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Come Sail Away

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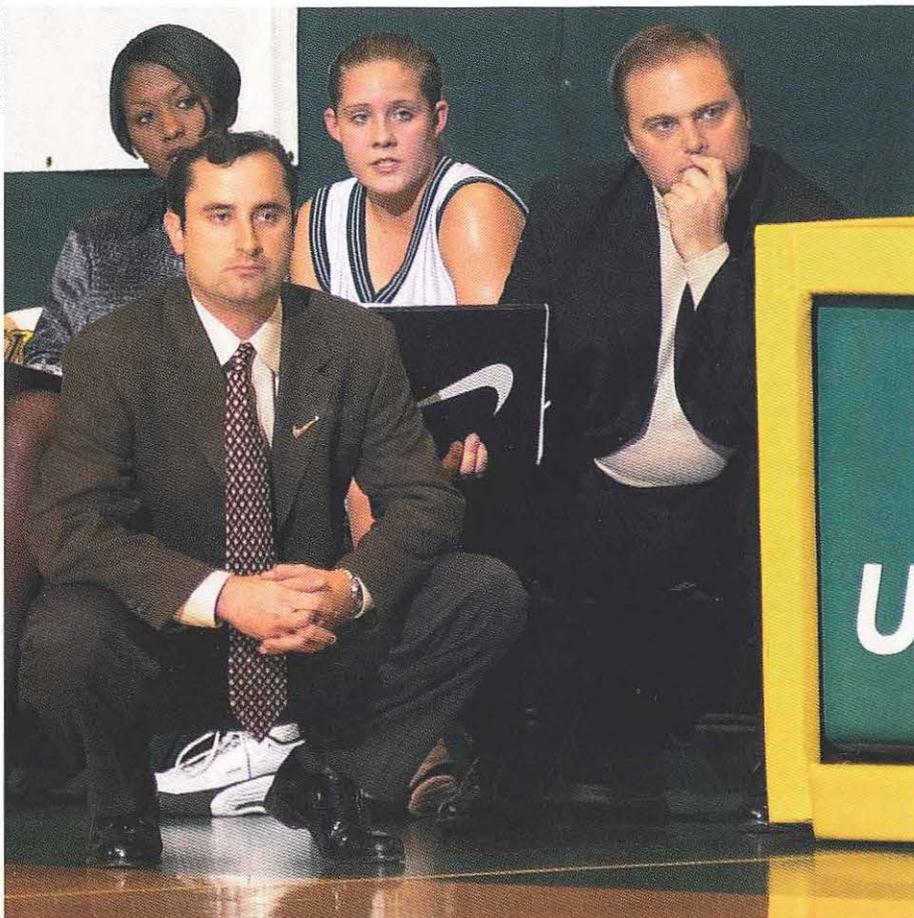
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TOM WAGNER



Ready to Win: Jose Fernandez, USF's new head coach for women's basketball, has three goals for each player: graduate, win games and help the team finish in the top 25. He previously served as USF's recruiting coordinator.

A New Start

Jose Fernandez, the new head coach for the USF women's basketball team, has more than 11 years coaching experience at both the high school and college level.

At 29, Fernandez joined the USF staff in April as the recruiting coordinator. He replaces Jerry Ann Winters, who was terminated after the university found reasonable cause to believe she had removed a student from the team in retaliation for earlier complaints of racial discrimination.

Fernandez' influence on the USF program has been immediate, and the program's future prospects for success skyrocketed with the signing of five of the nation's top prep players to national letters-of-intent in the fall signing period in October.

The Miami native is optimistic he can turn the program around. When asked where he sees the team in five years, he

proudly states, "Ranked in the top 25."

That's not going to be easy, considering women's basketball has never been a powerhouse at USF.

"I hope to bring a new attitude to women's basketball," he says. "I want to get the program going in the right direction toward a winning tradition."

Fernandez, who served as interim coach while USF investigated the allegations against Winters, says having a permanent head coach has brought closure to the team's current players. "They know who their coach is going to be," he says. "They know what I'm going to do to take them to a Conference USA title."

Fernandez hopes to bring in quality student athletes at the Division I level who are willing to work year-round in the weight room to strengthen weaknesses. "My staff and I are working 24 hours a day, and we expect the same dedication from our play-

ers," Fernandez said.

Fernandez has three goals for each player: graduate, win games and help the team finish in the top 25.

"The number-one thing I look for in a student athlete is character," says Fernandez. "You win with character. You win with good people, and you see that in how young women and men perform in the classroom and how they conduct themselves on and off the court."

Come Sail Away

It's a beautiful day on the bay. The sun is shining through the white puffy clouds in a crystal-blue sky. The wind whips through the trees and along the glistening calm waters. It's a perfect day to go out on a boat.

For the USF sailing team, it's just another day of practice. Last year, the team traveled as far away as California for a competition. In the fall, they went to the Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut, the Naval Academy in Annapolis and St. Mary's in Maryland.

Stephanie Doyle was appointed head coach of this up-and-coming program in August. The St. Petersburg native has been sailing all her life. Her passion for the high seas started before she was born. "My dad would take my mom out when I was still inside her belly," Doyle says. "I just grew up on the water; my whole family sails. My uncle was in the America's Cup. It was only natural."

Doyle has an impressive sailing background. She raced small sailboats made for kids for five years, made nationals as the captain of the St. Petersburg High School sailing team and was on the U.S. Sailing Youth World team for two summers while she was in high school. The 24-year-old was on the University of Notre Dame sailing team for four years, captain for three of those years, representing the school all four years at the women's nationals.

The USF sailing team has been around since 1992. The women's sailing club became a varsity sport last spring. Genoa Griffin is the captain of that team. Garth Reynolds is the captain of the co-ed team.

In addition to being the only university

in Florida with a varsity team, USF sailing is the first sport that doesn't practice on the Tampa campus.

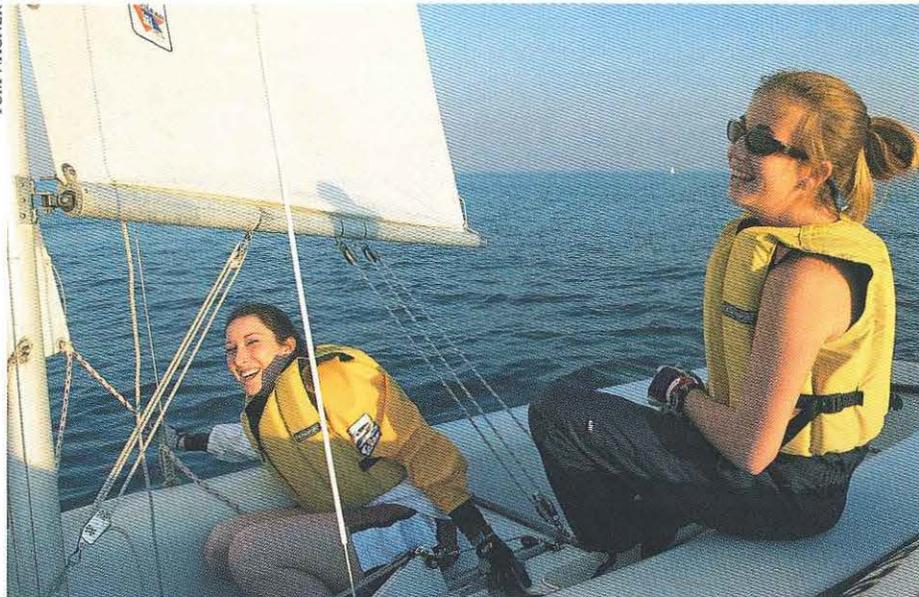
"It's a huge honor to be the first sport at the St. Petersburg campus. It's challenging," Doyle says. "There are two governing bodies and two budgets. I'm removed over here, but I have my independence."

Doyle says there will be some transition from club sport to a more serious varsity sport that wants to compete in the top 20 in the country. She and the program's other three coaches, who work part time, plan on laying the groundwork for the team to make its mark in the next year by creating a new structure and rules. And if that means a more rigorous practice schedule then that's what they're willing to do. The team practices Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The team participated in its first regatta of the year, the Mendelblatt, January 6-7 at USF. They placed third out of eight schools. "The learning curve is definitely on the up and up," Reynolds says. "We have a lot of new people. In a year or two, we're going to be really good."

The two schools that placed ahead of

TOM WAGNER



Water World: USF is the only university in Florida with a varsity sailing team. The team practices on the waters off USF St. Petersburg, making sailing the first sport that doesn't practice on the Tampa campus.

USF in the Mendelblatt were from northern states. But in the winter months, USF has an advantage over them. While their lakes are frozen over, USF can practice all year. This makes the USF sailing program attractive to new recruits. "St. Petersburg

is a major training venue for a lot of Olympic sailors," Doyle says. "We're trying to attract those high-quality, high-caliber sailors with the idea of being able to sail year-round as well as providing good coaching and top notch facilities."

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