

HURRICANES

MAGAZINE

WINTER 2026



A SEASON TO
REMEMBER

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A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS



Welcome to the winter edition of *Hurricanes Magazine*!

This issue spotlights our football team's incredible run to the College Football Playoff Championship Game. It was a memorable postseason and thank you to everyone who joined us along the ride!

We also take a look back at Flormarie Heredia Colon's record-setting volleyball campaign and look ahead to the 25th reunion for our 2001 baseball team's national championship under legendary head coach Jim Morris.

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I hope you enjoy this edition of *Hurricanes Magazine*. Thank you again for your continued support and Go Canes!

Dan Radakovich

Vice President / Director of Athletics

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Radakovich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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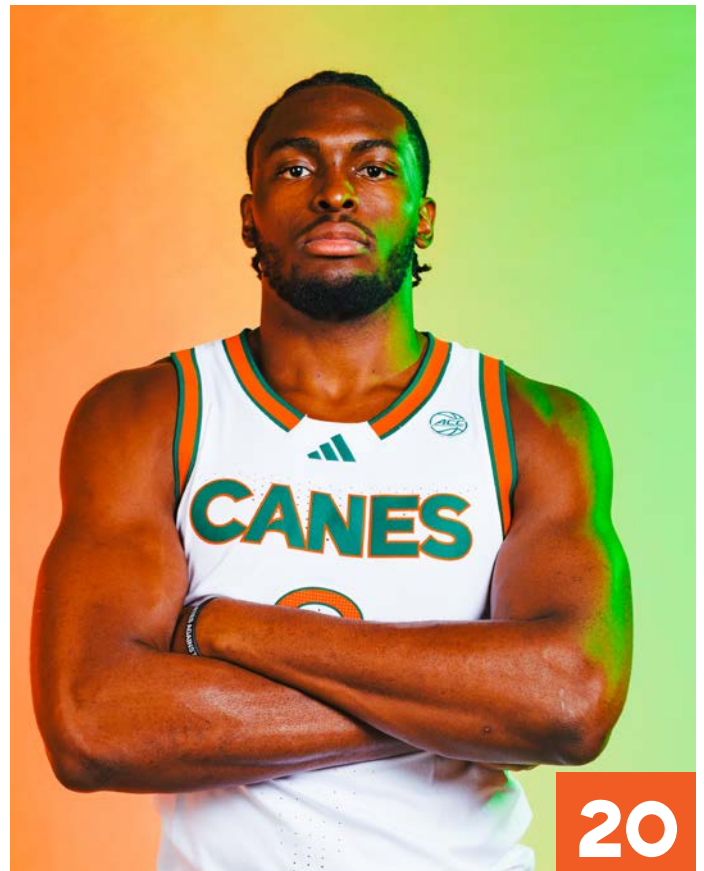
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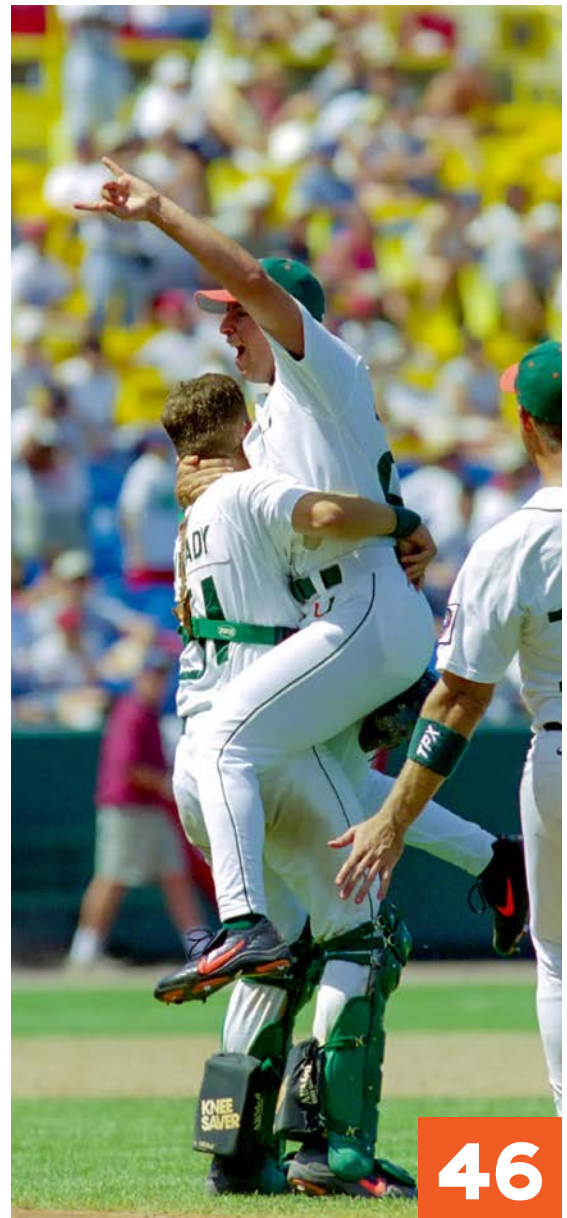
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A SEASON TO REMEMBER

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

In the tough moments after Miami's magical season ended with a gut-wrenching loss in the College Football Playoff Championship, Carson Beck sat in front of countless bright lights and cameras trying to make sense of what had just happened.

Bryce Fitzgerald, meanwhile, wandered the end zone at Hard Rock Stadium while crimson and cream-colored pieces of confetti fell around him, and Indiana celebrated its first national championship on the other side of Miami's home field.

And in the tunnel leading into a quiet Miami locker room, a group of Hurricanes greats including Ed Reed, Reggie Wayne and Andre Johnson did their best to offer as much encouragement and support as they could to the current Hurricanes, a group who'd just fin-

ished an improbable, history-making postseason run that put Miami back on college football's biggest stage for the first time in more than two decades.

No, the Hurricanes hadn't won the national championship they'd so desperately wanted, falling just short of the title after a 27-21 loss to the Hoosiers. But through all their disappointment, there was plenty of pride, too.

Pride in the fact that this team was the first in program history to win 13 games. Pride in the fact this team rallied after a tough mid-season stretch to win four straight conference games in dominating fashion and push their way into the playoff. Pride in the fact that this team, led by a group of gritty veterans and homegrown stars, had forged a remarkable turnaround, helping Miami go from 5-7

just three years ago to championship contender.

There was no reason, their head coach said, for any of them to hang their heads.

"Any loss, of course, is always going to be painful, but I'd like to reflect upon the fact that these guys won 13 games this year and won [three] postseason playoff games," Mario Cristobal said. "Got to the playoffs for the first time in Miami history and beat four top 10 teams, beat seven top 25 teams, won the Fiesta Bowl, won the Cotton Bowl, and I'll take full blame, [we] were one drive short of winning the national championship.

"I don't see anything negative, but I do see pain in moments like this and we should, if we're a competitor that's worth anything. You

feel it and you use it and you give those feelings a direction. I know the guys coming back will, and I know that the guys moving on will also use that as fuel.”

In the coming weeks, the Hurricanes will start preparing for the 2026 season, but before that work begins in earnest, here’s a look back at a run that won’t be forgotten in Miami any time soon.

LUCK OF THE IBIS

Every season opener brings with it a sense of anticipation.

But when that season opener is a top 10 matchup against a longtime rival, well, that will definitely get hearts pumping.

On Aug. 31, 10th-ranked Miami welcomed sixth-ranked Notre Dame to Hard Rock Stadium and as they have so many times before, the Hurricanes and Irish delivered a memorable game.

For Miami, the season opener marked the debut of several standouts who’d make a difference all season long.

Quarterback Carson Beck – a Georgia transfer who wasn’t sure quite what to expect from himself after undergoing offseason elbow surgery – was solid, completing 20 of 31 passes for 205 yards and two touchdowns.

His first scoring pass came early in the second quarter when Beck capped an eight-play, 70-yard drive with a 28-yard touchdown pass to freshman Malachi Toney, one of the jewels of Miami’s 2025 recruiting class.

The freshman – just 17 at the time – kicked off what would be a record-breaking season with six catches for 82 yards. He’d later go on to earn ACC Rookie of the Year honors.

Meanwhile, fellow receiver CJ Daniels – an LSU transfer – had one of the season’s most memorable catches with his one-handed, 20-yard touchdown grab just before halftime.

For much of the night, the Hurricanes and Irish found ways to respond each time the other made

a big play, but in the end, it was a 47-yard field goal from Carter Davis with 1:04 left that lifted the Hurricanes to a 27-24 win.

“Win, lose or draw today, we would’ve had 11 more games guaranteed. Obviously, it feels a lot better to come out of here with a win in the fashion that we were able to get it done in,” Beck said that night. “But man, the biggest thing that I’m so proud of our guys is that we just played hard, and we never gave up. Even when [Notre Dame] was able to bring it back there in the fourth quarter, we didn’t give up and then we made plays when we needed to.”

It was a win Miami celebrated that night – and one that would prove a massive difference-maker for the Hurricanes later in the year.

STATE CHAMPS

After dispatching Notre Dame, Miami turned its focus to the rest of its non-conference schedule and a slate of Sunshine State matchups against Bethune-Cookman, USF, Florida and Florida State.



The Hurricanes came out of that stretch unscathed, with a pair of top 25 wins to boot, given that both USF and Florida State were ranked when they faced Miami.

In those four games, the Hurricanes outscored their opponents 148-44, though the Seminoles gave the Hurricanes their toughest test.

Miami, playing in its first road game of the year when it traveled to Tallahassee on Oct. 4, built a 28-3 third-quarter lead before Florida State rallied in the fourth to score 19 unanswered points.

A 35-yard field goal with 20 seconds left pulled the Seminoles within 28-22, but Miami recovered the ensuing onside kick, took a knee and held on for the six-point

win.

It marked the second straight year the Hurricanes were able to claim the “state championship” after beating the likes of USF, Florida and Florida State. And after the win over the Seminoles, Miami’s coaches and players made it clear being the state’s top team – and beating Florida State – would always be among their top priorities.

“It’s such a big deal. This has nothing to do with me, but I played here and I know what it means to play in this game, especially up here in Tallahassee and what a victory means, especially in a game [where] it’s been years since both teams were ranked in the top 20,” Cristobal said. “So many high school rivalries, players playing against each other. ... It lasts an entire year and man, it’s

such an important thing. I mean, being a University of Miami Hurricane means that this game, you find a way to get it done.”

MIDSEASON SETBACK

While an ugly fourth quarter ultimately didn’t cost Miami against Florida State, the Hurricanes weren’t as fortunate over the course of the next few weeks when some miscues and mistakes popped up against a pair of conference foes.

After their win over the Seminoles, the Hurricanes returned to Hard Rock Stadium to continue ACC play against Louisville and the Cardinals wasted little time using some trickery to put the Hurricanes in a quick 14-0 hole.

While ultimately Miami cut into that deficit, the Hurricanes struggled to run the ball against Louisville and worse, Miami had four turnovers and committed nine penalties.

The result? A 24-21 Louisville win and Miami’s first loss of the season.

The Hurricanes bounced back after a week later with a big win over an overmatched Stanford team before heading back out on the road for an ACC showdown against SMU.

And the Mustangs, who earned a spot in last year’s College Football Playoff, were able to – like Louisville – capitalize on a series of Miami mistakes.

One of the Hurricanes’ 12 penalties extended SMU’s final drive in regulation and helped set up what





would be a game-tying field goal for the Mustangs.

Miami had the first possession in overtime but was unable to score after Beck's third-down pass inside the SMU 10 was intercepted.

SMU went on to score on its ensuing possession sealing a 26-20 win and hand the Hurricanes their second loss of the season and more critically, their second loss in conference play.

"You've got to be a grown man and face reality. We didn't take care of business and that's completely on us," Cristobal said after the loss in Dallas. "If you're raised the right way and you have the right stuff inside of you, you go right back to work. You don't know how things shake out. This is certainly a wild college football season, and the focus has to be on us taking care of our business."

The Hurricanes' two losses took a toll, knocking Miami from No. 2 in the AP Top 25 poll that was released on Oct. 5 to No. 18 in the poll released on Nov. 2.

Worse, when the initial College

Football Playoff rankings were released on Nov. 4, Miami came in at No. 18 – well out of the 12-team playoff field, prompting college football analysts across the country to write off the Hurricanes' championship hopes.

PLAYOFF PUSH

Not long after Miami's disappointing loss to SMU, the Hurricanes gathered for a team meeting that many of them would later say was a turning point in their season.

For Cristobal, the goal of the meeting was simple: remind the Hurricanes what kind of team they really were.

So, the coach and his staff played a series of clips from Miami's first five games of the season, games in which they'd delivered the big plays and big wins that had made them one of the nation's top-ranked teams.

There was no audio over any of the highlights, no sound in the darkened team meeting room. Instead, there was just what Cristobal called "the power of choice."

That day, the Hurricanes made the decision to get better and to focus

not on the games in which they hadn't been at their best, but on what was ahead of them, one week at a time.

A 38-10 win over Syracuse followed. Then came a 41-7 victory over NC State. Miami then traveled to Virginia Tech and put together a 34-17 win over the Hokies. And finally, the Hurricanes ended the regular season with a 38-7 road win over Pittsburgh.

During the course of that four-game stretch, Miami's offense found a spark in Toney, who showed his ability to not only catch the football, but throw it and run it, too. The Hurricanes' defense was a force, holding its last four opponents to an average of just 10.3 points per game.

And little by little, the Hurricanes rose in the polls, including in the College Football Playoff rankings. Still, during much of that stretch Notre Dame – the same team Miami beat in its season opener – was ranked higher.

Understandably, that didn't necessarily sit well with the Hurricanes or their fans.



"I think we've shown that we can compete with anyone and that we have a really, really talented team, not just a few talented players here and there, but a really talented team that is really efficient and that plays really, really well in all three phases of the game," Beck said after the Pittsburgh win when asked how he'd pitch Miami's playoff resume to the CFP selection committee. "Again, like I said, I think we compete with anybody and we've done a good job of focusing on what we need to focus on to get to this point. It's kind of up in the air and not in our hands at this moment, but I think we've done what we've had to do."

Still, despite Miami's strong regular-season finish, a tiebreak kept the Hurricanes out of the ACC Championship Game and there was little they could do but wait through college football's conference championship weekend to learn their playoff fate.

"IT'S CRAZY TO SEE HOW FAR WE'VE COME"

The first weekend of December brought an end to Miami's agonizing wait.

On the afternoon of Dec. 7, the College Football Playoff committee announced its final playoff rankings and the 12-team playoff field.

In those final rankings, the Hurricanes finally jumped over Notre Dame to grab the No. 10 seed – and the last at-large berth in the playoff field.

And for Cristobal and some of the veteran Hurricanes who'd been on Miami's roster in 2022 when that team went 5-7, it was vindication

and another step forward for the program.

"To see this turnaround is honestly just such a great feeling," said defensive end Akheem Mesidor. "You see Coach Cristobal's works, bringing guys in. You see [defensive line coach Jason Taylor's] work; a bunch of guys, a bunch of people, players, and staff members who helped completely change the trajectory of this program. It's an amazing feeling.

"When I look back at that team, and I look at this team, it's crazy to see how far we've come."

As the No. 10 seed, the Hurricanes were handed a significant test for their first playoff game: a showdown with No. 7 Texas A&M in College Station.

It ultimately proved a test the Hurricanes would pass.

In front of more than 100,000 raucous Aggies fans, Miami outlasted Texas A&M, 10-3, in a defensive showdown where points were plenty hard to come by.

Still, a late touchdown from Beck to Toney and a game-sealing interception by freshman safety Bryce Fitzgerald gave the Hurricanes their first postseason victory since 2016 and booked the Hurricanes another trip to Texas, this time to face defending national champion Ohio State in the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Eve in the CFP quarterfinals.

For many outside Coral Gables, the talk heading into that game was on the last postseason meeting between the Hurricanes and

ing between the Hurricanes and Buckeyes: the 2003 Fiesta Bowl.

But Cristobal and his team made it clear: their only focus was on this game and this Buckeyes team.

Their laser focus paid off, with Miami putting together an impressive 24-14 win that featured another strong rushing performance from running back Mark Fletcher Jr., a 72-yard pick-six by Keionte Scott and another impressive outing by the Miami defense, which notched five sacks and held the Buckeyes to just 45 rushing yards.

That win just before the calendar sent the Hurricanes to the CFP semifinals and the Fiesta Bowl, where a matchup against Mississippi awaited.

In Arizona, the Hurricanes and Rebels put together a thriller that featured four fourth-quarter lead changes and was ultimately decided when Beck engineered the game's final scoring drive, a drive that went 75 yards in 15 plays and ended when the quarterback scrambled into the end zone on a 3-yard touchdown run with 18 seconds left.

Miami's defense kept Ole Miss out of the end zone in the final seconds, the Hurricanes clinched a 31-27 win, and after running through a brutal, three-game playoff gauntlet, Miami was back in the national championship game, where it was set to face top-seeded Indiana.

"It was just like everyone counted us out. I told everyone in the locker room the day after the SMU game we can't lose faith. We've got to keep going. We can't lose faith," re-

ceiver Keelan Marion said after the Fiesta Bowl. "We got in the huddle [after] they scored; we've got three minutes left. I told everybody in the huddle, 'We've got three minutes left for our lives. ... Lay everything on the line. Three minutes of our lives right here to take it back home.' You saw what happened."

ONE LAST GAME AT HOME

The Hurricanes' return to Miami after the Fiesta Bowl was cause for plenty of celebration.

Their plane was greeted by a water-cannon salute at Miami International Airport. Their buses were cheered by fans and well-wishers as they made their way back to campus and in the days leading up their College Football Playoff Championship showdown against top-seeded Indiana, all of South Florida seemingly celebrated.

But for players like Rueben Bain Jr., Wesley Bissainthe, Fletcher, Toney and the rest of the Hurricanes who call South Florida home, the championship game was particularly special.

For them, it was a chance to win a title in front of family, friends and the communities that had been so instrumental in getting them to this moment.

"I don't have [any] words. It feels like a dream, just a local kid growing up in Miami, able to play in the National Championship in Miami," Bissainthe said. "[There's] nothing else I could ask for, something I worked my whole life for. I'm very excited for this moment."

Unfortunately for Miami, the Hurricanes would be no fairy tale ending

to this magical season.

Indiana weathered the Hurricanes' second-half surge and, led by Heisman Trophy winning quarterback Fernando Mendoza – a Miami native himself – the Hoosiers held on for a 27-21 win.

It was as tough a finish as the Hurricanes could have imagined.

Miami had the ball and a chance to score in the game's final minutes, but the last pass of Beck's collegiate career was intercepted with 48 seconds left and, in the end, it was the Hoosiers, not the Hurricanes, who celebrated one last time.

Still, there's no doubt the 2025 Hurricanes left a legacy at Miami that won't be forgotten and through the tough moments on the final night of the season, their coach had nothing but the highest of praise for all of them.

"I think it can't be understated what these guys have done. I can't understate that," Cristobal said. "The ability to take a team on November 1st that was lower than low and to find a way every single day [to] hold people accountable, demand the best of them, bring energy and enthusiasm to practice and get the results on a weekly basis, [to go] 1-0 for I think seven weeks straight, it is a testament to what they are. It's a testament to their choice and their determination and being true men of action.

"They're the best thing that's happened to Miami, the University of Miami, and our community in 25 years."



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208	---	237
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LEGACIES CELEBRATED: JIM LARRAÑAGA AND KATIE MEIER

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

They were two of the most impactful coaches in Miami basketball history and now, Jim Larrañaga and Katie Meier's names hang from the rafters at the Watsco Center, the same building where their teams won so many games and created so many memories.

On Jan. 20, before Miami's game against Florida State, the Hurricanes celebrated Larrañaga's 13-plus seasons at The U by raising a banner bearing his name.

During his time at Miami, Larrañaga became the program's winningest coach with a record of 274-174 and before stepping away from coaching in 2024, he led the Hurricanes to six NCAA Tournament appearances, including the program's first Final Four berth in 2023.

He also led the Hurricanes to their first Elite eight appearance in 2022, their first ACC Tournament title in 2013 and their first two ACC regular-season titles in 2013 and 2023.

Days after Larrañaga was honored, the Hurricanes also celebrated Meier and her historic 19-year career at the helm of Miami's women's basketball program by raising a banner in her honor as well.

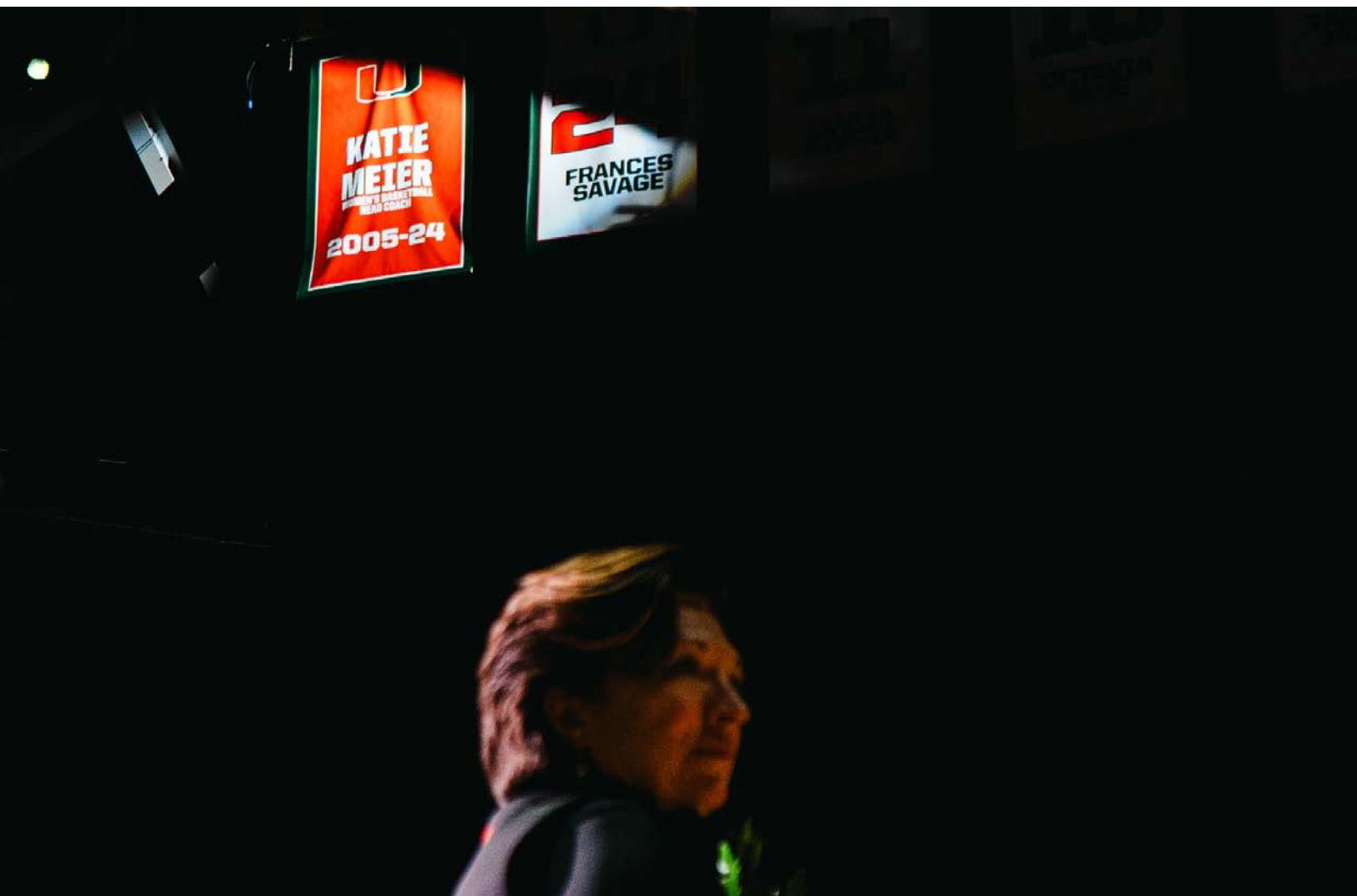
Under Meier – whose 362 career wins made her the school's all-time winningest basketball coach, men's or women's – the Hurricanes made 10 NCAA Tournament appearances and posted 11 20-win seasons.

In 2023, she led the Hurricanes through a magical March run that culminated with the program's first Elite Eight berth.

She was named the Associated Press National Coach of the Year in 2011 and the USA Basketball National Coach of the Year in 2013 and remains a part of the athletic department staff as a special advisor to Miami Vice President/Director of Athletics Dan Radakovich.

"It's a big deal, I think, because it just reminds you of all the people that were there with you and for you and stuck by you during the dark times, too," Meier told the ACC Network of the honor. "It's not all about all the great times. It's the memories when you were down and doubting yourself and people just grabbed you and said, 'Hey, build your legacy. You can do this.' And that just means a lot."









GETTING TO KNOW ... ERNEST UDEH JR.

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

Not long after men's basketball coach Jai Lucas was hired last March, he made it clear: recruiting Florida's top players and finding ways to keep them home was going to be a priority for him and his staff.

It's a philosophy Hurricanes center Ernest Udeh Jr. can appreciate.

Though his basketball journey initially took him from Orlando's Dr. Phillips to Kansas and later to TCU, the senior center now finds himself back in his home state playing for the Hurricanes.

It was important for him to play not far from home, and he said it's up to him and fellow transfers Tre Donaldson, Jordyn Kee and Malik Reneau – all native Floridians – to help set the tone for Miami as the Lucas era begins.

"I feel like Florida basketball culture is better than anybody really. I don't care if I'm being biased," Udeh said. "Basketball is something that you really can never take away from us and it's grown. Granted, we have a great football culture in this state, but at the end of the day, I feel like basketball is just up there with it."

Midway through the regular season, Udeh and his Sunshine State teammates have made their presence felt.

Through Miami's first 19 games, Reneau and Donaldson are the Hurricanes' leading scorers, averaging 19.6 and 16.0 points per game respectively. Udeh, meanwhile, is Miami's leading rebounder averaging 10.3 boards and 6.9 points per game.

As Miami prepares to head into a crucial ACC stretch in February, Hurricanes Magazine caught up with Udeh to talk about his basketball journey, what it's meant to become a Hurricane, and what he'd like to see Miami accomplish this season.

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

HM: This team has been able to get off to such a good start through the nonconference part of the schedule, despite the fact that it's a whole new team. How were you able to build some of that chemistry so quickly?

EU: "I just think in the summer, the summer really helped us a lot. [Those of] us from Florida understand how the culture is down here, so it was already easy for us and we knew each other beforehand. This is basketball. We understand that maybe, you're coming from a new place, or you've been here the previous year, whatever the case may be. The squad you're with currently, we all have one goal in mind and that's to be playing in April, you know what I mean? So, I feel like just us building that chemistry and that culture really was kind of easy. I don't want to make it seem like it's something that just any team can do, because you'd be surprised. You go to some places, and there's really no culture. But we were able to do it. And I love my teammates. This is a really great team."

HM: You said this is a great team and you love your teammates. What's made you feel so good about the squad so early?

EU: "We understand what it takes

to win. We've had our moments where, mentally, we've made mistakes. And obviously, you go to the drawing board, come in the next day for film and we talk about it, we go through it. But overall, you can tell this is a team that understands how to make winning plays, understands how to make that one more pass, understands how to, for me, set the screen in a specific spot ... But, like I said, we know how to play the game of basketball well at a high level. Granted, we're able to be in this position playing under [head coach Jai] Lucas, so, just overall, I feel like for us, it'll be mental. It's not anything skill-wise or athleticism that's going to hold us back. Like Coach said before it's going to be us."

HM: You mentioned head coach Jai Lucas. What's it been like to be part of his first team at Miami?

EU: "It's really everything that I expected. As a player being recruited, you understand how this goes. Everyone's going to tell you kind of what you want to hear. No one's ever really going to just recruit you saying these terrible things and negatives about playing for them. But, with him, it was everything I expected. Being on the AAU circuit, I played against his Pop's [John Lucas II] AAU team and obviously that kind of sprung a relationship. Him knowing me, and me knowing him, to now being recruited by his son, it's just everything coming full circle.

"I tell people all the time, he's a high-character individual. You see it with his family. I just knew for sure what he was telling me is what I was going to get. He wasn't going to sugarcoat anything. He was going to give it to me straight. And

again, that's the kind of coach that I want to play for. It doesn't matter if I like or don't like what he's saying. I know it's going to be exactly what he's telling me and that's exactly what it's going to be."

HM: How would you describe his coaching style?

EU: It's authentic for sure. It's no fluff, no fluff at all. Like I said, it's something I mentioned before: I really respect him because he's not going to make anything sound a specific way. And again, me being a high-level athlete, that's something that you want out of a coach. ... A coach, like I said, that's not going to sugarcoat anything, that's not going to make something seem like something else. He's just going to give it to you straight and unfiltered. And he wants the best for all of us. He wants the best for me. He wants the best for this program, for this school. That's something you can really appreciate and take in and you're almost awed at."

HM: What's it been like for you to be able to come back and play in your home state and share the court with guys that are also from Florida?

EU: "Peaceful. Mentally peaceful. Basketball has taken me all across the globe, whether it be over in Europe, Hawaii, the Bahamas, Canada. I've been everywhere. And for me, just being able to play basketball at the highest, highest level at home, it's something I wish every hooper is able to experience, you know what I mean? My family's here; guys that I know; the culture, everything almost feels like second nature. I don't have to think too much about it. Again, I'm just think-

ing about on-the-court stuff in totality and that's just really been the best thing for me."

HM: Let's go back to the start of your basketball journey. What drew you to this game when you first started playing?

EU: "The competitiveness. Growing up, my mom, she was an athlete. We're all athletic. I never forgot. I think the first time I started really paying attention to basketball was when LeBron [James] made his decision to go to the [Miami] Heat. My mom was a huge, huge, huge LeBron fan when I was growing up. You'd put the games on, and she's screaming, yelling. ... I just feel like it was the competitiveness that I liked. I played many different sports, everything you could think of. I played golf, kickball, ultimate frisbee. I mean, I played every sport you could think of and just for me, understanding myself and my abilities and what I would be best at and what I was interested in, it was basketball."

HM: When did you start to see basketball was something you were good at and that it could give you a path to college?

EU: "Middle school. I'm a very self-aware person and obviously, in elementary [school], I wasn't really seeing the communication that others were receiving, as far as success for the game. But again, when I got to middle school, I was playing AAU and it started. I feel like that was where I really saw where I could take it."

HM: When you step on the court now, what's your favorite thing about playing basketball?

EU: "Playing for others, honestly. First and foremost, I know my [responsibility] on the court as a player, and it is to this team. I know my role as an individual, but at the end of the day, for me, I find the most joy when I see others succeed. If I'm able to set a screen for my guy and he can go get an easy bucket; if I'm able to plug and let Shelton [Henderson] get a straight-line drive for a dunk, those are really the plays that give me the most joy. Seeing my teammates have success in their own light and shine, just shine, honestly, it's great. I've never been one to really want the spotlight on me. ... I've never been that guy. I know my role and I know the value that I bring to the team, and ultimately, I find joy in that."

HM: Are there any players whose game you like to study as you work to get better?

EU: "[LeBron James], that's my GOAT. I love his game for sure. But obviously, just as far as watching, Deandre Ayton, DeAndre Jordan, of course, coming out of pick-and-roll actions; Bam [Adebayo] ... I love how he's transcended his game, given his opportunity and his role on the team. Again, for me, as a basketball player, I'm always looking to, of course, expand my game and do more in a sense with the team, with one goal of playing in April. I'm honed in on playing my role, so I'm never going to try to play out of what I bring to this team and my best abilities to this team. There's multiple guys I like to study. ... I'm always looking at film. I'm always looking at different ways that I can affect the game. Right now, I'm just making sure that I'm locked in on my role until its second nature."

HM: Is it true you like to play drums? How did that come to be and is it something you still do from time to time?

EU: "Growing up, me and my siblings, we all sang in the church, and we were all in the choir and everything. And obviously, I have a love

for music. ... Without music, I generally don't know what I would do in this life at all and I feel like for me, drums is a rhythm thing. Obviously, everyone sees me dancing and all. I have rhythm. I know I do, so for me, drums is something that I love. Of course, I still play and I don't think it's something that I'll lose because

it just more so finding the temp, finding the rhythm. Yeah, when I get my house one day, I'm definitely having the nicest drum set somewhere in there."



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 winter edition includes a freshman who played a critical role in the secondary during Miami's run to the College Football Playoff Championship, a veteran distance runner who has added her name to multiple places in the Hurricanes' record book and a pair of basketball standouts who are doing their best to help make sure Miami is dancing in March.

Get to know Hurricanes Bryce Fitzgerald, Amarachi Kimpson, Natalie Varela and Tru Washington.



Bryce Fitzgerald, Freshman

A four-star prospect who was rated one of the nation’s top safeties when he came out of Miami’s Christopher Columbus High School, Bryce Fitzgerald arrived in Coral Gables with high expectations and he more than delivered. Fitzgerald finished the year with a team-high six interceptions, including two in Miami’s win over Texas A&M in the first round of the College Football Playoff. He also finished the season with 15 tackles, a tackle for loss, and a sack, numbers that helped him earn FWAAs Freshman All-American honors, along with teammate Malachi Toney.



Amarachi Kimpson, Junior

Amarachi Kimpson was an impact player during the first two years of her collegiate career at UNLV, earning recognition as the 2024 Mountain West Freshman of the Year and the 2024 Mountain West Sixth Player of the Year. At Miami, she’s finding ways to make an impact, too. Through January 25th, Kimpson – who has appeared in all 20 of Miami’s games – is one of three Hurricanes averaging double figures at 13.1 points per game. She is also averaging 2.3 rebounds per game and 2.0 assists per game. She’s also among team leaders with 26 steals on the year.



Natalie Varela, Senior

A former standout at Miami’s Gulliver Prep, Natalie Varela entered her final indoor track and field season having already put her name in the Miami record book. Early in the indoor season, she’s already done it again. In the season opener at the Jimmy Carnes Invitational in January, Varela clocked a 2:44.90 in the 1000m, setting a new Hurricanes record for that distance. Entering the season, Varela already held the program’s third-fastest time in the indoor 800m (2:06.01) and the third-fastest time in the indoor mile (4:50.46). She was also part of the indoor distance medley relay team that posted a school-best 11:27.44 in 2002 and in 2023, she posted a 4:20.04 in the outdoor 1500m, which also set a Miami record.



Tru Washington, Junior

During his time at AZ Compass Prep, Tru Washington developed into a consensus four-star recruit who helped lead his high school program to the finals of the 2023 GEICO National Championship. Last season at New Mexico, Washington earned All-Mountain West Honorable Mention accolades after averaging 11.1 points and 4.0 rebounds per game. Now at Miami, Washington is an integral part of a Hurricanes team that has posted a 17-4 record though Jan. 29. He is averaging 11.9 points and 4.0 rebounds per game with 23 steals on the season and had an 18-point, 10-rebound double-double in a November win over Elon.





A CAREER TO REMEMBER: FLORMARIE HEREDIA COLON

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos



Flormarie Heredia Colon was a wide-eyed freshman still trying to adjust to her new life in Miami and the level of play in American college volleyball when her coach pulled her aside and had her look up to the rafters of the Knight Sports Complex.

There, Heredia Colon saw the names and faces of some of the greatest volleyball athletes to suit up in orange and green, All-Americans like Lane Carico, Emani Sims and Savannah Leaf. All were standouts who'd made their mark at Miami and helped push the program forward after volleyball was restored at Miami in 2001.

And Hurricanes head coach Jose "Keno" Gandara made a prediction. "He would point and say, 'You're going to be there one day,' and my freshman year, I would look at him like, 'Whatever!'" Heredia Colon recalled with a laugh. "I used to tell him, 'Yeah, yeah.' I was never that sure it was going to happen. Now that I realize what we've done together, I'm like, 'Wow.' He really knew it and it was amazing. He had confidence in me since day one

and that helped open things up for me."

Her coach, it turns out, was right.

After Miami played its final match of the season in the second round of the NCAA Tournament, Heredia Colon walked off the court having rewritten the Hurricanes record book and leaving behind a legacy in Coral Gables that won't be forgotten any time soon.

In a November win over Duke, Heredia Colon notched 20 kills to become Miami's career all-time leader. She ultimately finished with 1,896 career kills, eclipsing Carico's mark of 1,749 set between 2008-2011.

And three times this season, Heredia Colon – an AVCA Player of the Year semifinalist, the AVCA Southeast Region Player of the Year, and two-time All-American – set new marks for kills in a single match.

In a five-set win over then-No. 4 Pittsburgh on October 10, the senior outside hitter tallied 38 kills to break the record of 34 set by Olga

Strantzali in 2017. Three weeks later, Heredia Colon broke her own record with 42 kills in a win over Florida State. And days after that, she broke her own record again – this time with 43 kills in a loss against then-No. 7 Louisville.

In between, she notched 37 kills in a win over Virginia Tech and 34 kills in a win over Syracuse, giving her the top five single-match performances in program history. Her 779 kills on the season are also a program record.

She's been named the ACC Player of the Week a record seven times this season and in November, she was selected by the Columbus Fury with the 10th overall pick in the Major League Volleyball draft.

Combine all of that with Miami posting a 27-6 overall record and advancing to the NCAA Tournament for a fifth straight season and the last few weeks of the season felt like a whirlwind.

"It's been amazing. I can't even explain the emotions," Heredia Colon said. "It's finally showing up, every-

thing that I've worked for. I'm just so happy that I've been able to reach a few of my goals. ... This is family for me. Miami is a place that has my heart, and it's everything. I came here; I'm around my people. ... I'm just so happy I get to live this experience here and that God sent me here for a reason."

Heredia Colon may not have known what was in store for her when she arrived on Miami's campus in 2022, but Gandara saw her potential well before that while she was playing high school volleyball at Central Pointe Christian Academy near Orlando.

Her ability to hit was immediately evident. So was her versatility.

But it wasn't just her skill on the court that made Heredia Colon different.

It was her approach to the game.

"It didn't take long to see her ability to hit the ball and her complete skillset to be an outside hitter at the

next level," Gandara said. "But she played with passion. She was this personality on the court that you could just see from day one ... She was fun to be around. And then just getting to know her, learning what her goals were and her ambition to play professionally, we were like, 'Yeah, she's got everything.' She's got an incredible arm; she plays with passion and she's fun on the court and fun off the court. We were fortunate to be able to get her like we did."

For Heredia Colon, who hails from Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, that passion, that love for the game runs deep.

Both of her parents played for the Dominican national team. So did some of her uncles.

That meant she was introduced to the game early on. It didn't take long for her to discover volleyball was going to impact her life, too.

"I always grew up in volleyball. In my family, everybody played for the

national team: my mom, my dad, my uncles," Heredia Colon said with a smile. "I grew up with it, and I fell in love along the way."

Eventually, she earned a spot on the Dominican National Team herself, representing her home country in 12 different tournaments. There she had the opportunity to start building on-court chemistry with one of her future Miami teammates, setter Ariana Rodriguez.

That chemistry – and friendship – is now making a difference for the Hurricanes.

"It all stems from family and culture and playing with the national teams. Our moms played together, so we were always around each other when we were younger," Rodriguez said. "One day, we both tried out for the national team together and there we were. ... We played together on the junior level and this year, she got on the women's national team, and I was able to play with her there too, which just furthered our chemistry."





“She does something new every day in practice and she’s always trying to work on her craft, which I’m very proud of her for. Every day, we’re just amazed by it. It seems like the sky’s the limit for her, and I hope she can continue to develop her craft and become the best player that she can be.”

Heredia Colon’s willingness to challenge herself and keep growing her game was part of what brought her to the United States first for high school, and later to Miami.

“Academically, the University of Miami is really good,” said Heredia Colon, a sports administration major. “But another point that I really looked at was my coaches and the connections I had with them. It was amazing and being in Miami, it’s like home to me. I’m Latina. I’m Dominican. Being here feels natural.”

With the Hurricanes, she’s gone from being an All-ACC Freshman Team selection to a record-breaking two-time first-team All-ACC honoree.

She’s proud of her success and is hopeful her journey has inspired not only some of her younger

teammates, but young volleyball players back home.

She wants those young players to see her as more than a star, but as a bridge.

“I think I’m the first Dominican to have all these merits in a U.S. league. To be from the Dominican Republic and be here, it makes me proud and happy, because not everybody gets to make it,” Heredia Colon said. “In the D.R., a lot of girls don’t know how to get here. Usually, players go to junior college first and then transfer. But I came here in high school, did my last year, and then joined Miami. I hope that through my story and my social media, more girls can get that opportunity, get scholarships for high school and follow the same path.”

And while she has big dreams of playing professionally and representing her country in the Olympics, for now, her focus is simple: helping the Hurricanes win a national title.

The push for that begins in earnest on Thursday.

“I want an NCAA championship.

We’ve been saying it every day in practice. We’ve been practicing so hard, giving 100 percent every day, every time,” Heredia Colon said. “On and off the court, we’ve been so focused and I think we’ve come close to surprising people this year.”

She will leave Miami with a plethora of records, accolades and a resume unlike any other in program history.

But Heredia Colon hopes it won’t be just the eye-popping numbers that people remember.

Her passion for the game, her joy, and her team’s success, all of those matter deeply.

“I want them to remember Flor as being happy Flor, the player that never gave up on the mental game, the player who always had a smile on her face and that her teammates always knew she was there for them,” Heredia Colon said.

“The Dominican Queen, the happy queen who enjoyed her game, who didn’t stress, who brought happiness and energy. I want people to remember that.”



CANES CONNECT SPOTLIGHT: HOLIDAY HELPING HAND

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

Amidst final exams, end-of-semester projects, practices, competitions, and conditioning workouts, more than a few Hurricanes student-athletes found ways to give back to the community during the holiday season.

A day after notching a crucial road win over Virginia Tech in November, Miami's football team hosted its fifth annual Canes Day of Giving, which began with student-athletes shopping to fill Thanksgiving meal boxes that were later put together and given to families from the Miami-Dade County Foster and Adoptive Parent Association at the Carol Soffer Indoor Practice Facility.

That same weekend, the men's basketball team served meals at the Miami Rescue Mission, which assists some of South Florida's most economically disenfranchised individuals.

And both the track and field team and the women's basketball team spent time at Branches, a nonprofit that works to help South Florida's children and their families, while student-athletes from across the athletic department participated in the 25th annual

Hurricane Holiday Shopping Spree for Kids in conjunction with the Hurricanes Team Store, the Bryan Pata Foundation and Milam's Markets.

It was a busy stretch, but one the Hurricanes hope made a difference for countless families and children in South Florida.

"It's such a blessing, not just for the turkeys and the food, but for the camaraderie between the players and the kids," said Shamele Jenkins, the executive director of the Miami-Dade County Foster and Adoptive Parent Association at the Day of Giving event. "To see compassion, nothing can take the price of that."

Said Jessica Hurley, Miami's Associate Director of Student-Athlete Development, "I am incredibly proud of our student-athletes for continuing to step up, serve others, and spread joy in our community, even during the busy holiday season. Their commitment to giving back truly reflects the spirit of teamwork, gratitude, and leading with heart."











WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

DIANA KHODAN

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

Diana Khodan concedes that when she made the decision to pack her one suitcase, leave her native Ukraine and come to the United States to play tennis at the University of Miami, she really didn't grasp how life-changing a move that would be.

She figured she'd just come to the States and play some tennis, earn a degree and if things in Miami didn't work out for whatever reason, well, she'd simply just go back home.

"I didn't really think deeply about it," Khodan said with a smile. "Obviously, I was 18. I was just like, 'We'll try and we'll see. Hopefully, I'll like it. It's Miami, right?'"

She never imagined a global pandemic would upend her college experience. Or that she'd be thousands of miles away when war

broke out in her homeland. Or that a devastating knee injury would cut her college career short.

And she never expected that, thanks in large part to the support she received through all of those challenges, that she'd still be in Coral Gables, working at Miami six years after she made the fateful decision to become a Hurricane.

"To still be here and see how players develop and to help the coaches, to know what it is from the beginning when I lived through all of this myself and to know how these kids feel ... I think I'm just so very lucky to have this opportunity," said Khodan, who today serves as the Director of Operations for Miami tennis. "It's meant so much."

Khodan arrived at Miami in 2019 after ascending as high as No. 80

in the ITF Juniors Singles rankings. She previously represented Ukraine in international competition as a member of the national junior team. And she drew attention from a number of major U.S. programs including Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, NC State, Pepperdine, Syracuse and others after winning a \$10K singles title in Turkey in 2016.

But she chose Miami, felt a solid connection with Paige Yaroshuk-Tews – Miami's Director of Men's and Women's Tennis and head women's tennis coach – and quickly built friendships with her new teammates, friendships that Khodan said helped define her Miami experience.

Those friendships, and her bond with Yaroshuk-Tews came into play significantly, when her fresh-





man season was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. They also provided strength and support in the spring of 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine.

Three days after that invasion, the Hurricanes took to the courts at the Neil Schiff Tennis Center for a match against Clemson wearing decals bearing Ukraine's national colors – blue and yellow – on their uniforms.

It was a gesture that meant the world and reminded Khodan that even thousands of miles from home, she wasn't alone.

"My eyes were watering. I couldn't believe that that's what they did, just for me," Khodan said. "And it was the entire team, and the equipment [staff] that got it done and so many people were involved. ... The support, the messages, the calls, for me and my team, it was a very special moment. But it was tough,

too. It was tough for me to see those [decals] and then realize, 'Oh my gosh, I have to play.' And it was tough for me to play. But knowing what they did for me, I knew what I had to do for them, too. ... I always did my best because they were always there, doing special things for me and I wanted to try and do the same for them."

That season, Khodan posted a 19-9 record in singles play and an 18-10 mark in doubles, rising as high as No. 38 in the ITA doubles rankings with her partner Maya Tahan, before she was sidelined with a season-ending ACL injury.

She got hurt in practice, just days after she and her teammates had played in the first collegiate tennis match at the high-profile Miami Open.

Khodan was devastated, though she later found a way to turn her pain into purpose, returning to the

court four months after her injury as a student-assistant coach.

"I was lucky that Paige told me I could be a student-assistant coach and so, I was still on the court with [my team], which was very relieving to me," Khodan said. "I could stay with them and experience everything with them and try to help. Obviously, I wasn't a 'coach-coach,' because I was still so young. I know tennis, but it's nothing like what Paige knows and what [men's head tennis coach] Alex [Santos] knows, but I was still experiencing matches with them. I was still on the court. I still had fun with them, and I cared about my team, and I wanted them to succeed, even though I couldn't add anything with my actual tennis. ... There were moments that were very tough, because they were my friends and sometimes, you have to speak up and say things they maybe don't want to hear. But I really cared about all my teammates and my friends, and I wanted to find the

the best way to deliver my message.”

Throughout her playing career, Khodan never really considered the possibility of one day coaching or potentially finding another way to stay involved in tennis.

But her role as a student-assistant opened her eyes to a number of possibilities, including her current position.

Khodan became the Director of Operations in 2024, the same year she earned her master’s degree at Miami and today, she is responsible for helping make sure the Hurricanes’ tennis program – both on the men’s side and the women’s side – runs smoothly.

She’s responsible for helping manage clothing and equipment at the tennis center. She also works with UM’s travel agents to help set up travel arrangements for the tennis

teams and helps manage schedules and calendars for Miami’s coaches and student-athletes.

Ultimately, she says, her goal is to help Yaroshuk-Tews and Santos do everything they need to do to keep Miami tennis operating at a high level.

“I guess the best way to describe it is that I’m just trying to make their lives easier, so they have to worry less about the other stuff,” Khodan said. “They spend so much time on the court and trying to help our [student-athletes], and I’m just trying to do all the other things so that they don’t have to worry about it.” For Khodan, having the opportunity to now work with the program she once played for seems a natural continuation of her personal and professional journey.

And she doesn’t take it for granted any time she’s at the courts where she spent so much of her time as a

student-athlete.

“It’s like I heard my freshman year – once a Cane, always a Cane,” Khodan said. “It was such a cool quote, but after my freshman year, and then the year after that, and the year after that, it started to be even more special to me. I realized how big it is to be a part of this school, especially to be a part of the athletic program and to represent the school as a student-athlete and now as staff. It means so much.

“There are times I go out somewhere and maybe I’m wearing a UM shirt or my gear, and people are like, ‘Oh my gosh, what do you do?’ and it just feels so good to represent the school, even if you’re not really an athlete anymore. ... This school has such a big history, a strong history and to be part of it, and see how the athletes are doing and being surrounded by the greatness here is really special.”





SPIRIT SQUADS SHINE: UDA COLLEGE NATIONALS

The University of Miami Spirit Squads turned in impressive performances at the 2026 UCA & UDA College Nationals at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla.

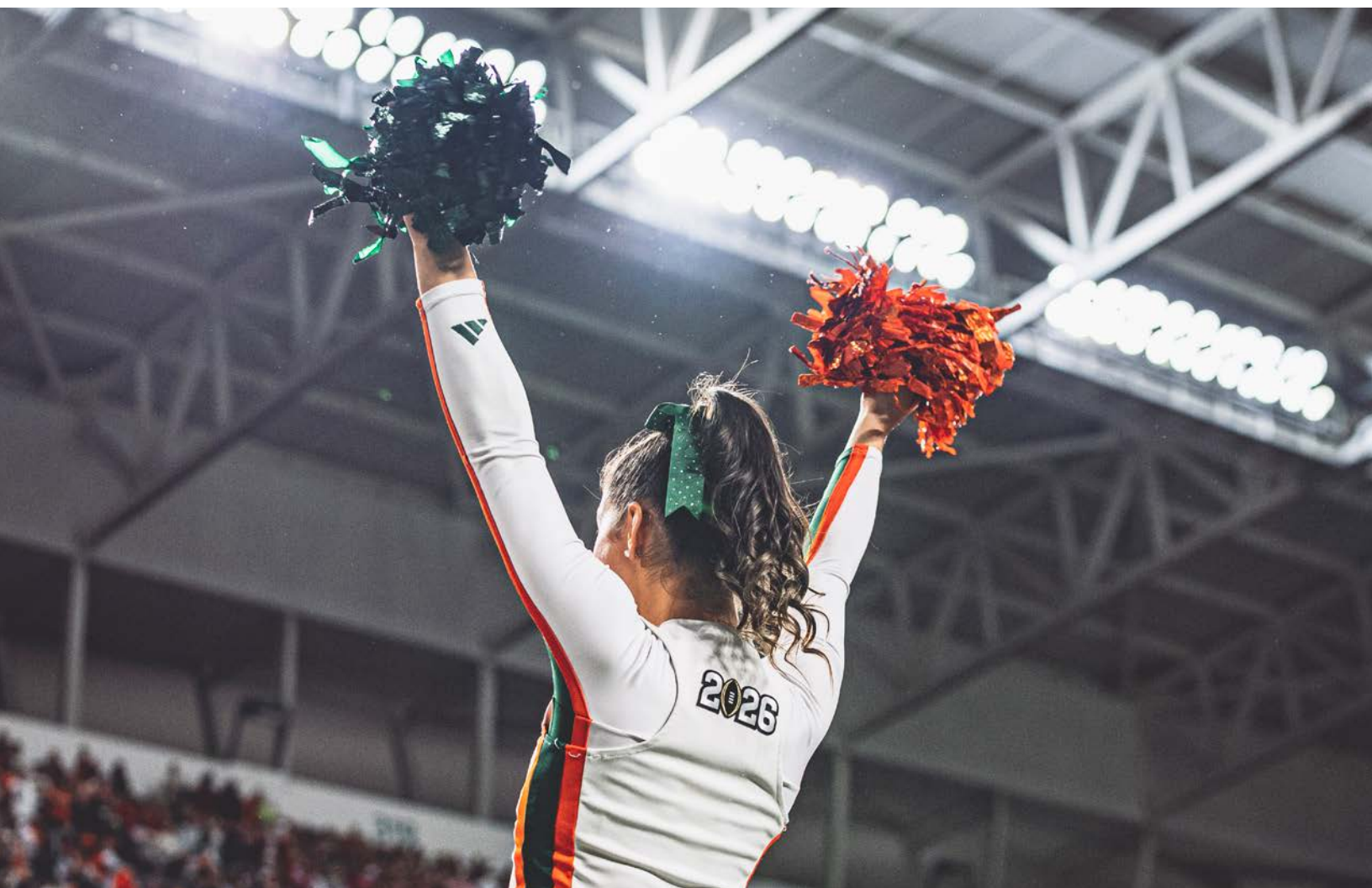
Miami's cheerleading squad placed seventh in the All-Girl Division I Gameday competition. Meanwhile, the SunSations dance team advanced to the Division I Jazz Semifinals for the first time in program history. UM was the only private institution to make it to the semifinals.

"I'm beyond proud of these 23 women and the way they showed up for each other," head dance coach Jonni Rogers said. "The standard has been raised, and this is only the beginning."

After returning from Nationals on January 18, both squads were back on the sidelines the following night at Hard Rock Stadium, cheering on the Canes in the College Football Playoff National Championship Game.

Congratulations to the Spirit Squad!





SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT: AMBASSADORS CHUCK AND SUE COBB

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos

It seemed an odd sight on that particularly warm South Florida day.

Sue Cobb – a former U.S. ambassador to Jamaica, Florida Secretary of State, CEO of the Florida Lottery, partner at Greenberg Traurig and alumna of the University of Miami School of Law – was out for a run on UM's on-campus track when she noticed former Miami athletic director Paul Dee nearby.

Despite the sweltering temperatures and blistering sun, Dee sported a coat and tie, attire that prompted Cobb to jog over and ask what he was doing outside dressed like that.

"He said, 'Well, I've got a really, big problem,'" Chuck Cobb, Sue's husband recalled with a laugh. "He said, 'We're going to have women's soccer, but our track is too narrow. It's oblong ... and we're going to need to make this a little fatter so we can fit the soccer field in the middle of it, and, by the way, you and Chuck wouldn't be interested in being major donors, would you?' And so, we said yes, yes, we'd like to be the major donors."

Nearly three decades later, Cobb Stadium remains the home of the Miami women's soccer team and men's and women's track and field teams, and the Cobbs remain as committed to the University and the Hurricanes as ever.

Last fall, the Cobbs donated a \$1 million gift to create the Cobb Stadium Facilities Fund which will be administered by the Miami athletic department to improve the infrastructure at Cobb Stadium.

The facility features a state-of-the-art, full-size soccer playing field centered inside an eight-lane, top-of-the-line rubber track and along with hosting Hurricanes soccer matches and track and field meets, it has been home to the football team's spring game the last two years.

"We are grateful to Chuck and Sue Cobb for their continued investment in Miami Athletics," Vice President/Director of Athletics Dan Radakovich said when the Cobbs' gift was announced. "Their generosity in establishing Cobb Stadium was one of the most transforma-

tive gifts in our rich athletics history, and the Cobb Stadium Facilities Fund will continue their mission of ensuring our soccer and track and field student-athletes have the best possible resources to compete."

The Cobb Stadium Facilities Fund is just one of the many gifts the family has made to help shape the University over the course of the last half-century.

From inspiring future diplomats by establishing the Ambassadors Sue and Charles Cobb Endowed Distinguished Professor of Practice of Diplomacy at the College of Arts and Sciences to funding multiple scholarships and helping beautify the Coral Gables campus with the Cobb Fountain at Lake Osceola, the Cobbs have created a lasting legacy at Miami that has impacted the lives of countless professors, students and student-athletes.

And the Cobbs wouldn't have it any other way.

"My wife and I have sort of a 'find a need and fill it' philosophy and the track and the stadium was really



Photos Courtesy of the Cobb Family

really along that line,” said Chuck Cobb, the former CEO of Arvida and Disney Development, a former U.S. Ambassador to Iceland and undersecretary and assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Commerce. “Paul Dee said, ‘We’ve got a problem, somebody help us fill it’ and then there’s been some scholarships that we’ve endowed that were kind of specific to particular needs. And one of the things that several professors said to me is that here we are, an international university, but we have almost zero courses in diplomacy. ... So, find a need and fill it. We said, ‘We’d like to bring in some top diplomats and motivate our kids to consider a career in foreign service.’ ... We’re trying to change the culture there.”

The Cobbs’ relationship with Miami dates back to the 1970s when the two Stanford graduates moved to South Florida and Chuck Cobb was asked to join the University’s

Board of Trustees.

He has been on the Board ever since, working with multiple committees and serving three years as Board’s Chairman.

And while there have been plenty of memorable moments in their decades-long relationship with the University, for Chuck Cobb, one of the biggest sources of pride is chairing the search committees that helped the University bring two of its past presidents to Coral Gables: Edward “Tad” Foote II and Donna Shalala.

“That was probably the highlight of my UM experience,” Chuck Cobb said. “Being Chairman was fun, but chairing the search committee that sets the tone for the University was really the most serious, most meaningful [work]. You’re meeting all of these presidential candidates and they all would be great presidents

and trying to decide which one was the best was really fun. It was hard work. Boy, I worked at that.”

There have been plenty of highlights on the athletic side, too, which is to be expected, given that Chuck Cobb played football, rugby and was on the track and field team at Stanford before earning a spot on the 1960 U.S. Olympic Track and Field team as a hurdler.

Sue Cobb, meanwhile, played tennis at Stanford and later became a high-altitude climber who attempted to become the first woman from the United States to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

Their passion for sports and athletics means the Cobbs have been regular fixtures at Hurricanes football, basketball and baseball games over the years and of course, they’ve cheered Miami’s women’s soccer teams and track and field

teams at Cobb Stadium, too.

The Cobbs also have a special affinity for the Cobb Mob, Miami students who have enthusiastically shown their support for Hurricanes soccer throughout the years. Not long ago, the group created t-shirts that were handed out ahead of women's soccer games, much to the delight of the Cobb family.

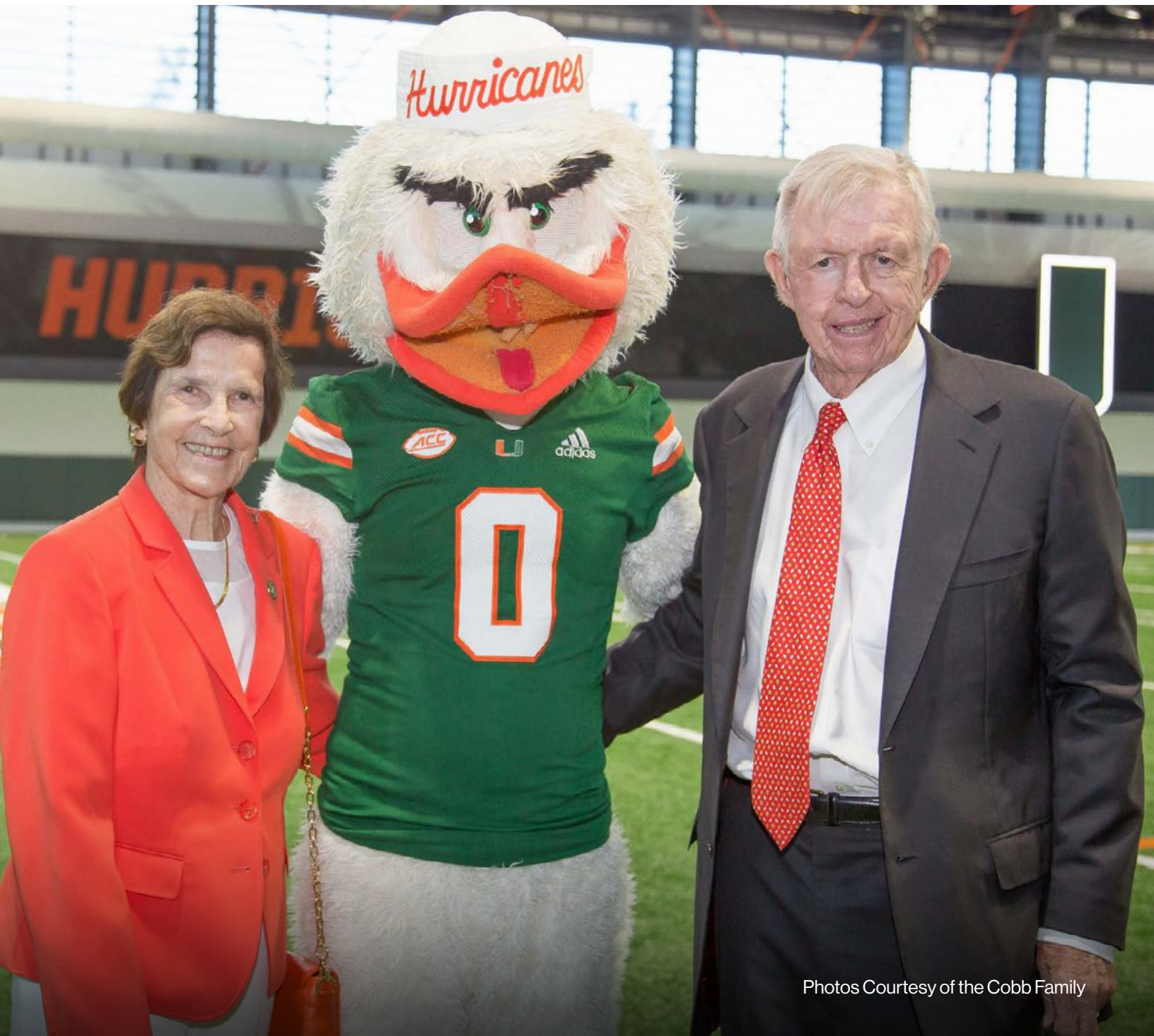
"The Cobb Mob t-shirts, they were all over campus," Chuck Cobb said.

"I mean, everybody was wearing Cobb Mob [shirts] and so we, of course, had them for all our kids and grandkids, and stuff."

Now, with their most recent gift, the Cobbs hope more Miami student-athletes will create lifelong memories of their own and gain invaluable experience in the process.

"[Being a student-athlete] was the absolute number one factor in my life, from teaching discipline to

striving, trying to be the very best. Athletics just does that," Chuck Cobb said. "Many athletes are successful in other life pursuits because of that discipline, because of that hard work, because of that focus. It changed my life and I'm delighted to see that it's changed a lot of lives of a lot of young UM students. ... I want them to have the same opportunities I had, get the same discipline I had, have the same life-changing experiences I had."



Photos Courtesy of the Cobb Family



Photos Courtesy of the Cobb Family



CANES CHRONICLES: CELEBRATING CHAMPIONS

By Rick Remmert

Power, pitching, speed, and defense. All the ingredients were on hand in 2001 for University of Miami baseball to prove they were the finest team in the land.

Driven by the hunger to win it all again as they had two years before, plus a desire to avenge a disappointing end to the prior season, the 2001 Hurricanes rode those motivations to the College World Series national championship, Miami's fourth overall as a program.

During the 2026 season, the University will recognize the 2001 National Champions on their 25-Year Anniversary.

Led by head coach Jim Morris and more than a dozen players who contributed to the 1999 title, Miami won all but one series in '01, went 17-1 on the road and won their final 17 games in a row capped by a nine-game sweep of the postseason.

"It was a great team effort," said Morris, who was named the 2001 National Coach of the Year, his

second such recognition in three seasons. "Every day in practice and in games, the guys gave their best effort."

Intending to atone for having lost in the 2000 Super Regional, the Hurricanes were taking care of business and ranked No. 1 heading into an end-of-March home series against Cal State Fullerton. Cal State swept Miami and the team used that shocking setback to propel the historic run that followed.

"That was the wake-up call," said outfielder Marcus Nettles.

Pitcher Tom Farmer echoed the sentiment, saying "That was a mirror check moment."

And shortstop Javy Rodriguez recalled how the Cal State sweep inspired the Hurricanes for the remainder of the season, "We were not going to let that happen again."

UM would go 28-3 the rest of the way, employing that memorable blend of power, pitching, speed, and defense. The Hurricanes

were dominant in postseason play, outscoring their nine opponents 109-53.

After rolling through NCAA Regional and Super Regional play with five straight wins, Miami continued overpowering opponents in Omaha and setting a College World Series record by averaging 12.3 runs per game.

Outfielder Charlton Jimerson was named the CWS Most Outstanding Player for continually making highlight plays in the field and at the plate, and three teammates joined him on the CWS All-Tournament Team, first baseman Kevin Brown, designated hitter Danny Matienzo, and Farmer.

After belting three home runs and a regional-record 10 RBI in the championship game, Brown was selected Most Outstanding Player of the regional. He was joined on the regional All-Tournament Team by catcher Greg Lovelady, Javy Rodriguez, Jimerson, Matienzo, and Farmer.

"We tried to win every inning, they score two and we try to score three," said Brown of the season and CWS. Noted Javy Rodriguez, "We em-

braced going to Omaha, we loved that. Someone always came up big.”

Farmer recorded victories in the CWS opener and title-clinching games and finished 15-2, one win off the national lead.

“We were a mature team,” Farmer said. “We got hot at the right time. It was fun and it was contagious, winning creates more winning.”

Pitcher Brian Walker went 12-1 on the year and fellow pitcher Kiki Bengochea was 9-4. Closer George Huguet recorded 14 saves and had a 2.03 ERA in 44 appearances and pitcher Luke DeBold also logged 44 appearances with four saves and a 1.74 ERA largely in set-up work. On the season, UM established an NCAA record with

223 relief appearances.

The team stole a nation-leading 228 bases, 68 more than the runner-up squad. Javy Rodriguez led the way nationally with 66 thefts, with outfielder Mike Rodriguez swiping 53 and Nettles stealing 44. Nettles remembers coming to the plate and one opposing catcher asking, “You guys are going to make me work today, aren’t you?”

Defensively the Hurricanes led the nation with 81 double plays and their 53-12 record also was tops nationally.

But at Miami, while statistics are nice, the standard is how you finish. “You expect to win,” said Farmer.

Added Javy Rodriguez, “We always knew Omaha is what we were

working for, and someone always came up big.”

And Brown noted, “You do not want to lose your last game at Miami.”

Of the upcoming 25-year reunion, Nettles said, “It doesn’t seem like 25 years. I remember in the dug-out when Miami was honoring the 1985 [national championship] team, we were thinking those guys are old. We’re the old guys now,” he laughed.

Morris put a ribbon on it all, saying, “Ours was the last College World Series won by Miami, which just shows how hard it is to get to Omaha and win. I couldn’t be prouder of my 2001 team.”







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