

Sports

UM's Golden has long-ago connection to upcoming Russell Athletic Bowl

For Al Golden, coaching Miami in the Russell Athletic Bowl might be a surreal experience. Turns out Golden, a former tight end at Penn State, played in the bowl's inaugural game when it was known as the Blockbuster Bowl in 1990. "I didn't know it was the same bowl ... interesting," Golden laughed. "It's going to be fun. I also had the good fortune of playing in the Citrus Bowl and we certainly enjoyed Orlando and everything it had to offer." The Hurricanes face Louisville in the Russell Athletic Bowl on Dec. 28.

— Christy Cabrera Chirinos

Online today

@6 a.m.: Get a complete breakdown of the AFC playoff picture with analysis and schedules at SunSentinel.com/dolphins.

BallenIsles re-launches its golf course

BallenIsles Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens will re-launch its newly designed North Golf Course on Wednesday. The \$5 million redesign was the work of golf course architect Kipp Schulties, and integrated into it is a short (executive) course that can be played quickly, for members who want to play a full game in less time. Among the guests attending the grand re-opening are junior golfer Allan Kournikova, who is featured in the golf documentary "The Short Game," and acclaimed golf instructor David Leadbetter, who will host a mini clinic for members.

— Staff report

PACERS 90, HEAT 84



BRIAN SPURLOCK/USA TODAY SPORTS

Heat forward LeBron James looks for some room to work against Pacers forward Paul George in Tuesday's victory by Indiana.

Pacers stake a claim

Heat fall to Indiana in tense game

BY IRA WINDERMAN
Staff writer

INDIANAPOLIS — We now resume the drudgery of the NBA regular season, already in progress.

But for one night, whether LeBron James wanted to classify it as a rivalry (he did not), whether the Miami Heat wanted to call it a statement game (they did not), there was compelling NBA drama in December.

Meeting Tuesday for the first time since the Heat moved on to the NBA Finals in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals, the first time since the Indiana Pacers vowed not to allow that to happen again, the

play nearly was as compelling as last spring.

Ultimately, in a game that featured first-quarter Heat domination and a fierce second-half pushback by the Pacers, Indiana stole away into the crisp Indianapolis night with a 90-84 victory at Bankers Life Fieldhouse, now 10-0 at home.

"They brought it tonight," said James, who scored 17 points but shot just 6 of 16, compensating with 14 rebounds. "Their defense is No. 1

Seeking respect

George likes his Pacers. 4C

in the league, and they make you, at times, do things you don't want to do."

After the Heat shot 12 of 21 in the first quarter, they shot 21 of 56 the rest of the game, closing with a season-low in points.

"They just played better go-

See HEAT, 4C

DOLPHINS

Thomas steps up at right moment

BY CHRIS PERKINS
Staff writer

DAVIE — Dolphins running back Daniel Thomas was supposed to be the answer. Instead, he's merely part of the answer. And for now, he'll take that role.

In two-plus NFL seasons Thomas has had to battle concussions, a knee injury, an ankle injury, fumbles, Reggie Bush and Lamar Miller. Yet none of that prevented him from turning in the best game of his career on Sunday. It was an improbable performance because no one was sure he would play due to an ankle injury.



Thomas

"We're all grown men," said Thomas, who sparked the offense by rushing for a season-best 105 yards in Sunday's 34-28 victory in frigid Pittsburgh. "You've just got to be ready when your opportunity is called."

That hasn't always been the case for Thomas, a disappointing second-round pick from Kansas State in 2011. So far this season, he's teamed with Miller to form the NFL's 23rd-worst rushing attack at 95.8 yards per game.

But Thomas might have to carry more of the load this week. Miller left last week's game with a concussion. He has to pass NFL-mandated concussion testing before being cleared to play in Sunday's showdown against New England.

See THOMAS, 5C

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Folks who whistle while they work

Refs have part-time job, full-time commitment

BY RYAN S. CLARK
Staff writer

Goodwill toward a football referee doesn't last long. Just ask David Campbell.

"When we first walk into a stadium, everyone loves us," said Campbell, a high school referee for 10 years. "It is always, 'Hey Mr. Official, have fun out there.' As soon as a ball is kicked, someone doesn't like that the kickoff happened so fast. Someone is always going to be mad no matter what."

From being second-guessed to handling a full house of angry people, there's always some-

thing that comes with the job of a high school football referee.

More than 200 men and women are high school football referees in Broward and Palm Beach counties. For the majority, their season is over. For the elite of the group, there are two state championship games Friday in Orlando, where Class 5A American Heritage (Plantation) and Class 7A Dwyer will be playing for titles.

Even with the low pay, physical demands and sometimes unpleasant people, the referees say this is a job worth doing.

"It is a thankless gig," said Carlos Carles, a 20-year referee from Royal Palm Beach. "But

See REFEREES, 6C

CLASS 5A: AMERICAN HERITAGE VS. CLAY, 1:07 P.M., FRIDAY, ORLANDO

Rumph no stranger to success

Patriots going to Class 5A state finals with rookie coach



Dave Hyde

dreams everyone else did when he was young, even as young as his players are today.

That's why, as he sits behind his desk, at a time he's big news in a smaller world, Rumph says, "Who better than me to tell these kids what's important, that they need



ROBERT DUYOS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

American Heritage football coach Mike Rumph gives pointers to his players in practice. The Patriots will play for the state title Friday.

an education? I made it in football. And, at 27, I was done."

Now, at 34, Rumph sits in his office at American Heritage School, where he is just starting, where his first season heading a

program ends Friday in the Class 5A state final against Green Cove Springs Clay.

Rumph, as good a defensive

See HYDE, 3C

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