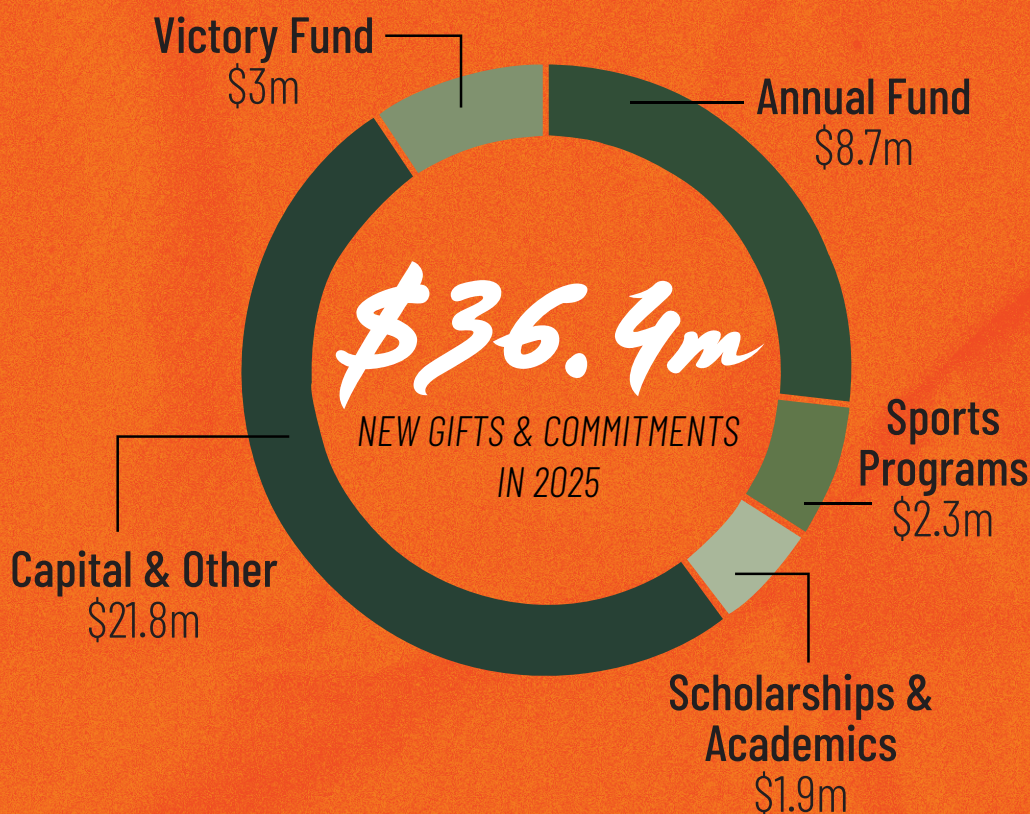
Miami Athletics posted a fundraising total of \$36.4 million during the 2024-2025 year – the second-highest annual total in school history. That number included six gifts of \$1 million-plus; the Top 4 gifts given by first-time donors to UM; 21 major gifts closed in the last half of the year; the most raised for women's athletics; and the most raised for Olympic sports. The department also surpassed its Ever Brighter Campaign goal of \$225

million over 10 years. Three of the campaign's Top 10 gifts were received in FY25 including two of the top four of all time.

The \$40 million expansion of the Carol Soffer Indoor Practice Facility will add 15,600 square feet, highlighted by a new, state-of-the-art strength and conditioning center including a football-exclusive weight room and a sports science lab.

The recent launch of "The U Standard" philanthropic initiative prioritizes our fundraising efforts to meet the needs of the new college athletics landscape, including the debut of the Victory Fund to support revenue sharing with student-athletes. Since establishing the fund in March 2025, over \$2.5 million has already been raised.

MIAMI ATHLETICS FUNDRAISING



BY THE #s

7,465
total donors

\$1.75 million
gifts to women's athletics –
most raised in a single year
in the history of Miami Athletics

6
\$1 million+ gifts from first-time
donors to athletics

13,786
total number of donations

2024-25 COMMUNITY SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

In recent years, University of Miami student-athletes have been national leaders when it comes to community outreach.

That continued – in championship form – during the 2024-25 academic year.

In February, the Hurricanes learned that they had once again won the NCAA Team Works Community Service Competition.

It marked the third time since 2018 Miami has won the championship, and the recognition was a special source of pride for both student-athletes and staff – especially given that the Hurricanes are the only program to win the title three

times.

“This is super special because it shows Miami is more than just athletics,” said pitcher Brian Walters. “Miami is about taking care of the people. It’s one of the things they taught me when I got here. It’s like, ‘You have a big opportunity, not just as a baseball player, but as a person, to change people’s lives.’”

During the last academic year, 99 percent of Miami student-athletes donated their time and talents, totaling 8,536 hours of community service that resulted in an economic impact of \$296,970.

The Hurricanes spent time writing to 155 pen pals in South Florida

schools. They served meals at the Miami Mission, provided Thanksgiving dinners for foster and adoptive families, and hosted track coaching sessions and swimming lessons for local youngsters, among other outreach efforts.

And the goal is to continue that positive work as a new year begins.

“I think Miami is known as a really, really big city with a lot happening, and that’s true,” said Jess Hurley, Miami’s Associate Director of Student-Athlete Development and a former Hurricanes swimmer. “But when you go into the communities, it’s such a tight-knit community. That makes what we do even more special.”



2024-25 ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

University of Miami student-athletes had another strong showing in the classroom during the 2024-25 academic year.

In November, the Hurricanes posted an NCAA Graduation Success Rate of 93 percent, marking the ninth consecutive year and the 12th year in the past 13 that UM has earned a four-year average GSR rate of 90 percent or higher.

Seven of Miami's programs had a 100 percent GSR, including women's basketball, men's diving, golf, rowing, soccer, women's tennis, and volleyball. Additionally, the Hurricanes notched an NCAA Academic Progress Rate score of 992, with 12 programs achieving

APR perfect scores of 1,000 during the 2023-24 academic year.

Miami student-athletes also posted a 3.35 GPA during the Spring 2025 semester, and 16 programs had a GPA of 3.0 or higher. In total, 76.5 percent of student-athletes posted a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and 59 student-athletes recorded a 4.0 GPA.

"I am proud of our student-athletes for the work they do in the classroom," said Vice President/Director of Athletics Dan Radakovich. "And I am also grateful to our coaches and academic services staff for their commitment to helping our student-athletes succeed in their academic efforts."

During the University's most recent spring commencement, 72 student-athletes representing twelve of Miami's athletic programs earned undergraduate or graduate degrees, led by the rowing team, which had 11 graduates.

This year's graduates included men's basketball scoring leader Matthew Cleveland; two-time NCAA swimming qualifier Giulia Carvalho; 2022 NCAA diving champion and seven-time All-American Mia Vallée, and 2025 indoor track All-American Gabriella Grissom.



FACES IN THE CROWD

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos



In each edition of *Hurricanes Magazine*, we'll spotlight some of the student-athletes who are rising above the competition in each of their respective sports and making a difference for Miami.

Our summer edition includes a freshman who quickly made an impact and helped the Hurricanes baseball team put together a memorable postseason run, a golfer who set the tone for her squad all season long, and a pair of track and field athletes who reached new marks and times this season.

Get to know Hurricanes AJ Ciscar, Desmond Coleman, Olivia Grønborg, and Maddie Scheier.



AJ Ciscar, Freshman

AJ Ciscar came to Miami with an impressive high school resume. He helped lead Fort Lauderdale's St. Thomas Aquinas to four district titles, earned All-County recognition twice, All-District honors three times and was the 2024 Broward County Scholar-Athlete of the Year. And his success continued in Coral Gables. During his first season as a Hurricane, Ciscar posted a 4.46 ERA in 66.2 innings pitched. He notched 65 strikeouts, allowed just 16 walks and held opponents to a .222 batting average, the lowest number among all of Miami's starters. Ciscar helped lead the Hurricanes back to the NCAA Tournament's Super Regional round for the first time since 2016 and was named a first-team Freshman All-American by D1Baseball, a second-team Freshman All-American by Perfect Game and earned a spot on the ACC All-Freshman team this spring.



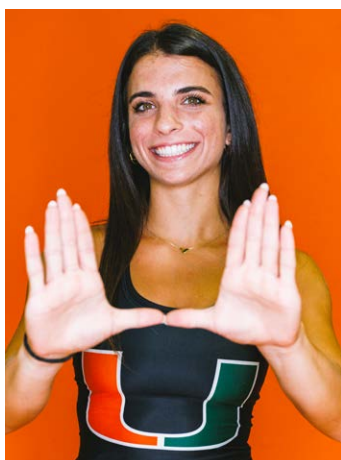
Desmond Coleman, Junior

Desmond Coleman just wrapped up his first season in orange and green, but his name is already etched in the Miami record book. The thrower, a transfer from Liberty University, owns the third-longest mark in program history in the discus after he recorded a throw of 59.07 meters in March. Also in March, Coleman recorded a mark of 59.68m in the hammer throw, good enough for fifth-longest in program history. Coleman finished the year with a throw of 58.58m in the discus at the NCAA Track & Field Outdoor Championships to earn the first All-American honors of his career.



Olivia Grønborg, Junior

A member of the Danish national team who was part of the team that won the 2019 European Team Championship, Olivia Grønborg came to the U.S. with plenty of international experience. After a season at Nova Southeastern, Grønborg transferred to Miami in 2023 and as a sophomore last year, added her name to the Miami record book. She shot a career-low 65 (-7) in the final round of the Pat Bradley Invitational, her score tying for fourth in program history for an 18-hole performance. This season, Grønborg won the Hurricane Invitational with a 54-hole score of 208 (-8) and recorded a team-best five top-10 finishes. She also led the Hurricanes with a 72.48 scoring average.



Maddie Scheier, Sophomore

On and off the track, Maddie Scheier had an impact. The distance runner earned her first collegiate cross country win in the fall when she posted a time of 17:44.22 in the 5K of the FAU Invitational. That is the seventh-fastest 5K time in school history. In the spring, Scheier continued posting impressive times. She recorded a time of 4:25.55 in the 1,500 meters, a mark that ranks fourth in program history in April and set a new school record in the 3,000m steeplechase with her time of 10:48.62 at the Wake Forest Invitational. Scheier was also recognized for her efforts in the community this year at both the Celebration of Women's Athletics and Hurricane Honors, where she won the Outstanding Community Service Student-Athlete Award.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW: ORLANDO FRANKLIN

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

Like many former Hurricanes football players, Orlando Franklin tries to return to Miami's campus as often as possible.

When he does, he'll check in on practice and try to get a glimpse at how the current Hurricanes are doing. He'll say hello to familiar faces. And during more than a few of those visits in the past, Franklin often found himself facing the same question when he'd bump into Dave Wyman, Miami's Senior Associate Athletic Director for Academic Services.

"Every time I was in South Florida, I swung by the school and would go by the athletic department and Dave Wyman would always say something to me," Franklin recalled. "Whether he was chirping or not, he'd be like, 'Hey, when are you going to come back and finish this thing up?'"

That "thing" was the psychology degree Franklin began pursuing during his time as an offensive lineman at Miami, the degree he didn't quite finish after he needed surgery – and time to recover – in the weeks and months leading up to

the 2011 NFL Draft.

Today, Franklin has an answer to that question – for Wyman, or anyone else that might ask.

In May, Franklin was one of 72 Miami student-athletes who earned degrees during the University's spring commencement exercises. It was a moment nearly 14 years in the making, one Franklin couldn't help but celebrate with his family and friends, especially given some of the academic struggles he'd overcome in the past.

"When I first got to high school in South Florida, I had a 1.9 GPA when they converted my grades from Canada, so I was academically ineligible my junior year," said Franklin, who was born in Jamaica and grew up in Toronto before eventually enrolling at Atlantic High School in Delray Beach. "I had to retake some classes through a credit lab, got eligible in my junior year. The following year, I played football and ended up going to the University of Miami. ...

"There were people telling me that I wasn't going to graduate high

school back in the day, so the emotions that came with walking across that stage and getting a degree from a place like the University of Miami was unbelievable. ... There was a lot of emotion that came with it."

For Franklin, those emotions ran the gamut from pride to happiness to gratitude.

He was proud of himself for having the courage to return to the classroom, albeit a virtual one on Zoom. He was nervous to, again, take on the role of student. He was appreciative of the fact Miami allowed him – and other student-athletes like him – the opportunity to return to the University and finish their degrees. He was thankful, too, that people like Wyman provided encouragement and that former football players in situations similar to his inspired him to press forward.

And he was especially grateful to his wife, Kiaana, for giving him the nudge that pushed him back into the classroom.

"She's the person that truly understands me for me," Franklin said.

"There's no judgement. I can be brutally honest and say what I'm feeling or what I'm going through and she taught me that you can work through kind of anything as long as you are communicating at a very high level. It's really been amazing to look at myself today, and who I am today, and a lot of these things, I would not be this person at all without her. That's just a really, really cool thing to me."

While earning his degree is one of his most recent accomplishments, Franklin has certainly found ways to stay busy since his seven-year NFL career ended in 2018.

During his time with the Denver Broncos – who drafted him in 2011 – the offensive lineman dabbled in radio with a weekly appearance on Denver's 104.3 The Fan that eventually paved the way for him to land a regular full-time position with the station after his retirement from football.

It was a way, Franklin said, to stay connected to the game he loved – while keeping his competitive edge, too.

That competitive edge and his love of football eventually led to another opportunity: coaching.

In 2021, Franklin joined his father-in-law Bobby Turner in San Francisco as part of 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan's staff.

Initially, Franklin served as one of the team's Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellows, but when his fellowship ended, Shanahan offered Franklin a full-time position working with the 49ers' offensive linemen.

"When they asked me to come on for the whole entire year, I dropped everything I was doing and now, I'm full-time with the San Francisco 49ers helping coach the offensive line," Franklin said. "And that goes great. ... We got all the way to the NFC Championship [Game] before we lost to the Rams, and the Rams went on to win the Super Bowl the following game."

As much as he enjoyed being back around football on a daily basis, though, Franklin – a father of two – worried how a coaching career might impact his family. After more than a few 20-hour days and stolen naps in the 49ers facility, Franklin opted to walk away from coaching and return to his broadcasting career.

"Hats off to coaches. I realized I couldn't do that," Franklin said. "As a player, it's easy. You get to go home at 5 p.m. Coaches? You're there until midnight. There were many days I slept on the couch in my office. I was like, 'Yep, I'm not doing this. And I'm certainly not signing my family up to move every two to three years.' I knew I couldn't do it without my family ... so I came home, and we're right back into broadcast media at this point. Radio, TV, everything."

Along with his broadcasting work, Franklin also began dabbling in home construction, fascinated by the process of building something tangible from scratch.

Today, Franklin is working with 104.3 The Fan and serving as a college football analyst with ESPN and the ACC Network. He keeps a constant eye on the Hurricanes' progress for both professional and





personal reasons, especially given his connection to head coach Mario Cristobal.

"Mario recruited me to the University back in 2006. He's the reason why I committed. He had Delray Beach and Atlantic High School, and he was my point of contact," Franklin said. "I know his brother, Lou. I remember when Mario met his wife back in the day. We always kept in contact, and it's been unbelievable to see everything he's done. I remember when he got the job, and he came back to Miami. I had a conversation with him. He told me what needed to be done and what they were getting ready to do. So, it's been unbelievable to see these things start to come together. I'm definitely tuning in and every single week, I know what time the University of Miami is playing and he's a big reason why."

As to his next chapter, Franklin says he hasn't ruled out continuing his

education now that he's earned his college degree. He's weighed the possibilities of either earning his MBA or taking the LSAT and going to law school.

Either option, he says, would help him continue navigating his post-football career and he remains hopeful his experience will serve as an inspiration to former athletes who may have walked away from school a few credits shy of meeting their graduation requirements.

"At the end of the day, go and get that piece of paper, because once you get it, nobody can take anything away from you," Franklin said. "It's never too late to continue your education. I'm thinking about two things right now. Do I want to take the LSAT and go to law school? I don't believe I'll ever take the bar, but I can see where going to law school would help with reading contracts and having a different

way of thinking. Or do I want to go get my MBA because I own a couple of businesses? It never hurts to further your knowledge. ...

"If you have an opportunity to continue to further your education, or you have an opportunity to get a piece of paper for yourself, why not do it?"

As to the impact Miami has had on him Franklin said there's no question being a Hurricane changed his life.

"I tell everybody all the time, I'm a Hurricane until the day I die," Franklin said. "I learned how to be a man at the University of Miami. ... It showed me how to be more responsible, more accountable and it showed me how to fight through adversity. It truly really allowed me to understand that I'm comfortable in my own skin."



Photo courtesy of:
Orlando Franklin

CANES CONNECT SPOTLIGHT: ATHLETE ALLY ACTIVISM SUMMIT

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

Khara Vassell understands the challenges that can come with competing at a high-level college program.

A former soccer player at the University of North Carolina, Vassell knows the expectations placed on student-athletes every time they step on the field, be it for practice or a game. She knows how tough it can be to juggle schedules and make sure assignments are completed on time, despite having to miss class for road trips and logging long hours of training. She knows the frustration that can come with recovering from an injury.

And she knows how much more difficult all of that can feel when a student-athlete is already questioning their personal identity or wondering if they fit in with their

teammates.

That's part of the reason Vassell went into sports psychology once her playing days ended, and part of the reason it's been essential for her to be a resource for student-athletes at Miami, where she is now a mental health fellow.

"There are a lot of different things to navigate, and I wanted to be an open voice for other student-athletes who might be kind of having the same struggles," Vassell said. "I got into this field because I wanted to shape the minds of the future and help them feel supported enough to be themselves."

To help her be that advocate, Vassell accompanied four Hurricanes student-athletes to this year's Athlete Ally Athlete Activism Summit in Portland, Oregon. Also on the trip

was Coach May, an assistant rowing coach with the Hurricanes.

It was an opportunity for Vassell, May, and the four Hurricanes to connect with – and learn from – fellow student-athletes, coaches, and athletic department staff members from across the nation who want to ensure all student-athletes feel included on their respective campuses and in their athletic departments, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This year's trip marked the second time Vassell – the advisor for the University's Athlete Ally chapter – has attended the summit with Miami student-athletes.

Both experiences, she said, left an impression.

"As far as what students take away





as a whole, the first thing I think about is community,” Vassell said.

“A lot of times, these student-athletes, especially depending on where they are in the States, might not really have the experience of being their full, authentic selves where some trans or non-binary student-athletes have to misidentify themselves just to be able to afford to go to school and perform in their sports. So, for them to be around other people who share the same experiences is important. ...

“And number two, I think, is sharing knowledge. That’s something that is super important with anything you do, and I think the plenaries and discussions and different groups that Athlete Ally hosted were really, really impactful, whether the student-athletes were allies, or they were actually in the community. ... Community and knowledge, I think, were the biggest things. It’s really a big brainstorming session.”

For Vassell, one of the summit’s highlights was watching as one by one, Miami’s student-athletes stood in front of their peers and opened up about their experiences on campus and beyond.

That was a moment that resonated with May, too.

“I was really proud of them and how

engaged they were. They didn’t treat it like just a fun trip to Oregon. They really took advantage of the space. They made a lot of friends,” she said. “And now, they’re ramped up for this year, to do more initiatives, do more events with the [Athlete Ally] chapter. So, we’re going to see what we can do to add more participation from our athletes and see how we can educate others. I just loved seeing how excited they were throughout our time there. I’m just really proud of them.”

Sam Kavanagh, a middle-distance runner on Miami’s track and field team, made her second trip to the summit this year. For her, going into the event with an idea of what to expect was a boon – a boon that helped her feel more comfortable and confident as she participated in panels and conversations throughout the summit.

“I definitely feel like I had an amazing time, and I think even being able to go there for the second time was even better,” Kavanagh said. “I think the biggest thing for me personally was just being able to be in a space where everyone can relate to me and everyone relates to what the process is like, or the journey is like, of having to advocate for yourself or be in a space where you’re not always going to be fully accepted by everyone or fully understood by everyone. I think that was the best

thing. Everyone there was just so nice, so sweet, so genuine and you didn’t even have to say anything. Everyone just understood you.”

Kavanagh, the president of Miami’s Athlete Ally chapter, said she also left the summit inspired and hopes to take what she learned in Portland to help her continue growing the Athlete Ally community in Coral Gables.

“Sometimes it’s hard to get people to come to events or want to participate in the chapter or be on the [executive] board because not everyone is fully comfortable ... That’s been one of the main struggles. How can I reach out and get people to actually want to come or just be in this space and feel comfortable?” Kavanagh said. “But it’s still rewarding, and I think I’m finally starting to see that more recently, especially because of the feedback I’ve gotten from the other athletes that came with me on the trip and hearing how excited they are to help me with events. Hearing all of their ideas and the impact the trip had on them was amazing. And I know it can only get bigger from here.

“I think that’s where the rewarding feeling comes from. I’m excited for what’s to come and I’m excited to see what can come from this.”



DEVELOPMENT SPOTLIGHT: DELP & MARTIN FAMILIES

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

Cleves Delp didn't graduate from the University of Miami. Neither did Rod Martin.

And while the two friends now spend significant amounts of time in South Florida, neither of them are from Miami, nor do they have any kind of deep ties to the University.

That hasn't stopped them and their families from seeing Miami's potential or believing in the University's mission – both academically and athletically.

"Obviously, we'd heard about the University over the years," said Martin, the former Chairman and CEO of Voya Financial. "And now as we've learned more about the size of the University, and the medical and hospital facilities connected with it – which is impressive by itself – coming to Miami, it just seemed to be a very logical point of entry to get connected with a university that seems to be on a real ascension, both in terms of what

it's doing with athletics as well as academics."

Added Delp, the founder of financial consulting services Cleves Co., "Rod Martin and Deb [Martin] and Kathy [Delp] and I saw an opportunity to show leadership in coming from places other than Miami and demonstrating a connection with the community."

For the Delp and Martin families, fostering those connections meant making significant commitments they hope will impact the lives of Hurricanes student-athletes and coaches for years to come.

Earlier this year, the two families worked with Assistant Vice President of Athletics Development Brian Campbell to establish a pair of enduring endowments.

One – the Cleves and Kathleen Delp Endowed Fund for Coaching Excellence – will help the University attract and retain premier coaching talent. It will provide the

foundation for mentorship, consistency, and elite training that the Delps hope will help Miami's football program continue growing as a national power.

The second – the Rod and Deborah Martin Champions of Life Endowment – will help student-athletes have a complete well-rounded experience at Miami that will include career readiness support, financial literacy education and leadership development that, the Martins hope, will help Hurricanes student-athletes be ready for life after graduation.

And while the Martin and Delp families shared a similar goal to support the University, each had their own distinct reasons for creating the endowments they did.

"Rod's company strongly focused on financial literacy at Voya, where he was the CEO and it's very important for these students to have financial literacy and be able to maximize the opportunities the

University provides for them going forward, as far as job placement and overall career development,” Deborah Martin said. “That’s something as a former educator I felt strongly about.”

Said Delp, “Who doesn’t love to cheer for the home team, right? I was drawn to athletics, and in particular, to the football team. That’s why we designated our gift in the way that we did. And my vantage point is this – Miami is a value play, right? It’s been over 20 years since they’ve had a national championship, and it appears there is a huge desire to put greatness at that level back into the program. To be part of that process – which has already begun, by the way, this isn’t the beginning; we’re closer to the end than the beginning – felt like a cool opportunity. That’s why our support went for the coaching staff in that regard.”

For both families, college athletics have long been a passion.

Deborah Martin earned her mas-

ter’s degree at Syracuse University and spent time attending many Orange basketball and football games with her family.

Cleves Delp, meanwhile, played baseball at Hillsdale College and is set to be inducted into the school’s Athletic Hall of Fame later this year. All five of his and Kathleen’s children have played sports at Hillsdale, with the family’s youngest son, Winston, currently on the Chargers’ baseball team.

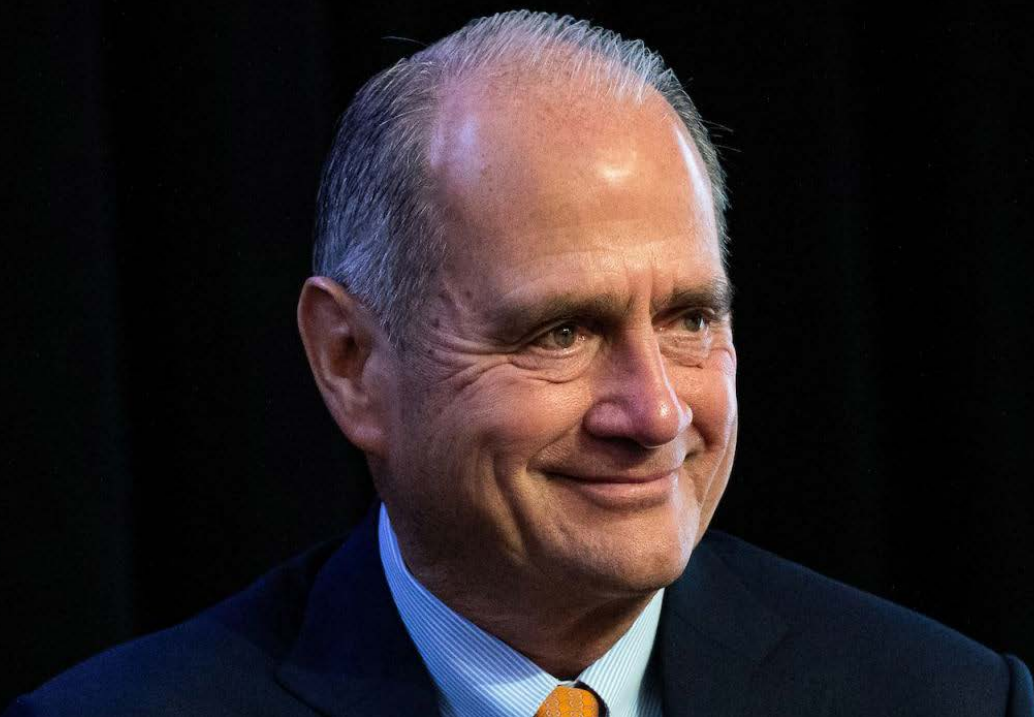
For Delp, there was another very specific reason he felt called to support both the Miami community and Hurricanes athletics.

“My angle on Miami is that it’s a place where, candidly, few are from Miami, right? There are so many first and second-generation Americans particularly from places in Latin America and I have found that to be so inspiring,” Delp said. “It feels to me like the American dream lives in Miami like no other city in the United States of America, in part because so many

of those first or second-generation Americans came from a place where they lost their freedom and had to start again. Miami is a place where people come from all over the world, literally. I happened to come from Ohio, but I was really struck by that.”

Delp – who has also made significant gifts to the University of Toledo football program, among other charitable efforts – noted football head coach Mario Cristobal, the son of Cuban exiles, is part of that American dream. The same can be said for baseball head coach J.D. Arteaga.

“I’m a big fan of the American dream. And I thought I loved this country until I met people who had their freedom taken away,” Delp said. “Let me tell you, you appreciate freedom in a whole different way, at a whole different level, when it’s been taken away from you and you had to start over again. That’s the story of the coach. It’s the story of Miami. And it’s in part, the story of the University of Miami. So, yes,



it was very important to us and a great tie to that fine school.”

With a new academic year set to begin in August and more Hurricanes student-athletes making their returns to campus, the Delps and Martins say they’re both looking forward to attending more Miami athletic events and showing their support for the Hurricanes in person.

They hope, too, that their efforts will inspire more fans of the program to find ways to support the University and the athletic department.

“It would be great if others can see folks like Rod Martin and I who have parachuted into Miami and

found ways to support and love the University of Miami,” Delp said. “I’d like others to say, ‘Maybe I ought to go on that journey, too.’ It’s really to initiate the idea that you don’t have to have graduated from Miami or be from Miami to see the beauty of that school and in particular, the football program.”

Added Rod Martin, “Speaking for Deb and I, because we came at it just a little bit different than what Cleves and Kathy did, but again, it’s the career preparation, the financial literacy piece, the professional development and all the soft-skill development. Having [student-athletes] gain as much confidence in those skills as they do in their athletic skills, that is going to serve

them and whatever community they choose to be a part of, whether that’s Miami or any other great city in the country. It’s a small step, but I think it’s something there’s a big need for and we hope this is just the first little foundation of what we, and others in the community can do, to help them become successful in every way possible beyond athletics.”



Photo courtesy of:
Rod and Deborah Martin



Photo courtesy of:
Cleves and Kathleen Delp



GETTING TO KNOW ... CARLOS POLANCO- ZACCARDI

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

His college journey started not far from his hometown of Columbus, Ohio.

But after his freshman year, Carlos Polanco-Zaccardi felt compelled to make a change.

He wanted to experience life in a bigger city. He wanted to be somewhere warmer. And he wanted to see a different part of the country, all while attending a bigger, more well-known school.

And so, even though he'd never visited Miami, he applied to the University of Miami, transferred, and found himself living a life he could never have imagined – as both a student studying business and finance and one of the most iconic mascots in college athletics.

Early into his Miami experience, Polanco-Zaccardi attended an information session for students interested in trying out to become Sebastian the Ibis and was intrigued.

"I called my mom later that day and I was like, 'Hey, I think this is super awesome and crazy. What do you think about me trying out?' and my mom was like, 'Go ahead and go. What's there to lose?'" Polanco-Zaccardi recalled.

He tried out, became Sebastian and for three years, helped create memorable moments for Miami's fans, student-athletes and, of course, himself.

Hurricanes Magazine asked Polanco-Zaccardi to share some of his story, and what it was like to suit up as Miami's beloved mascot.

Here's what he had to say, in his own words...

HM: Now that your time at Miami is finished, how would you describe your Miami experience?

CPZ: "Being a student was amazing, honestly. Me, personally, I'm not a fan of small, college towns. I like to go visit them, especially for like a football game, but I love Miami because of the wide variety and diversity we have to do different activities every single night. And the city aspect, that's what I really enjoyed about moving here.

"I would say as a student, I loved seeing all the different countries and nationalities of the friends that I have. They've come from everywhere around the world. ... People from the Northeast, people from the West Coast, international students. I just love how diversified Miami is and the University also reflects that [diverse] representation. It's been amazing to allow myself to be friends with people of many different backgrounds and cultures."

HM: Why, ultimately, did you decide you wanted to try out to become Sebastian the Ibis?

CPZ: "It was the third day I was in Miami. I never did a college visit to Miami. I had never been to a city like Miami before I moved here. It was a real leap of faith, and I was just like, 'I want to go, and this is going to be awesome.' And when I was at CanesFest, where they had all the clubs and organizations at the Watsco [Center], I passed by the Cat Five student section and there was a guy handing out flyers to students. And out of all the students that walked by, this guy pointed to

me specifically and was like, 'Hey, man, come here for a second. I'd love to talk to you.' At first, I actually said no, I wasn't interested. But then I told myself, 'You came here to Miami because of the opportunities. Why are you denying yourself this opportunity?' ... So, I went back to talk to the guy, and it turns out it was Jake Schloemann, the Seb from the Class of 2022. He told me about his whole college experience. ... He talked about all the cool perks with the traveling and the experiences, and he gave me a flyer and was like, 'Hey, there's this meeting next Tuesday.' He talked about graduation and that was the cherry on top [for me], the graduation reveal and getting to be the last student to walk the stage and close the ceremony.

"I called my mom later that day and I was like, 'Hey, I think this is super awesome and crazy. What do you think about me trying out?' and my mom was like, 'Go ahead and go to the meeting. What's there to lose? If you don't make it, it is what it is, but you went and you tried. But if you make it and enjoy it as much as you can, once you graduate, you'll have no regrets.' And that's exactly what happened. Also, for me ... college football is my favorite sport to watch. For me to have that experience, ties to like a student-athlete lifestyle and then also representing the University, that was one of my favorite things about being Seb and why I decided to try out."

HM: What was it like to go through the tryout process and becoming Sebastian?

CPZ: "I noticed the most enjoyment I got from Seb, or the greatest satisfaction, came when I put other



people first. ... At football games, Seb's got to go to different spots. There are lots of demands for him. But I would try my best to stay behind and take a few extra photos if there was a little kid that had been waiting for 15 minutes. Or if we were walking away, and I'd see a little kid that wanted me to sign something, I'd try to do that for them because that's a memory they can remember for the rest of their lives."

HM: What are some of the challenges that come with being Sebastian?

CPZ: "Part of it, I would say, is the mental part of it, understanding you're not Carlos. You're not the person you embody. When you're in the suit, you embody something greater than yourself. Understanding the history of The U is very important. And understanding the characteristics of Seb and what he embodies is very important. That's what makes the Sebastian experience more enjoyable or not. ... You have to have the same character, mindset and energy Seb has. It can make your two hours in the suit very fun, or it can be kind of miserable and very long.

"The secrecy thing is hard as well.

I would say 20 to 25 people knew who I was during my time as Seb. I had friends I'd known for more than two years that didn't find out until graduation. ... so, I would say those two things were the hardest things about being Seb."

HM: What were some of your favorite moments or events as Sebastian?

CPZ: "Well, the first one would definitely be the Bahamas trip and the engagement to Gigi. I'd never been to the Bahamas before and Seb, I don't think, has traveled internationally in more than 10 years. It's been quite a while. I'd also say witnessing the women's basketball team's Sweet 16 win and reaching their first Elite Eight, against Villanova [in 2023]. ... To be able to storm the court, to see them make history, and I'll never forget seeing the [reception] Katie Meier got from the fans who stayed to applaud the team. They were all absolutely ecstatic about doing something that the women's team had never accomplished before. ...

"And then I would say the football game at Louisville in 2024. It was like my homecoming game. My family got to drive down and see me in suit for the game. We got pic-

tures at the end of the game, pre-game, and I loved that. It was very meaningful. ... That was the first time my dad got to see me in the suit, and it was just awesome. And it was a fun game overall. I got to do so many cool, fun things that I really enjoyed, but that's probably my top three."

HM: How would you describe the essence of Sebastian and what is it that you think makes him so special?

CPZ: "I would say Sebastian represents more than just the University itself. I think he represents the entire city of Miami as a whole, when it comes to his swag, when it comes to the fun, when it comes to his character. ... People soak up Sebastian's energy and his vibe everywhere he goes. And again, that's one of the things I love about him, the difference you can make when you step in the suit. In some ways, all eyes are on you. It's up to you to make sure you can establish a great presence and experiences for people when you're in the suit."

HM: So, tradition dictates that Sebastian reveals himself at graduation. What was that experience like for you?



CPZ: “That was the greatest moment I’ve had in my life so far. That was the greatest two minutes I’ve ever had. The lights were so bright, that I couldn’t see the back row of the Watsco Center, but I could see a full crowd from onstage, celebrating. My family, in the front right row, hooting and hollering the entire time and then being able to wave to them and blow them kisses from the stage. It was three years of hard work and grinding and suffering and fun, and those two minutes made it all worth it and that’s something I’ll carry with me for the rest of my life.”

HM: So, how did people react when they found out you were Sebastian?

CPZ: “A lot of people were awestruck that I was Sebastian. Some of them couldn’t see it at first. They couldn’t see me doing something

like this, and others just didn’t put the pieces together. I tried so hard to come up with as many crazy excuses and cover-ups as I could for when I couldn’t go places or do certain things. ... It was fun, though. For three years, I was keeping kind of like a fantasy, superhero life, like Batman and Bruce Wayne.”

HM: Now that your time as Sebastian is finished, and you can reflect on the whole journey, what did it mean to you to be part of the flock?

CPZ: “I always tell myself this is the second-greatest thing I’ve ever done in my life. The first was transferring to The U. If I had never transferred, I would have never been able to go through this journey. I think for me, just helping others, putting people first and seeing how you can really make an impact on the community and for people, learning what it was like to be more

than just yourself, that was the greatest satisfaction.

“There were times where I felt too tired or personal things came up and maybe I wasn’t in the mood to suit up, but those kinds of moments also allowed me to just appreciate that I could be Seb and bring other people joy. That was awesome. And I think the support I got after my reveal was just one of the coolest things. ... There are people who are inviting me to their tailgates next season, thanking me for being Seb ... I’m just happy. I was more than blessed and honestly, very honored to receive all that love and all the kind things people were saying.”

MIAMI MED: DR. MEREDITH COSTELLO AND DR. MATTHEW WIEFELS

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

Meredith Costello never imagined a simple interaction early during her time at Miami would change her entire college experience – and help her prepare for the challenge of a lifetime.

As a freshman from South Dakota still adjusting to college life, Costello was making her way across campus when she was stopped by a coach for the Hurricanes' rowing program who told her she might want to consider trying out for the team.

Though she'd never rowed, and the idea of early-morning training sessions wasn't exactly appealing, Costello was intrigued enough that she took the coach's suggestion and tried out for the Miami rowing team.

She wound up spending three years rowing for the Hurricanes, all while completing Miami's medical scholars program, and majoring in biology and minoring in chemistry.

In May, Costello's academic journey at Miami came to an end and she became one of two former Hurricanes student-athletes to graduate from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

Also earning his medical degree was former distance runner Matthew Wiefels, who competed on both Miami's cross country and track and field teams.

Today, both Costello and Wiefels say their experiences as student-athletes helped not only define their college experiences at Miami but helped them hone the skills and work ethic that made it possible to handle the rigors of medical school once their undergraduate degrees were complete.

"The biggest thing for me, the time management was huge. But I think the other thing was learning to thrive in uncomfortable situations," Costello said. "I think medical training, in general, it's a very much learn-on-the-go experience and you can prepare as much as you want, but your attendings, your residents are always going to be asking you questions that you don't know the answer to. So, learning to be okay with that, and not getting frazzled in tough situations, athletics in general really helps you develop those characteristics from a very early age and then [in] college athletics, the stakes are higher. I think that was super helpful. And I think also just learning teamwork

skills. Medicine is a very team-based profession, whether that's working with other doctors, nursing staff, different lab techs, radiology, you have to learn to deal with people with different backgrounds and get things done for your patients. That's where I think being a part of the rowing team – which is a big team – helped."

Added Wiefels, "Being a student-athlete gave me a lot of structure in my schooling. It helped me do what I needed to do. It helped me stay on task and not get too distracted. I think that transitioned over very well in medical school. I knew how to make time for everything that I needed to do. If you have class at this time, this means you need to eat at this time, and set aside this time to run, and then go to bed at this time, study this amount of time. I really did try to carry over that kind of structured schedule as best as I could, and I really think it helped."

With their undergraduate and post-graduate academic careers now behind them, Costello and Wiefels are preparing to take the next steps in their medical journeys.



Photo courtesy of:
Dr. Meredith Costello



Photo courtesy of:
Dr. Matthew Wiefels

For Costello, that's meant heading west to Seattle where, in July, she began her residency in neurosurgery at the University of Washington. Wiefels, meanwhile, began his residency in otolaryngology at the University of Oklahoma, also in July.

And while each may be practicing a different specialty, both say they are making longtime dreams a reality.

Wiefels, who also spent time in the U.S. Army Reserves and tutored Miami student-athletes while attending medical school, has known he wanted to be a doctor since middle school, where he developed an affinity for both math and science.

"I love all of this. I've always been into science and math, but I also like the practical applications of science, and I like working with people a lot," Wiefels said of his decision to pursue

medicine. "I thought medicine would offer a good combination of both of those things. ... and ENT [medicine], I really like the mixed nature of the specialty. I love doing procedures, but I also like to treat patients medically, too. It's really offered a good combination of both of those things, which I'm really passionate about."

Costello, meanwhile, initially thought about studying engineering. But she was always fascinated by how the brain works. That fascination – and a less-than-exciting physics class – set her on a new course, one that helped bring her to Miami and eventually, join the medical scholars program.

"I always knew I wanted a career of service and that was a huge reason I decided to go into medicine," Costello said. "So, I did some shadowing in neurosurgery while I

was in undergrad and even though I really went into medical school pretty open-minded, what drew me to neurosurgery was honestly the people, the attendings and the residents I spent time with. There's a lot of people in the hospital that are working really crazy hours and neurosurgeons are typically close to, if not the top of that list. But I felt like when I was with them, they truly loved what they were doing and were so passionate about it. It didn't matter how long they were there or how late in the day it was; they loved what they did, and they were doing it for their patients and that was what I wanted in my career."

Both Costello and Wiefels concede that while it wasn't always easy managing their responsibilities as student-athletes and aspiring doctors, the hard work they put in has most definitely been worth it.

And now, as they begin their medical careers, they hope their experiences at Miami can show other athletes who dream of becoming doctors that while there may be long days and unexpected challenges, pursuing excellence in both competition and medicine are possible.

"Being a student-athlete, some people might say it's a kind of like a distraction if you want to become a doctor; that it might take up too much of your time," Wiefels said. "But I credit my time as an athlete to being where I am today. If you work hard in the classroom and you work hard on the track, find good men-

tors in your sport and in your classes, that will take you far. There are people that want to help you. That was actually one of my favorite things about it all, the people that I got to work with.... Stay focused on everything, keep your head down, work hard and it can happen."

Said Costello, "I think the demand of being a student-athlete and being pre-med, you have to make a lot of sacrifices. And I think sometimes, it takes a long time for those sacrifices to be worth it or to see them pay off in the long run. I think surrounding yourself with good people, people who are also hard-working and going after their goals

– even if they're wildly different from yours – having those types of people around you can help foster that within yourself. And the other big piece of advice is to make sure you are doing it for the right reasons. Don't do it because your mom or dad wants you to be a doctor, or you want to make a lot of money. ... You've got to be doing it because you truly love it and you're truly interested because on the hard days, that's what's going to get you through."





CANES CHRONICLES: SWIMMING & DIVING REUNION

By Rick Remmert

The year was 1975, when the University of Miami was nicknamed "Suntan U."

Across the globe, Saigon fell, and the Vietnam War ended. At home, gas cost 57 cents a gallon, Bruce Springsteen released "Born to Run," Ford introduced the F-150 pickup truck, and "Jaws" broke movie box office records while scaring a generation of beach goers.

At UM, only two years after becoming the founding American university to award Division I athletic scholarships to women, Miami captured the first of back-to-back Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) national championships in swimming and diving.

As part of Homecoming 2025, the University of Miami and its M Club will celebrate the half-century an-

niversary of those championships with the 50-year reunion of the 1975 and 1976 women's swimming and diving teams on November 7-8.

The returning champs will be honored during the M Club Welcome Home Reception on campus on November 7. And the next day, they will be recognized again with an on-field ceremony during the Homecoming football game pitting the Hurricanes against Syracuse at Hard Rock Stadium.

The foundation of Miami's meteoric rise to the top of collegiate women's swimming and diving was unquestionably the awarding of scholarships in 1973. Just a year later, the Hurricanes took second at the 1974 AIAW championships.

UM next stepped it up to first win and then retain the top spot the following two seasons. Miami won the 1975 title under long-time

head coach Bill Diaz and repeated in 1976 under first-year women's head coach Charlie Hodgson.

Both championships were aided by the expert tutelage of head diving coach Tom Gompf. Joining an abundance of their standout performers who likewise were elected, all three coaches would later see their accomplishments recognized with induction into the UM Sports Hall of Fame & Museum.

"Those early years were exciting beyond imagination," said Hodgson. "The swimmers and divers were very dedicated and worked very hard. They were receptive to new ways of training, new techniques, and were willing to train seriously in the weight room ...a very new thing back then, especially for women."

Workouts and weights paid rapid dividends as UM swimmers





Photo courtesy of:
Ibis Yearbook

and divers achieved 20 individual All-American recognitions in 1975, and 28 more in 1976, with both teams having four relays that earned All-America honors.

In those two seasons, Sharon Berg and J.B. Buchanan each earned seven All-America recognitions in individual events plus three more in relays. Robin Brannman was a five-time honoree individually and twice more in relays.

Those championship years also saw Jodi Yambor and Pat Hines named four-time All-Americans as individuals and four more in relays; Leesa Sward four solo and three relay; Jenny Bartz four individual and one relay; Dawn Frady three times individually and four in relays; and Melissa Briley earned four All-America honors in diving events.

For Dr. Jodi Yambor, her decision to become a scholarship athlete at The U rewarded her first as a student-athlete and later both personally and professionally.

"In addition to the team and individual swimming championships,

some of my teammates are still my best friends 50 years later," Yambor said.

"I was able to achieve my ultimate dream of becoming a sports psychologist at UM in the 1980s – Miami's first and believed to be the first female full-time nationally in that role - and get to work with teams and players who would win national championships."

Both Hodgson and Yambor are looking forward to seeing teammates at the reunion and where a lifetime of memories was made 50 years ago ...but it wasn't always easy.

"The swimming budget was tight, and we drove to all meets except nationals – me driving 14 girls and their bags, all in one van on 10-hour trips," Hodgson said.

"Once, we competed at FSU in 20-degree weather. There were icicles hanging from the starting blocks," he laughed.

The weather is anticipated to be more seasonable for Homecom-

ing Weekend 2025 and one of the highlights of the year for The U's Alumni Programs/M Club unit. There, varsity letterwinners from all sports are invited back to campus.

Last year, over 325 monogram club members and guests enjoyed food, beverages, and the company of their athletic alumni sisters and brothers from across eight decades at the Welcome Home Reception. Letterwinners took home gifts and M Club was honored to feature one of Joe Echevarria's first public addresses as UM's seventh president.

As the University of Miami celebrates its Centennial Year, it will be fitting that the 1975 and 1976 AIAW national champion swimming and diving teams will be honored on their 50-year anniversary.

As some of the favorite daughters of The U, assuredly these women will be remembered among the proudest and finest to ever represent the orange, green, and white.

HONORING EXCELLENCE: CELEBRATION OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

This past April, the University of Miami community gathered to honor some of its most inspiring student-athletes at the 11th annual Celebration of Women's Athletics held on the Coral Gables campus at the Donna E. Shalala Student Center.

The event, which featured ESPN's Andrea Adelson as emcee, recognized the accomplishments of 11 talented student-athletes in competition, in the classroom, and in the community.

Among the honorees were two national champions – tennis player Alexa Noel and diver Chiara Pellacani – and two competitors at the 2024

Summer Olympic Games in Paris, Pellacani and volleyball player Ariana Rodriguez.

Also recognized this year were Giulia Carvalho (swimming), Aaliah Dawson (rowing), Tori Grambo (soccer), Gabriella Grissom (indoor track and field), Olivia Grønborg (golf), Sanaa Hebron (outdoor track and field), Maddie Scheier (cross country) and Cameron Williams (basketball).

It's a group that has earned All-ACC and All-ACC Academic recognition, broken school records, and compiled hundreds of hours of community service and outreach during their time in orange and green.

And during a panel that featured Dawson, Scheier and Williams sharing their Miami experiences, all three noted how their time as Hurricanes has been impacted by the community spirit around them.

"I think that team aspect and community aspect is so important," Scheier said. "And here at Miami, it's there. I feel like athletes from other teams, trainers and coaches from other teams, everyone supports each other and it's such a great community that's so special to be a part of."



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