
University of South Florida.
Hispanic coaches bring USF football into Division I play

In the ranks of collegiate football, Hispanics are a rarity. Hispanic players make up only an estimated 2 percent of all players; the percentage of coaches is smaller than that.

So far that USF has not just one, but three Hispanic football coaches is extraordinary. Add to that their key collective role in transforming USF from a university without a football program into a school making the quickest ascent ever into big-time Division I play and you have something very special.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity here — we all are. I realize how difficult it is to get into college coaching, period," says Receivers Coach/Recruiting Coordinator Frank Hernandez. "I'd like to think that there's a higher purpose to us coming together."

Bulls fans might be inclined to agree. To understand why, one needs to look back to 1996, when university leaders and newly hired head coach Jim Leavitt were working to get the recently approved football program on the field.

USF had no special reputation as an athletics powerhouse and faced the prospect of years of Division I-AA play against little-known opponents while neighbors Florida, Florida State and Miami all basked in the national spotlights so frequently shown on their teams.

But Leavitt, a highly regarded defensive coordinator at Kansas State University, was determined to build an immediately competitive program. And for expert help, he looked right away to Mike "Chico" Canales, a young quarters-backs coach at the University of the Pacific, and Hernandez, an ambitious Texas high school coach whom Leavitt had known as a player at Kansas State.

"When I found out Chico had been hired, I thought he might be Hispanic, so I called him and asked him how he spelled his last name," said Hernandez.

"I've always been friends with Hispanics, is a three-time winner of the Florida Poet of the Year Award."

Even more important is the fact that Conference USA will admit the Bulls as a football school (USIF is already a league participant in most other sports) beginning in 2003; USF will move to Division I in 2001.

Those two actions will be the fastest ascent to Division I and to a major sports conference that any program has ever achieved. In preparation, the Bulls scheduled their first Division I opponent this season and have scheduled Kentucky and Baylor for next year.

All of that will bring unprecedented attention not only to USF and the team, but to the Trio from Rio as well. They have ambitious plans for how they might use the spotlight for both cultural and educational purposes.

"We want to start a national Hispanic coaches association — something that will help us continue the growth of American football among Hispanic Americans," says Hernandez.

Add Diaz, "When you think of baseball, you think of Dominican and Cuban players. When you think of soccer, you think of Latin Americans and maybe Argentines or Spaniards. But when you think of football, you don't really think of Hispanics. There are very few cultural roots there."

Minority support is critical. "If we do not get the collegiate level, we could have the kind of support that enabled Canales, Diaz and Hernandez to become successful, experts say."

"The new "Blackwell Scholarship Card" on intercollegiate athletics (created by researchers at Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society) found that "college sport had the smallest percentage [compared to major professional sports] of people of color among head coaches, athletic directors ... senior administrators and administrators in general." The report graded college sports an "F.

The study showed that according to NCAA data, fewer than 2.1 percent of head coaches of men's Division I teams in 1997-98 were Hispanic. And in that report, Hispanics were lumped into an "other minorities" category. In the previous year's report, which included a Hispanic-specific breakdown, the percentage of men's Division I teams led by Hispanics was less than half a percentage point.

Among football teams, Hispanic assistant coaches represented less than 1.9 percent of the total in 1997-98; Hispanics were less than 2.1 percent of male college athletics administrators and less than 3.1 percent of female administrators, the report showed.

Hispanic male athletes, meanwhile, made up 3.1 percent of all male college athletes in 1996-97 and 2.8 percent of women athletes. Both numbers are on the rise, having each grown by more than half a percentage point in the previous five years.

Canals, Hernandez and Diaz are always on the lookout for more Hispanic counterparts across the field and at NCAA meetings. "We've had opportunities to mingle and interact with others on the national level," says Hernandez.

Those opportunities have assured the men that there is much more that can be done. Canales proposes organizing a Hispanic caucus at the 2001 NCAA convention, while Hernandez envisions the possibilities of creating educational resources such as special camps for Hispanic football players.

Anyone interested in joining Canales, Hernandez and Diaz in forming a Hispanic coaches' association or caucus can contact them through the USF Office of Intercollegiate Athletics at ext. 4-2125.

by Todd Martinez-Padilla Simmons
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

CALENDAR

FRIDAY

1

Limited exposure: Karl Haas explores the musical output of masters known by only one composition on WUSF-FM 90.7 at 6 p.m. as part of the series, "Adventures in Good Music."

2

Make an impression: The COMPASS training program "Providing Memorable Customer Service" takes place Dec. 1, 8 and 15 at the Student Services building, room 2070. Sessions take place from 8:30 a.m. to noon, and a "B" session from 1 to 4:30 p.m. Participants will learn to identify customers, enhance verbal and nonverbal communication skills and use responses to defuse angry customers. Cost is $25; for more information, call ext. 4-9116 or e-mail ecarson@admin.usf.edu.

AIDS awareness: The World AIDS Day Celebration will take place from noon to 1 p.m. at the Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza. The USF AIDS Memorial Quilt will be featured, and new panels will be dedicated. New toys and non-perishable food will be collected for the Tampa AIDS Network. For more information, call ext. 4-5703.

Such a child: The University-Community Collaborative for Children and Families, Partnerships for Children’s AIDS awareness: The University-Community Collaborative for Children and Families, Partnerships for Children’s collaboration, will host a statewide conference Dec. 1-3 at the Embassy Plaza. The event is free; parking costs $3. For more information, call (800) 359-4263.

Get wild: "Wild, Wild West" with actor/stinger Will Smith, is shown at Crescent Hill at 9 p.m. Admission is free.

THURSDAY

2

Be discovered: Human Resources and Organization Development and Training offers the new employee training program "Discover USF" every Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the Student Services building, room 5012. To register, call ext. 4-5716.

Laugh it up: The COMPASS training program "The Value of Humor in the Workplace" takes place from 9 a.m. to noon at the Student Services building, room 2070. Participants will learn the health benefits of humor, and how to use humor in difficult situations and to promote creative thinking. Cost is $25; for more information, call ext. 4-9116 or e-mail ecarson@admin.usf.edu.

SATURDAY

11

Get into the spirit: The Botanical Garden hosts a holiday wreath-making workshop with Hortist Tim Manke from 10 to 11:15 a.m. Participants learn techniques and combinations for making wreaths. Cost is $17 for garden members, and $20 for non-members. For more information, call ext. 4-2529.

Books to grow by: The Botanical Garden hosts a Holiday Garden Book and Gift Show from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Authors will sign their books, and gifts will be available for garden lovers. For more information, call ext. 4-2529.

SUNDAY

5

Windy day: The USF Festival of Winds Grand Concert gives a free performance at 2 p.m. in the Special Events Center.

12

Commencement: Tampa campus commencement takes place at the Sun Dome. Architecture, Arts and Sciences and Fine Arts students graduate at the 2:30 p.m. program; Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Nursing, Public Health and Medicine students graduate at the 7:30 p.m. program. Engineering Professor Alberto Saguis will speak at both ceremonies. No ticket is required to attend either program. For more information, call the Office of Media Relations at ext. 4-6014.

Meet-n-greet: The USF Senate hosts its holiday meeting from 10 a.m. to noon. The location is to be announced; for more information, call William Shippee Jr. at ext. 4-2368.

SUNDAY

13

The St. Pete mars: St. Petersburg campus commencement takes place at 7 p.m. at the Mahaffey Theatre, with university philanthropist Gus Stavros as the speaker. Tickets are required; for more information, call Jonene Maczis at ext. 3-3414.

SUNFRIDAY

9

Conflicting styles: The COMPASS training program "Learning Through Conflict" takes place from 8:30 a.m. to noon at the Student Services building, room 2070. Participants will explore conflict styles, and learn how conflict impacts decision making and how to use conflict to learn. Cost is $25; for more information, call ext. 4-9116 or e-mail ecarson@admin.usf.edu.

FRIDAY

4

Quality living: Dr. Mark D. Hayward presents the lecture "Healthy Life Expectancy in the United States: Living with Fatal Chronic Diseases and Disability" at 10:30 a.m. in the College of Public Health auditorium. The lecture is sponsored by the Institute on Aging; for more information, call ext. 4-8908.

Getting started: The Small Business Development Center offers the seminar "Where to Find the Money" from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at 1101 Channelside Drive, Suite 210, Tampa. Cost is $40; for more information, call (813) 903-5800.

Native jazz: An All-Star Team of Jazz and Indian Classical Music is performed at 7:30 p.m. at the Special Events Center. Reserved seating is required; tickets cost $10.50 for students, $18.50 for faculty and staff, and $20.50-$31.40 for the public. For more information, call ext. 4-3180.

MONDAY

10

Social gathering: The USF Club hosts a Holiday Social for members from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at The Club, fourth floor of the Marshall Center. For more information, or to join the USF Club as faculty, staff, alumni and retirees, email lmorrow@admin.usf.edu.