

# The Palm Beach Post

## Commentary: Even 0-6 start can't mar fact that FAU's new stadium is an absolute gem

By **DAVE GEORGE**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 6:50 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 16, 2011  
Posted: 8:56 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 15, 2011

It's finally real, not just some figment of Howard Schnellenberger's astounding imagination, and it rocks.

Florida Atlantic's new football stadium, sized just right at 30,000 seats, debuted Saturday afternoon with thousands of students stomping their feet on the aluminum stands in celebration of all the regularly-scheduled tailgate parties that are coming to their campus neighborhood.

Altogether, this long-awaited opening was a certified hoot, regardless of another demoralizing loss for the 0-6 Owls, and in spite of the fact that hundreds of customers weren't in their seats by the 4 p.m. kickoff with Western Kentucky because of exasperating clogs at the ticket booths and will-call lines.

"Those are good problems to have," FAU Athletic Director Craig Angelos said. "We've never had this many people at an event in Florida Atlantic's history of 50 years. That means a lot of people were interested in coming to see our product. Eventually we got them in by the second quarter and it's all good now."

Great news, too, for any who missed this historic opening day and want to catch next Saturday's FAU home game with Middle Tennessee. The stadium promotional staff still has bells and whistles in reserve that were not experienced by the opening-day crowd of 29,103.

There is a special-effects cruise ship horn, for instance, that is supposed to sound over the public address system whenever FAU scores a touchdown. No need for that Saturday, not with FAU crossing midfield only twice and piling up the paltry sum of six first downs.

Also, an owl trained at Universal Studios was supposed to fly from near the top of the 145-foot press box tower to field level just before the opening coin toss. That didn't happen Saturday, reportedly due to a pregame injury that limited the animal's skills, but there's a backup bird that still may be coached up in time to perform the aerial stunt next game.

What's the use of nitpicking, though, on a day like this? The stadium, with its tiki bar and its oceanview VIP suites and its massive end-zone video screen, is a little slice of paradise.

Schnellenberger, of course, dreamed it even bigger, with a retractable roof and a capacity of 42,000, but this is a palace compared to other facilities around the Sun Belt Conference.

The University of Miami could have had this in Coral Gables, and would have if Howard had gotten his way as Hurricanes head coach three decades back. The man is a master builder, and the only shame of it now is that some other coach will reap the benefits of his efforts here in Boca Raton. Schnellenberger, 77, is stepping down after six more games, and fittingly, four of them will be played in the House that Howard Built.

There's a new 10-foot statue of Schnellenberger in a stadium walkway here, arms crossed, defiant. After this crushing loss, and after two days of ceremonies and festivities surrounding the signature achievement of this stadium, it was sad to see the coach so weary and drained of his famous enthusiasm.

The Owls' ugly performance, he said, "made the wonderfulness of this day melt into the agony of where we are today as a football team."

The guy needs a hug, or a first-class quarterback at least. Failing a victory here and there, it will be tough filling the stands in the weeks to come. This place cost \$70 million to build, and magically it went from groundbreaking to completion in just one year. For football to be fun, however, there needs to be a reason for students to paint their bodies in FAU colors and come to the stadium rather than soaking them in oil for a trip to the beach.

All the pieces are in place, though, for the continued and consistent growth of a program that didn't even hold its first practice session until August of 2000. Schnellenberger had to take the Owls indoors that day because of stormy weather, running drills inside a nearby basketball gym with players wearing socks rather than cleats. Since then FAU has played its games at the Miami Dolphins' stadium in Miami Gardens, much too big, and at Fort Lauderdale's Lockhart Stadium, much too small.

Now the FAU football team has a home, and the students and supporters of this massive commuter school have a meeting place to make everyone truly proud. The beach-themed quirkiness is the best part, with two groves of towering palm trees planted and propped up by boards near the south end zone.

There are other features unique to FAU, too, like the "Owl Ball" available at the Tomasso's Pizza concession stand underneath the stadium. It's a meatball inside a garlic roll and sells for \$3. That, as Schnellenberger might say, spells wonderfulness.

Just wait until the touchdowns start coming. There's a little cannon designed to commemorate each one scored by FAU, but it fired loudly at a most surprising and inappropriate time Saturday, just as FAU's Mickey Groody was kicking one of his eight punts on the day.

Hey, everybody is still a little antsy around here, impatient for successful traditions to take hold.

Saturday's opening splash at the still-unnamed FAU stadium showed amazing potential. Now the trick is to show area football fans a good time from kickoff until the final gun.

That will take a little more time, but know this. On Schnellenberger's clock, time has always moved impossibly fast.

## Despite loss, FAU takes big leap with opening of new stadium

By Marcus Nelson

A week of festivities and parties came to end early Saturday night. After all the pomp and circumstance surrounding the opening of Florida Atlantic's gleaming new \$70 million on-campus stadium, there was a small matter of playing a football game.

Western Kentucky proved to be a rude guest as they handed the Owls a crushing 20-0 defeat. The program slipped further with an embarrassing loss to the Hilltoppers.

"To play so poorly in front of our dedicated fans we had out there, it's hard to deal with," FAU coach Howard Schnellenberger said.

A victory would have led to better prospects to another large crowd next week vs. Middle Tennessee.

But when you reach the abyss, there is no way to go but up. And, thanks to fan support never seen before in the history of FAU, it isn't going to far out on a limb to say brighter days are ahead for the football program, the athletic department and the university as whole.

Yes, it's tough to swallow that this team is in danger of going 0-12, but it was still a great day for FAU – and when you think about how bad the game actually was, that speaks volumes about what this day meant.

It would have been nice to cap the day with a victory instead of a dreadful offensive performance, but the many people who came to FAU's campus for the first time likely had a pretty good time. At least until the game started.

October 15, 2011

## Fans fill FAU's new stadium for first football game

*Posted: Oct 15, 2011 11:01 PM EDT*

BOCA RATON, FL (WFLX) -- College football fever is catching at Florida Atlantic University. For the first time, they're kicking off their home opening football game at their own brand new \$70 million stadium.

More than 25-thousand FAU Owls and fans turned out to be a part of school history as their team took on the Western Kentucky Hilltops. Parents and tiny children dressed as cheerleaders and quarterbacks, along with students and alumni filled the stands, excited that the FAU Owls finally have a football home.

"You feel a sense of pride," said FAU alumni Navon Wallace. "Now you feel proud to go to FAU because you have something to represent the school."

"This is the most exciting thing," said Alexis Heck, an FAU student who went with her roommates to the game. "This is the only thing anybody has been talking about all week. All week, everybody's talking about where they're going, who they're going with, where they're sitting."

No longer will FAU fans have to travel all the way to Fort Lauderdale to root and hoot for their team. They now have their own 30-thousand seat stadium, complete with concession stand, room for the band, stadium lights and even a JumboTron right in their own backyard.

"The reason I didn't go to any of the games before is because they were somewhere else," explained FAU Junior Ian English, "and now they're here and I have absolutely no excuse not to go to a game and I don't need transportation. I can just walk here."

Even alumni like John Starr, whose daughter now attends FAU, are thrilled to be part of it all.

"There's a lot of new buildings and a lot of new energy in the place," he said, "so it was good to come back."

The Owls ended up losing 20 - 0 to Western Kentucky; however, win or lose, these fans' feathers won't be ruffled as they're already eager to cheer on the owls at their next game.

## Fans flock to FAU's campus for first game in new stadium

By Mike Graham

Originally published 09:56 p.m., October 15, 2011

Updated 11:48 p.m., October 15, 2011

BOCA RATON — Thousands of fans filled Florida Atlantic University's campus early Saturday afternoon for a first-time course — Tailgating 101.

FAU celebrated the opening of its new on-campus stadium and 29,103 fans turned out to witness the team's 20-0 loss against Western Kentucky — the Owls' sixth straight setback this season.

Prior the game, FAU fans fired up grills and broke out coolers all across the school's parking lots.

"Everyone is super excited and can't wait for the game to get started," said FAU freshman Emily Harvey, 18, prior to kickoff. "We had a big bonfire (Friday) night and everyone has been talking about this all week.

"The buzz around campus is unbelievable."

Harvey, a Port St. Lucie resident and St. Lucie West Centennial High School graduate, was with her parents, John and Alana Harvey, and her sister, Kimberly.

John Harvey grew up in Tennessee and is a Volunteers' fan at heart. But Saturday, he was decked out in FAU colors.

"I'm use to SEC tailgating," he said. "I told some friends of mine I never thought I would be tailgating in the Sun Belt Conference. But where your daughter goes, you go."

Palm City's Greg Rogers, 66, graduated from FAU in 1968, back when it was a two-year school — for juniors and seniors.

"I'm so proud of (FAU) for building this stadium, and the growth of the university is phenomenal," said Rogers, as he entertained a group of Martin County residents in his RV before the game. "(Coach Howard) Schnellenberger is the impetus for all of this and there should be a move to name it Schnellenberger Field." Schnellenberger, 77, has pushed for an on campus stadium since the team began play in 2001.

Vero Beach resident Alan Shiveler, 61, said he was having a hard time believing he was attending an on-campus game.

"Back in 1975 and 1976, when I went to school here, I would have never thought there would someday be a Division 1 football team here," Shiveler said. "So the idea of a college football stadium here is beyond my wildest dream.

"You couldn't ask for a stadium better than this one."

Rusty Veatch, of Stuart, said he is a University of South Florida fan and has season tickets to Bulls' home game in Tampa. But Veatch said he couldn't pass up the chance to christen the new stadium.

"I love Howard Schnellenberger," Veatch said. "That guy has such a storied past as a college football coach.

"There are a lot of great powerhouse college football teams in Florida, but this stadium will bring a lot more attention to FAU."

Unfortunately, all the hoopla was not enough to offset a poor performance by FAU in the lopsided loss to Western Kentucky. FAU will host Middle Tennessee State at 8 p.m. Saturday night.



## Fans praise Schnellenberger's stadium dream

[During FAU's first game on campus, bronze likeness of coach a big draw for fans](#)

By Christy Cabrera Chirinos, Sun Sentinel

6:51 PM EDT, October 15, 2011

BOCA RATON

There were giveaways, cheerleaders and plenty of pre-game festivities.

But for dozens of Florida Atlantic fans, the first stop once inside the school's new on-campus stadium was the bronze likeness of Owls coach Howard Schnellenberger.

Some posed for pictures, while others merely took in the sight of the 10-foot statue.

The one constant for all of them seemed to be a sense of gratitude for Schnellenberger's work in building both the football program and stadium at FAU.

"He is football here," said Lisa Carman of Fort Lauderdale, a 2001 FAU graduate. "I have goose bumps looking at what he's done. If it weren't for him, this wouldn't have happened."

Carman, like many South Florida college football fans, grew up watching the Miami Hurricanes.

But it was Schnellenberger who turned her into an FAU fan — one so devoted to the team she came to the home opener even after friends canceled their plans to join her.

Schnellenberger was also part of the reason Steve Doerr traveled from San Francisco to attend Saturday's game.

Doerr, an FAU alum, wore a t-shirt autographed by Schnellenberger and dated 1998 — the year the coach was hired to begin the process of building FAU's program.

"He gave the program credibility from day one," Doerr said. "When you're building something big, you're looking for a leader because leaders lead. He's always been that kind of coach."

Even former players stopped at the statue to pay tribute.

"All he wanted was that you work hard and give it everything you've got," said George Allen, a linebacker who played for FAU from 2005-2008. "That still helps me today."

[South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com](http://SouthFloridaSun-Sentinel.com)

## **FAU has day to remember, game to forget**

[Florida Atlantic's new on-campus stadium opens \(to 20-0 loss\)](#)

Dave Hyde

Sun Sentinel Columnist

9:07 PM EDT, October 15, 2011

BOCA RATON

But the stadium looked great.

It was beautiful. Brilliant, even. Can we keep repeating that thought for the next 22 paragraphs?

Can we keep saying it was such a landmark day for Florida Atlantic University that even ticket lines were something to cheer?

"Those are good problems to have," Athletic Director Craig Angelos said.

They're problems any college with a football stadium on campus gets to have, and FAU inaugurated its new stadium on Saturday afternoon with a big crowd on a fun day in a game against Western Kentucky that was ... uh ... well ...

"Oh, boy," Howard Schnellenberger said in his first two words after the game to forget on the day to remember.

But the stadium looked great.

It was magnificent. Marvelous, even. They dressed it up for the opener, too. An oversized American flag stretched across the full field to fit the big occasion. There was a flyover like all the big events have — OK, a helicopter flyover, but you get the idea.

"We wanted to treat this like a bowl game," Angelos said.

An owl also was brought from Orlando that was supposed to fly around the field before the game like the Auburn war eagle before landing back on its trainer's glove. It didn't fly. It got stage fright just before the game that ... uh ... well ...

"I've never been in this situation before," Schnellenberger said.

But the stadium looked great.



It was impressive. Imposing, even. There were traffic jams around the stadium to signify its importance and tailgate parties in the parking lots of this school's first football Saturday.

For the past decade, games were held far off campus at Fort Lauderdale's Lockhart Stadium or even Sun Life Stadium in Miami Gardens. Saturday's announced crowd of 29,104 fans didn't sell out the place, but it did let everyone around the school dream some more.

"I think a 30,000-seat stadium is the right number to start with," FAU President Mary Jane Saunders said. "You can fill in the corners and get to 40,000. You can fill out the tier on the top and get to 60,000. Maybe we will someday."

Before the start of the third quarter, the football players walked down the sideline to the full student section and saluted them. That's another tradition they want to start in this stadium.

"We had such a wonderful story going in," Schnellenberger said. "And we had a really different and bad story going out."

Well, yeah, losing 20-0 to a Western Kentucky team that entered 1-4 wasn't so great. But the stadium, Howard. Did you see the "House That Howard Built" T-shirts and signs? Wasn't the day nice in that regard?

"I was feeling like a proud father watching a baby being born," Schnellenberger began that answer. By the end of it, he was saying: "To feel that feeling ebbing, knowing you weren't going to win, that's tough to deal with. That's what I've got to deal with."

"Obviously, the problem is we've been shut out virtually every game we've played. There were two games where we came back in the fourth quarter and scored touchdowns long after the game was over."

"Our problem if you know football, or even if you don't, is we don't have a tried and true quarterback. We don't have one ready with first-team ability. And we're going to have to develop that."

The legend stood there, sounding all of 77, looking ready for the retirement awaiting him at the end of this season. That's what a bad game can do to the best of coaches. It can turn a good day hollow, a festive time dreary.

"That made the wonderfulness of the day melt into the agony of where we are as a football team," Schnellenberger said.

But, well, the stadium looked great.

# The Palm Beach Post

## **FAU stadium unveiling causes few traffic tie-ups**

By **CYNTHIA ROLDAN**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Posted: 6:04 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 15, 2011

The unveiling of Florida Atlantic University's \$70-million on-campus stadium caused little to no traffic problems for motorists in Boca Raton on Saturday.

Officers from the Boca Raton and FAU police departments, along with Palm Beach County Sheriff's deputies, were stationed at the campus' entrances on Glades Road to ensure that traffic moved smoothly. But officers on the scene reported no traffic back-ups before and during the 4 p.m. game against Western Kentucky.

A deputy directing traffic on campus said that there was some confusion over parking, but the issues were quickly resolved.

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## **Statue of Schnellenberger to honor the father of Football in Paradise**

By Marcus Nelson

Florida Atlantic football coach Howard Schnellenberger isn't going any where and will be at FAU for a long, long time.

Or at least an incredible likeness of him will, as a statue of Schnellenberger will grace the entrance of the stadium (and the field that almost certainly will be named for him) for many years.

That's right. Schnellenberger has entered the bronze age.

The statue was made possible by a generous gift from Founder Pete LoBello and ensures Schnellenberger will be a permanent fixture at the stadium that was his dream and passion for generations to come.

What an honor, and a richly deserved one.

October 14, 2011

# **Tailgaters, students giving the day a true college football feel as kickoff nears for Florida Atlantic's first game in new stadium**

by Tom D'Angelo

Kudos FAU and its fans who have given the day a true college football feel.

The campus is buzzing with tailgaters and tents, sponsors and special visitors surrounding the new stadium. The first Owl walk, complete with the band and cheerleaders and, for this week several past players, is the start of a nice tradition.

Players were dropped off on campus and headed toward the stadium through the breezeway, first passing the Owlsley statue that was unveiled this week and entering the stadium near the Howard Schnellenberger statue that was unveiled Friday.

Students are filling up the south end zone and the game-day ticket line looked pretty healthy. If every seat is not filled it should be close.

Some on field news: Quarterback David Kooi will receive his first start in place of Graham Wilbert, whose elbow injury made the decision easy but whose job likely was in jeopardy even if he were healthy after throwing three interceptions last week, two of which were returned for touchdowns.

# The Palm Beach Post

## **FAU finally gets to show off its new stadium, but can the Owls win one for the coach who helped build it?**

By **TOM D'ANGELO**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 9:11 p.m. Friday, Oct. 14, 2011  
Posted: 7:53 p.m. Friday, Oct. 14, 2011

When Howard Schnellenberger was first hired to lay the foundation for a football program at Florida Atlantic, he envisioned a 42,000-seat domed stadium that would be the envy of every mid-major program in the country.

More than 13-years later that dream - scaled down but nonetheless satisfying - will be realized Saturday .

The \$70-million stadium gives Palm Beach County its first ever college football stadium - one that is open and airy, with 30,000 seats painted red, white or blue and offers a view of the Atlantic Ocean from the upper levels of its 145-foot press box tower.

And The House that Howard Built will include a likeness of Schnellenberger. To show their appreciation for the man whose name is synonymous with FAU football, the university on Friday surprised Schnellenberger with a life-like bronze statue of the coach with the inscription: To Believe is to be Strong.

"I had no idea," said Schnellenberger, who was on the stadium field preparing his team for their opener against Western Kentucky when the statue was unveiled. Schnellenberger, 77, described the statue as "flattering."

Although his original hopes for a domed stadium didn't pan out, Schnellenberger joked: "My dream fell on deaf ears ... Hallelujah. Amen. Glory be. The university dispelled my first thoughts and came up with their own."

The new stadium gives the Owls something it never had during its 10 years of football, first as a Division I-AA school and the last six in college football's upper division: a true home field.

FAU first played its home games two counties to the south in Sun Life Stadium, which was often 90 percent empty for contests against teams like Marist, Albany and Morris Brown.

After two years they moved closer to home, playing at Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, a deteriorating high school facility that was a tough sell. Fans stayed away in droves as attendance and traditions suffered. Last season the Owls average announced attendance was 14,025, fifth fewest in the FBS.

At least for Saturday, that number will double with a sellout expected. And for the first time, players are talking about a home-field advantage.

"This will have a big impact, disrupt their team, put the fear in their tummies," linebacker David Hinds said of the stadium's impact on FAU's opponent.

"We don't want to lose there. It's going to be a pride thing to know it's our home. We want to protect our house."

Of course, things will have to change for that to happen considering the Owls are 0-5 and have lost eight consecutive games dating back to last season. Western Kentucky (1-4) snapped its four-game losing streak last week, upsetting Middle Tennessee.

"The game is a very important game even if we were playing in Lockhart," Schnellenberger said.

An on-campus stadium not only should mean more excitement, but more traditions.

Every home game will include the Owl Prowl, a traditional walk similar on many other campuses every Saturday. The FAU team will be dropped off near the library and walk through campus into the stadium accompanied by the band, cheerleaders and dance team.

They will pass by the Owsley statue that will be unveiled Saturday and start the tradition of touching its wings, similar to Clemson touching Howard's Rock before they storm the field at Memorial Stadium.

Borrowing a page from Auburn, which starts each game with an eagle swooping down onto the field, FAU will have a soaring owl before each game.

"Traditions kind of develop," Athletic Director Craig Angelos said. "You can jump-start some of them and we do have some in place the students have developed over the years."

The best tradition of all: Students showing up. The south end zone holds 5,000 and officials hope it is filled with students every game.

"I can't wait to see that student section in that end zone," safety Marcus Bartels said. "That's what I'm going to be anticipating. It's going to be fun."

Amid the pomp and pageantry, the Owls are calling Saturday a "must win" considering the team is at its lowest point since losing its first five games of the 2005 season.

FAU believes the new stadium will boost a program that has been in decline since 2007, but an immediate impact could depend on the rest of this season, in which five of the remaining seven games will be played on campus.

Schnellenberger, who will retire following the season after 27 seasons as a head college coach, still believes this program one day will be competing on a level with Miami and Florida and Florida State.

But he also believes the addition of a state-of-the-art facility will impact not just the football program but the entire university.

"It's going to do what stadiums all over the country have done the past 125 years of adding a great dimension to the vibrancy and the potential of this university," he said.

"Football teams act as a magnifying glass to show the world the best things about each university."

## **FAU honors Schnellenberger with statue at new stadium**

By Ted Hutton, Sun Sentinel

8:02 PM EDT, October 14, 2011

BOCA RATON

Howard Schnellenberger may be gone from the sidelines after the season, but his legacy was literally cemented into Florida Atlantic University's new stadium Friday.

A 10-foot, 575-pound bronze statue of Schnellenberger was unveiled on the eve of the first game to be played in the \$70 million, 30,000-seat on-campus stadium that Schnellenberger had pushed for since he took the job to create FAU's football program in 1998.

"It is flattering. That is a 65-year-old statue," the 77-year-old Schnellenberger said about the statue, which sits in the southeast corner of the stadium, just inside the main gates. Schnellenberger is retiring after this season.

The statue bears one of Schnellenberger's favorite slogans: "To believe is to be strong."

The surprise unveiling did not go quite as planned because Schnellenberger was so focused on his team, which is 0-5 and looking for its first win Saturday when the Owls host Western Kentucky at 4 p.m.

Schnellenberger's son, Tim, called him on his cellphone while Schnellenberger was holding a short practice on the field with his team and tried to lure his father to where the stadium was covered with a shroud that would be lifted when he arrived.

But Schnellenberger didn't budge from the field.

"I didn't know what [Tim] was talking about. I am out there mad because we had just missed three field goals in a row and I was chewing the kids out," Schnellenberger said.

Schnellenberger eventually made it over to the site, where he thanked Pete and Kerry Lobello, who donated the money for the statue, and Susan Phipps Cochran, the artist who created it.

The unveiling preceded the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the stadium, which was followed by a dinner for former FAU players.

Two of those former players were able to make it because their NFL teams have a bye week.

Rob Housler, a tight end for the Arizona Cardinals, and Rusty Smith, a quarterback for the Tennessee Titans, both were on the field during practice.



"Isn't this exciting? Great day for FAU," said Smith, who graduated in 2009 and holds most of FAU's passing records.

"It was kind of a jaw-dropper," Housler said about seeing the completed stadium for the first time. "It is a jewel. It is a stunner." Housler graduated in 2010 and was a third-round pick by Arizona.

FAU will be playing its first true home game, after 10 years of playing games in Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

"It is bittersweet," former FAU running back Anthony Jackson said. "I wish we could have been out there playing in that stadium."

Jackson, who works in the FAU athletic department as an academic adviser, said the stadium will have a positive impact.

"It will take the football program and the whole athletic department to the next level. We can show recruits this nice stadium, the beautiful weather, it can't get any better than this," Jackson said.

## FAU Stadium a reality

From Miami Herald Staff Reports

Howard Schnellenberger didn't weld any of the beams at FAU's new on-campus football stadium, nor did he bolt in any of the 30,000 seats. He didn't even help those workers being paid overtime lay down sod on the day before the stadium opens, nor help finish a parking lot behind the press tower.

Yet the FAU Stadium isn't a reality if not for Schnellenberger.

When students walk into the stadium for Saturday's inaugural game against Western Kentucky around the scheduled 4 p.m. start, they'll do so wearing blue t-shirts that read: "The House that Howard Built."

It's an obvious take on Babe Ruth and Yankee Stadium. In this case, it definitely works.

"The stadium is the essence of being enough for anyone who has been here 'X' number of years," Schnellenberger said as ribbon-cutting ceremonies went on behind him Friday afternoon at FAU's main campus in Boca Raton. "That's for the players, the coaches, the students. Right now, the students are unreal in their love for this place. They think it's really going to do something for their personal lives and their social lives. And it will."

Schnellenberger has been selling the notion of 'football in paradise' since he first arrived on the scene in 1998 to help get the program off the ground. His dream stadium has a Tommy Bahama feel to it as palm trees and beach sand – as well as an eastward-facing press tower for the view of the Atlantic – abound. The large scoreboard features a pair of metal palm trees as well.

Best known as the offensive coordinator of the 1972 perfect season Dolphins and the coach of the 1983 national champion Hurricanes, Schnellenberger has been the only coach FAU has ever known. That changes next year as Schnellenberger retires after this season.

That doesn't mean Schnellenberger is ready to hang 'em up. Before the big ceremony, wife Beverlee as well as other family members gathered in a courtyard in an end zone. Underneath a row of palm trees and towering over that beach sand stood a bronze 7-foot tall version of Schnellenberger, his hair eternally perfect, his

arms forever folded.

“I thought when the students gave me the T-shirts, that was going to be it. Which would have been more than enough,” Schnellenberger said. “I think the statue is flattering. That’s a 65-year-old version.”

The 77-year-old coach didn’t know about the statue and wasn’t there for its unveiling as he remained on the field, chastising his field goal kicking unit.

The Owls are 0-5 as they head into their first home game of the year. It’s obvious Schnellenberger is more than ready for the bleeding to stop. Instead of staying for the many speeches prior to the official ribbon cutting, Schnellenberger gathered his team and loaded them on charter buses for their night in a hotel. Then he followed suit.

Whether it was building a football program from scratch in a cramped trailer or literally standing on a tree stump in the middle of a crowded college cafeteria to drum up support, Schnellenberger has always put the game first.

“Our football team needs to get back to the hotel and get ready,” Schnellenberger said. “They are the ones who will play in there, they’re the ones who are going to win there. They are going to be the ones to carry us to the next level and set a standard that the whole athletic department will follow and emulate and make this a great, great program.”

George Richards

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## **FAU Stadium ready for its football debut Saturday**

By Maria Herrera, Sun Sentinel

7:31 PM EDT, October 14, 2011

Boca Raton

If you're going to Florida Atlantic University's stadium opening Saturday, bear this in mind: There are another 30,000 people headed to the same place.

So university officials have some advice: Get there early, be patient and be safe.

"There's a good plan in place to accommodate everyone," FAU spokeswoman Katrina McCormack said. "The athletic department has been working with the city of Boca Raton to make sure the cars come in a timely fashion."

Still, that doesn't mean the impact of thousands of cars won't be felt beyond the campus.

"We hope it will have a positive impact, not just on business," said Mike Witte, general manager of 16 Handles frozen yogurt store in University Commons, across Glades Road from the campus. "We're very happy about the opening of the stadium and pleased [the Owls] will finally be able to play on campus."

Officials say they expect the 30,000-seat stadium to be sold out by kickoff at 4 p.m. Saturday, when the 0-5 Owls hosts the 1-4 Western Kentucky Hilltoppers for the inaugural game.

Until now, the Owls, whose football program began in 2001, traveled 14 miles to Fort Lauderdale's Lockhart Stadium for their home games.

"I'm excited to be part of FAU's history," said Emma Jean Livingston, a freshman who will be tailgating Saturday with her sorority. "The new stadium is partially why I decided to go to FAU. I thought it would be really cool to be part of a new beginning."

Tickets still are available, ranging from \$11 to \$90. Student tickets are free with a student ID.

And what's football without tailgating? Another new FAU tradition, it's allowed, but fans should stick to the university's rules: no kegs, or tents bigger than 10-by-10 feet, no bottles and no underage drinking.

The day begins at 1:30 p.m, with a special presentation by FAU President Mary Jane Saunders, who will unveil a statue of Owsley, the school's mascot, on the Alumni Plaza, across from the stadium.

Then at 2, the football team will gather at the south end of the breezeway for what they hope becomes a tradition known as the Owl Prowl. They will walk north, past tailgaters and the corporate tailgate village at the southwest corner of the stadium before entering the home locker room.

On-field festivities begin at 3:45 p.m. with the unfurling of a giant American flag. Kick-off is at 4.

As the opening-day hype has built, officials have been working to minimize parking and traffic concerns.

Some 22,000 parking spaces on campus should be more than enough, McCormack said.

Traffic is expected to be heavy, but to avoid backups on Interstate 95, Boca Raton police will be stationed at key intersections, directing game traffic to three entrances around campus — two off of Glades Road on the south end of the campus and one on Spanish River Boulevard to the north.

"The goal has always been to do what we can to make sure local residents and the traveling public are least affected by the football game," said Boca Raton police Capt. Coy Dixon, who worked for months with traffic engineering, the city and FAU officials to develop a game-day traffic plan.

Still, some say they will stay away.

"I'll avoid it like the plague," said Marissa Machado, who was shopping Friday at Whole Foods in University Commons. "Traffic is already bad on Glades Road. I can't imagine how congested it will be with all those cars."

Dixon said motorists should follow instructions on the electronic signs that will be placed around the campus. Season ticket holders and fans who purchased tickets in advance should also follow the parking recommendations printed on their tickets.

All lots will open at noon, McCormick said, giving fans enough time to get in and enjoy the pregame activities.

# New result in new home?

*Florida Atlantic coach Howard Schnellenberger and his players aren't just happy to be playing in the first game in a new on-campus stadium. They want to beat Western Kentucky and win a game for the first time this season.*

Originally published on 10/14/2011

**by Marcus Nelson**

BOCA RATON – How serious is Florida Atlantic's football team taking Saturday's game against Western Kentucky?

In the middle of a ceremony for the ribbon-cutting for the 30,000-seat, \$70-million stadium that has been talked about for 13 years, Owls coach Howard Schnellenberger quickly grabbed the microphone before it was his turn to speak. He grumbled a few words and then announced he and the team were leaving because they had to get ready for the game.

About an hour earlier, a statue of Schnellenberger had to be unveiled without Schnellenberger there to witness it. He was a few hundred feet away, but didn't want to leave the team going through a special teams drill after the Friday walk-through.

With the Owls 0-5 heading into the most-anticipated game in school history except for the program's inaugural game, Schnellenberger is leaving nothing to chance.

"I had a call from my son Tim trying to get me to look down to the (southwest) corner," Schnellenberger said. "I didn't know what he was talking about and I'm out there mad because we just missed three field goals in a row and I'm chewing the kids out. Then I find out what's going on and I'm trying to be respectful and joyous and all those things, but I was too upset."

With a possible sell-out crowd (Athletics Director Craig Angelos projects the game will be sold-out by game-time) winning the game is very important.

And no one wants the Owls to win and avoid losing a possible school-record ninth consecutive game dating back to last season, than the players.

"That would make it even more exciting that it is to get this first win, which we've been trying to do all season," said FAU running back Alfred Morris. "That's the ultimate goal, winning, despite the stadium opening up and all the festivities going on."

If the Owls can do that, it could be the start of something big, FAU linebacker Randell Johnson said.

"We're going to try to make it a tradition not to ever lose in that stadium," Johnson said.

## Keys to the game

### **Key for FAU:** Keep Kooi calm

Nothing like making your first career start under center with 30,000 fans in attendance wanting you to win a game for the first time this season. But Kooi has played in enough games the past two seasons. He may be able to handle the pressure and it's a lot better to have a large crowd cheering for you than against you.

### **Key for Western Kentucky:** Keep FAU crowd out of the game

That is the first time those words have appeared since...well, ever. But the last thing the Hilltoppers need is for FAU to get a few quick scores and have a crowd just giddy to have a place to call home whipped up into a frenzy. On the other side, if WKU could take the crowd out of the game with some quick scores of their own, the stadium opening could be a non-factor.

### **Key matchup:** FAU linebackers vs. WKU RB Bobby Rainey

The Owls defense did a decent job on UNT running backs Lance Dunbar and James Hamilton, but Rainey is a cut above those guys and more difficult to bring down. Rainey rushed for 152 yards last season in WKU's 17-16 loss vs. FAU.

### **Key stats**

**11** - combined points the Owls have won by in the three previous meetings with the Hilltoppers.

**33** – Players on WKU's roster from the state of Florida

**22** - Career completions for FAU QB David Kooi, who is making his first start. He has completed 12 of those for 158 yards and a TD.

**Discuss this story in our [message boards](#)**

## **Football Stadium to Generate Estimated \$1.8 Million in Revenue on Game Day**

**May 10, 2011**

**Boca Raton, FL (FAUSports.com)** - Florida Atlantic University's new 30,000-seat on-campus football stadium could generate an estimated \$1.8 million to FAU and the local economy on each game day, according to the Palm Beach County Sports Commission, a private, not-for-profit organization contracted by Palm Beach County to promote and market the County as a sports and sports tourism destination.

The FAU stadium project has already made an important impact, as it contributed to the creation of 2,000 jobs, including all work done onsite and offsite since the official planning stages began in 2008.

"Florida Atlantic University's stadium has already begun to positively impact the University and local community as a whole," said Tom Donaudy, vice president for facilities at FAU. "Once it opens, it will positively impact the economic portfolio of South Florida."

The stadium is the centerpiece of FAU's Innovation Village, located in the north central area of campus. Home of the Owl football team, the open-air stadium, a \$70 million project funded through a direct bank loan and private donations, is slated to feature 6,000 premium seats, including 24 suites, 26 loge boxes, 1,000 premier club seats and 4,000 priority club seats, and the latest, state-of-the-art amenities. FAU will play all home football games in the new stadium in fall 2011.

The stadium project is a design joint-venture between architects HKS Architects and INC/Schenkel Schultz, as well as a construction joint-venture by Cummings General Contractors and Balfour Beatty Construction



## **Impact of FAU Stadium goes beyond football and the university**

By Ted Hutton

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

8:19 AM EDT, October 14, 2011

When Howard Schnellenberger talks about the impact of Florida Atlantic's new on-campus football stadium that opens Saturday, he often ends talking about Louisville.

Schnellenberger spent 10 years as coach of the Cardinals (1985-1994) and despite leaving four years before Papa John's Stadium was built there, he is credited with laying the groundwork that made the stadium possible.

"I have no way to be a judge or prognosticator as to what will happen in Boca Raton, but I do know the things that are going to happen are going to be damn good," Schnellenberger said.

That's because Schnellenberger saw what happened in his home town once Papa John's Stadium was completed.

"It's been a great success story. It had a monumental impact on the city and the university," Schnellenberger said. Schnellenberger said Louisville was more of a commuter school than FAU was when he arrived. "It was in a downtrodden part of Louisville," he said.

Now every sport has its own venue, built since the Papa John's opened in 1998, and the stadium just went through an \$72 million expansion that increased seating from 42,000 to 55,000.

"There has been an incredible resurgence," said Kenny Klein, Louisville's veteran sports information director, who was when during Schnellenberger's tenure. "We went from 1,000 students on campus to more than 5,000 now. The football stadium is a huge part of that."

FAU opened two new dorms this fall that added 1,200 students to the on-campus population, bringing it to 3,700. The dorms sit next to the stadium and are part of the Innovation Village complex that will eventually have two more dorms along with retail shops and restaurants.

The dorms and stadium appear to already be having an impact. The university has a record enrollment of 29,400 this fall, and had more than 22,000 applications, a record and double from the year before.

"What [Schnellenberger] did here is make everyone dream bigger than they ever thought before. He always held true to that," Klein said.

FAU graduate and former FAU Board of Trustee member Armand Grossman believes the stadium will touch off the same kind of changes in Boca Raton that happened in Louisville.

"It will have a huge impact. You get more applications, you get a higher performing student population and you have higher retention and higher graduation rate," Grossman said.

And he was just getting warmed up.

"It goes well beyond football. A stadium is an economic driver, not just for game day. It enhances the university, and a thriving university is an asset to the city it is in. This is huge for Boca Raton," said Grossman, a commercial real estate broker and developer who lives in Boca Raton.

"It is hard to market a school on a national level. But you start football and win a couple bowl games and suddenly Florida Atlantic gets national attention," Grossman said. "If I sound passionate it is because my feelings are so strong because I have seen what intercollegiate sports can do at all levels."

## New FAU stadium to open on Saturday

# Venue could help boost Boca Raton economy

Posted: 10/14/2011

- By: Marissa Bagg

BOCA RATON, Fla. - It's a new era at Florida Atlantic University with the new state-of-the-art football stadium set to open Saturday. The new venue could also spark the economy in the area.

Boca Raton's Irishmen Pub owner Mark Nelson is looking forward to game day crowds arriving. He setup a shuttle to and from his restaurant for patrons.

"Before and after the games we can get them here for food and drink, a tailgate party here," said Nelson.

Just down the street, Flackowitz serves up breakfast and lunch. Soon it will serve dinner to accommodate more people.

"I think people that come to town don't want to go to the chain restaurants, they want to come to the diners and drive-ins," said waitress Courtney Weeks.

"Whether it's taxis, hotels or restaurants, as they utilize the stadium for different events in addition to football, and as the program grows, it'll bring a lot of outside people in to see the area," said Nelson.

With growing enrollment, the stadium is also setup to add thousands more seats in coming years. Right now it seats 30,000 and has luxury boxes and other premier seating. It cost \$70 million to build.

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# The Palm Beach Post

## Officials hope to avert traffic tie-ups at Saturday's FAU game

By **ALEXANDRA SELTZER**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 9:44 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 15, 2011

Posted: 5:15 p.m. Friday, Oct. 14, 2011

Saturday's game at Florida Atlantic University's new stadium may pose problems for drivers on Interstate 95 and roads leading to the campus.

But officials with the Florida Highway Patrol and other agencies say they have planned for possible traffic back-ups and are working together to minimize any inconveniences.

"We're hoping it's not a problem," said Florida Highway Patrol Lt. Tim Frith.

FHP troopers, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and Boca Raton Police Department will direct traffic at I-95 exits at Glades and Yamato roads as well as on Military Trail before and after the 4 p.m. kickoff between FAU and Western Kentucky.

Drivers planning to head north or south on I-95 before the game should instead use Florida's Turnpike, Frith said.

Boca Raton Police Department Capt. Coy Dixon said drivers can expect increased traffic between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. and after the game.

But no city roads will be closed, Dixon said.

"People should be able to travel throughout Boca as normal," he said.

He said the department has been working with FAU for several months to "establish a maintenance of traffic plan," addressing increased traffic on the roads on game days.

Part of the traffic plan will be placement of variable message signs on the roads to give motorists directions to the university.

FAU's on-campus 30,000-seat stadium cost \$70 million.

## Owls Seek First Victory In New Stadium

*October 14, 2011 2:35 PM*

BOCA RATON, Fla. (CBSMiami.com) – Western Kentucky is looking to crash Florida Atlantic’s party this Saturday as the [Owls](#) open their brand new stadium.

For Florida Atlantic, nothing would christen the new 30,000 seat stadium like getting the team’s first victory of 2011. But, Western Kentucky isn’t backing down to the challenge of what is expected to be a raucous crowd.

“It’s our new stadium because we’re playing in it too,” Western Kentucky cornerback Tyree Robinson told the Associated Press.

If you’re looking for points, the game may not be your cup of tea. Combined, WKU and FAU are averaging less than 32 [points per game](#). Those stats are skewed by blowout losses to large BCS schools.

Western Kentucky’s offense is putting up 316 yards per game, good for 103rd in the country. FAU’s offense is managing just 230 yards of total offense per game, ranked third worst in the country.

Plus, the WKU Hilltoppers are at their best on the road. WKU three victories over the past two season have come away from the team’s home stadium in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

FAU is one of the three winless teams in the Football Bowl Subdivision. All of the losses have come on the road including losses at Florida, Michigan State, and Auburn. FAU has also dropped two straight [Sun Belt Conference](#) games to Louisiana-Lafayette and North Texas.

FAU will also be sending out backup quarterback David Kooi as the starter this week after Graham Wilbert suffered an injury to his throwing arm in last weekend’s game.

Kickoff for the Owls matchup with the Hilltoppers is set for 4:00 p.m. in Boca Raton.

## **Pep rally, bonfire draw thousands of FAU students**

By Ted Hutton

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

8:07 AM EDT, October 14, 2011

BOCA RATON – Usually Florida Atlantic coach Howard Schnellenberger avoids making predictions about games.

But Thursday, before the biggest crowd to ever attend a pep rally at FAU, Schnellenberger veered off his usual script.

"Sure we are going to win Saturday," Schnellenberger yelled, and the crowd of several thousand students cheered. "Sure we are going to win the next Saturday..."

The students then started chanting "Schnelly, Schnelly," as the 77-year-old coach smiled and waved.

Schnellenberger is in his final season at FAU, the program he created and is in its 11th season.

"What a wonderful day for Florida Atlantic University. Thank you all of you who have created this groundswell of enthusiasm that I have never seen at any school I have been," Schnellenberger said.

This week is special because in view across the street from where the pep rally was held was FAU Stadium, the new \$70 million, 30,000-seat stadium that hosts its first game Saturday when the Owls host Western Kentucky.

The pep rally was followed by a bonfire that attracted several thousand more students, who watched and cheered as a large effigy of the Western Kentucky Hilltopper's mascot went up in flames.

Brandon Shepard was one of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity members that build the effigy.

"It was nice chilling after class and getting together to work on it," he said of the likeness of Big Red, which is essentially a big red blob with eyes and mouth. "A ton of chicken wire," was the key to construction, covered by sheets and then spray-painted.

Saturday will be the first time that FAU players won't have to get on a bus to play a home game, as the Owls rented Sun Life Stadium in Miami Gardens for their first two seasons and then moved to Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale for the last eight.

And it is not just the players and fans who are grateful they don't have to travel south on I-95.

"I am probably going to be so emotional," said FAU cheerleader coach Heather Henderson. "I have 11 seniors and am so glad they will get to cheer in the new stadium."

Henderson said she has seen the spirit and support grow in her eight years. "FAU is going to take off from this point," she said.

FAU President Mary Jane Saunders helped Schnellenberger light the bonfire.

"Howard has really done a tremendous job at this university and this just the beginning of a wonderful era of school spirit and winning football games and having a lot of kids choose FAU," Saunders said.

Friday's events include a breakfast hosted by Schnellenberger that begins at 8 a.m. at the stadium, with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 5:30 p.m.

In the evening there is an event for former FAU players, hosted by former FAU quarterback Rusty Smith, the first FAU player ever drafted and now on the roster of the Tennessee Titans.

"I am so excited to come onto the campus and see coach Schnellenberger's dream," Smith said on his radio show that was on the air just before the pep rally. "It has something he has talked about nonstop every time I have talked to him."

## **Schnellenberger show in stadium one of week's top FAU moments**

By Chuck King

I think we are all in agreement that we are in the midst of a pretty special week at FAU.

One of the most memorable moments for me actually happened on Monday, and while there were only a handful of people present at the time, anyone who desires can now see what I'm talking about.

For the past three years we have been producing The Howard Schnellenberger Show, a weekly video broadcast where coach and a host (for the past two years it's been voice of the Owls Ken LaVicka) discuss the previous week's game, the upcoming opponent and various features.

Every show had been recorded in the Founders Lounge in the Oxley Center. On Monday, however, we took it on the road – well down the road. actually. We shot the nearly half hour show from the Priority Club level inside the stadium.

What I will remember from that shoot is how long it took, and how much I didn't mind. The recording probably lasted twice the time as a normal show. The reason? All of us kept stopping to look at various features of the stadium, discuss how the stadium would play on game day, and how it would look on game day.

I have been in the stadium literally dozens of times over the past month, and had similar conversations with various people. Schnellenberger made this trip different.

No one was more excited to be shooting in the stadium than the coach, and it really shows in the video. Even after we finished taping, Schnellenberger remained in his chair shaking hands with various workers and fans who wandered into the stadium, and talking with other media members.

In what has been a trying year both on and off the field, he seemed comfortable. He felt at home.

As for the show, it's certainly one of the best we've ever produced. Right now it can be seen on OwlAccess.com.

We're still playing around with the idea of shooting more shows at the stadium. It's definitely an appealing idea.

I hope you enjoy watching the show as much as we enjoyed creating it.

October 14, 2011



# The Man With The Vision: The House That Howard Built

October 14, 2011 -

By: Pedro Heizer

Howard Schnellenberger has been to the FAU Owls what his mentor, Don Shula was for the Miami Dolphins. Schnellenberger has devoted his time and passion to getting the FAU Football program off the ground.

He spent two years as the school's director of football operations, though there was no football team, and has since been the only coach the program has ever known.

Schnellenberger was the driving force behind getting an on-campus stadium, and made FAU a common name in both the state and the country.

When Schnellenberger came to FAU in 1998, one of the first things he proposed was an on-campus stadium. He had made a similar proposal during his tenures at the University of Miami, and Louisville.

Schnellenberger understands the importance of an on-campus stadium, from his days with The University of Miami in the late 70s and early 80s.

The Hurricanes played at the Orange Bowl and Schnellenberger said one of his first games (a game versus Notre Dame) had to be moved because fans wouldn't travel to the Orange Bowl despite the Irish being one of the most recognizable teams in college football.

He said he didn't want FAU to have the same problems.

"I've been right in the middle of this thing for all these years and can see the significance of playing their home games on campus," Schnellenberger said. "It was absolutely obvious to us that a stadium needed to be built on our campus because no college football team wants to be off their own campus. The ones that are off campus certainly wish that they were on campus and that is true of the great teams as well."

According to Schnellenberger, a school becomes a recognizable after its football program becomes important in the national eyes. UCLA, FSU, UF, UCF, Auburn, LSU, Alabama, all were small schools at one point. These schools grew once the school invested in a football stadium. Once a football program becomes seen in the national media, not only will it be easier for the school to sign recruits, but the school will grow along with the football program.

"With this football stadium, FAU will now be a major player when it comes to recruitment, and being noticed by bigger conferences." an enthusiastic Schnellenberger in his office explained the importance of a football stadium in a University.

Not only is the stadium a huge boost for the College Life at FAU, but it will also be a huge boost for the city of Boca Raton. The new 30,000 seat stadium will attract fans from all over Boca Raton, Fort Lauderdale, and other neighboring cities. All these people will come to the heart of Boca Raton and will end up eating at the local restaurants, go to bars, clubs, or any form of entertainment after the games, much like FSU has right now.

Seeing his dream of an on-campus stadium realized is one of the highlights of Schnellenberger's career. And in spite of feeling the pull of retirement that is just around the corner (Schnellenberger will retire after the season), Schnellenberger hasn't lost his passion for the game.

FAU found the ultimate builder, and the ultimate dreamer; Schnellenberger is the type of guy who is able to look at a pile of junk and see gold.

As for what Schnellenberger sees in the future for FAU, "I can see them in 15 years being parts of the Big East Conference and competing for a national title or a meaning bowl game."

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And no one wants the Owls to win and avoid losing a possible school-record ninth consecutive game dating back to last season, than the players.

"That would make it even more exciting that it is to get this first win, which we've been trying to do all season," said FAU running back Alfred Morris. "That's the ultimate goal, winning, despite the stadium opening up and all the festivities going on."

If the Owls can do that, it could be the start of something big, FAU linebacker Randell Johnson said.

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**Discuss this story in our [message boards](#)**

## FAU Opening House That Howard Built

*October 13, 2011 3:33 PM*

Reporting **Tim Kephart**

BOCA RATON, Fla. (CBSMiami.com) – It could be called the House that Howard Built, but this Saturday, [Florida Atlantic University](#) will finally open its brand new 30,000 seat on-campus stadium.

Famed former University of Miami head coach [Howard Schnellenberger](#) helped build the stadium and the team at FAU. The school's program started under Schnellenberger in 1998 and hasn't had a true home stadium since.

Schnellenberger originally pitched a 42,000-seat on-campus stadium with a roof. But the retiring head coach has no complaints about the open-air designed stadium.

"My dream fell on deaf ears," Schnellenberger said. "Hallelujah, amen, glory be, the university dispelled my first thoughts and came up with their own."

For FAU, the addition of the on-campus stadium will finally give a football program that is so young, but already won two bowl games.

"I think the stadium's going to do what stadiums all over the country have done — add a great dimension to the vibrancy and potential of the university," Schnellenberger said.

Giving the Owls a home stadium will also give the university more credibility to hire a coach to replace the retiring Schnellenberger. The list of names rumored to be targets of FAU include: former Texas Tech head coach Mike Leach; former Canes head coach Randy Shannon; and former USF head coach Jim Leavitt.

"I think we'll be able to attract great coach," athletic director Craig Angelos said. "This is a job I think a lot of people would love to have — one, because of a brand-new stadium, and two, because we're in the hotbed of some of the most talented players in the country."

Attracting the players has been an issue in the past as players would see the rough stadium conditions FAU would play in and immediately turn elsewhere. But, with the sparkling new stadium opening Saturday, players say things have changed.

"With recruiting, kids now know we have our own stadium, and that affects them," junior linebacker David Hinds said. "Schnelly told us the vision he had, and that's the reason a lot of us in my class came here. He came through; we have our stadium."

The always desired home-field advantage will finally be in FAU's corner on Saturday. The Owls are early favorites to knock off the [Western Kentucky Hilltoppers](#).

Still, while the stadium is built, it's only the first step in building a program that all of the more than 28,000 FAU students can finally say can compete in the Sun Belt Conference year in and year out.

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FAU Puts Finishing Touches On New Football Stadium

### ***Athletic Director Optimistic For 'Full House' When Stadium Opens Saturday***

POSTED: 3:56 pm EDT October 13, 2011

**BOCA RATON, Fla.** -- Take the skybox elevator to the top floor of the "House that Howard Built," and it's easy to see why the Owls of Florida Atlantic University believe their football program is on the rise.

The view includes the Atlantic Ocean on the horizon, a bustling, rapidly growing campus to the right, and the school's newest edifice directly below -- a handsome 30,000-seat stadium that will open Saturday when the Owls play Western Kentucky.

Since the program began in 2001, the Owls have been playing home football games in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. But come Saturday, the Owls will finally be home.

This may not quite be the top of the college football world, but coach Howard Schnellenberger likes what he sees. It has been a hard, humbling climb to reach this point, but the Owls' new \$70 million home makes it clear they're here to stay, and a near-sellout crowd is expected for the opener.

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"As of Monday, we had about 5,000 tickets left to sell," athletic director Craig Angelos said. "As of today -- Thursday -- we're probably maybe 4,000, but we expect a big walk-up crowd also, so I think we'll have a full house on Saturday."

Last month, ticket sales were lagging, and an 0-5 start certainly doesn't help, but Angelos is confident the new stadium will pay off -- especially with the millions of dollars in revenue from naming rights and if the school sells 12,000 tickets per game.

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"This is the biggest sports venue in Broward and Palm Beach counties," Angelos said. "That services a lot of people, so we've try to reach out to make sure that we involve as many people as we can in those two counties."

Ground crews were putting the finishing touches on the field, landscaping and painting. Tickets are still available for Saturday's game. To purchase tickets, [click here](#).

South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## **New FAU Stadium: The House That Howard Built**

### **Schnellenberger's vision finally turns into reality**

By Ted Hutton, Sun Sentinel

12:07 PM EDT, October 13, 2011

Almost from the day he walked on to Florida Atlantic's main campus in 1998 to create a football program out of thin air, Howard Schnellenberger talked about the stadium that would be built.

To Schnellenberger, it was never a question of 'if,' but of when.

And it wasn't just words. He carried around an artist's rendering of a 40,000-seat domed stadium, and showed it to anyone and everyone.

That included Tom Donaudy, FAU's architect and Vice President of Facilities.

Donaudy was responsible for all construction projects on the Boca Raton campus, but had never heard about a stadium, much less authorized that that an artist put Schnellenberger's dream on paper.

"I was thinking to myself, 'How did he get a rendering?' " Donaudy said.

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That happened in Miami, his first stop as a head college coach. Back then, in the early 1980s, Schnellenberger had a small model of a stadium he envisioned on the Coral Gables campus.

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"We are on a collision course with a national championship. The only variable is time," is what he said, and it is a quote every Louisville fan can repeat.

"We had to win first," Schnellenberger said. And after three rough years when the Cardinals went 8-24, they started winning. In 1990 the Cardinals went 10-1 and then beat Alabama 34-7 in the Fiesta Bowl.

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"Howard is a visionary," said FAU alum and former FAU Board of Trustees member Armand Grossman, who voted to approve construction of the stadium in 2010. "Without Howard this would not have happened. I owe that man a huge debt for what he has done here."

"This truly is 'The House That Howard Built,' " FAU President Mary Jane Saunders said.

It came later than he predicted, and without a roof and few seats.

But it is an on-campus stadium, and it will transform FAU.

"It does have some magic in it," Schnellenberger said about the stadium, "and we hope to extract some of it Saturday evening."

## WIOD-AM Local News

Thursday, October 13, 2011

### **Schnellenberger's Dream Comes True At FAU**

#### **New 30,000 seater stadium at Florida Atlantic University to open this Saturday.**

Former Hurricane Football Coach, Howard Schnellenberger will finally see his dream turn to fruition.

On Saturday October 15th FAU's long awaited stadium will be open, and seated by 300,000 students, alumni, and fans.

It was in 1998 the very year Schnellenberger began his journey at FAU, that he instantly began talking about the stadium.

Many may remember Schnellenberger's first stop as head coach for the University of Miami in the early 1980's.

Schnellenberger led the Hurricanes to the national championship winning in 1983, followed by four more championships.

Even then Schnellenberger says he had a small model of a stadium he envisioned on the Coral Gables campus.

Schnellenberger's next stop would be Louisville, his home town, where he took over another foundering program.

Building the program from the bottom up, Schnellenberger then sought to build a stadium at Louisville.

The then \$63 million, 42,000-seat Papa John's Stadium opened on the Louisville campus in 1998, but Schnellenberger would leave for a coaching job at Oklahoma, before having a chance to coach in the very stadium he helped to create.

Now 77-years-old, and in his 52nd and final year as a football coach, Schnellenberger will lead the Owl's onto the field at the \$70 million, FAU Stadium.

## Thursday's Required Reading: First 1,000 students at Saturday's game to get Owlsley bobblehead doll

By Chuck King

FAU student government president Ayden Maher spent much of the last couple months trying to secure as many tickets as possible for students to the first game.

His efforts have paid off. Even though the student section seats about 6,000, it appears as though 7,500 students will be allowed into the first game. The overflow from the student section will be seated in the south portion of the east stands.

While it could be argued those are better seats than the south end zone bleachers that are dedicated for the student section, FAU's student government is giving the students a reason to show up early and fill their main section first.

The first 1,000 students to enter the stadium on Saturday will receive an Owlsley bobblehead doll (*photo*). There are going to be a lot of commemorative pieces that come from Saturday's stadium opener, but if you like the Owls' mascot it's going to be hard to beat the bobblehead giveaway – and in theory only FAU students will have them.

The nice thing about this promotion is that it should ensure that there's a good group of fans inside the stadium an hour before kickoff when FAU players hit the field for the pre-game warm-ups.

It's a win-win for the students and the players.

*Other linkage...*

- Owl Access: FAU will have home-field advantage even though it has never played in its home before
- Owl Access: Kooi named starter for Saturday
- Owl Access: Hoops recruit likes what Jarvis is doing at FAU
- Sun-Sentinel: FAU faces top running back in the Sun Belt
- TCPalm.com: No conference shopping in FAU's future
- Pensacola News-Journal: Kooi ready to be Owls starter
- Pensacola News-Journal: Morris shines at RB
- Bowling Green Daily News: One is not enough, Taggart says
- College Heights Herald: WKU's Doyle named Mackey Tight End of the Week
- Murfreesboro Daily News Journal: Waters to retire as Sun Belt Commissioner
- Miami Herald: Golden Panthers receiver set to return next week
- New York Times: Auburn cleared by NCAA

October 13, 2011

## Schnellenberger, Florida Atlantic open new stadium

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) -- Take the skybox elevator to the top floor of the House that Howard Built, and it's easy to see why the Owls of Florida Atlantic University believe their football program is on the rise.

The view includes the Atlantic Ocean on the horizon, a bustling, rapidly growing campus to the right, and the school's newest structure directly below -- a handsome 30,000-seat stadium that will open Saturday when the Owls play Western Kentucky.

This may not quite be the top of the college football world, but coach Howard Schnellenberger likes what he sees.

"Majestic," he says in that familiar baritone growl.

It has been a hard, humbling climb to reach this point. Schnellenberger built the state school's program from scratch beginning in 1998, and the Owls were rootless for a decade, playing home games at the Miami Dolphins' stadium, and then at a high school stadium in Fort Lauderdale. Crowds of less than 3,000 were common at first.

Florida Atlantic reached the Division I-AA semifinals, made the jump to the major-college level, joined the Sun Belt Conference and won two bowl games. But the program struggled for attention in the busy South Florida sports market, and last year attendance averaged only 14,025.

The Owls' new \$70 million home makes it clear they're here to stay, however, and a near-sellout crowd is expected for the opener.

"I think the stadium's going to do what stadiums all over the country have done -- add a great dimension to the vibrancy and potential of the university," Schnellenberger says.

He knows about building. Schnellenberger led the Miami Hurricanes to their first national title in 1983 and built Louisville into a top-25 team. Then he came out of retirement to join the Owls.

His goal at the outset was a 42,000-seat on-campus stadium with a roof. The school decided on a smaller, open-air design, but Schnellenberger has no complaints about the end result.

"My dream fell on deaf ears," he says, a smile lifting his mustache. "Hallelujah, amen, glory be -- the university dispelled my first thoughts and came up with their own."

Even so, it was Schnellenberger who led the push to make the stadium a reality.

"Howard has been a great visionary throughout his career," athletic director Craig Angelos says. "He has a certain talent of being able to cast a long vision that might seem impossible to some in the beginning, and as he starts moving forward, people get on board with it. That was his role and will be his legacy."

With the program now on a firm foundation, the 77-year-old Schnellenberger will retire after the season. Angelos says his long list of possible successors includes former coaches Mike Leach, Randy Shannon and Jim Leavitt.

"I think we'll be able to attract great coach," Angelos says. "This is a job I think a lot of people would love to have -- one, because of a brand-new stadium, and two, because we're in the hotbed of some of the most talented players in the country. With that combination, we could be as good as anybody in the country in the next five to 10 years."

Schnellenberger agrees. Ever since arriving in Boca Raton, he has claimed Florida Atlantic can eventually compete with the nation's elite programs, including Florida, Florida State and Miami.

"It certainly has as much of a chance as any young school in America to be the best team in America," Schnellenberger says. "It has all of the natural resources that you need."

Enrollment now exceeds 28,000 at the 50-year-old school, which prides itself on the diversity of its student body and offers more than 170 degree programs. But while the campus sits amid fertile recruiting territory, that's not where the football team played, and homely venues made the Owls a difficult sell to prep players.

That has changed.

"With recruiting, kids now know we have our own stadium, and that affects them," junior linebacker David Hinds says. "Schnelly told us the vision he had, and that's the reason a lot of us in my class came here. He came through; we have our stadium."

The extent of the home-field advantage will immediately be tested. The Owls played their first five games this season on the road and lost them all, including as heavy underdogs at Florida, Michigan State and Auburn.

Now they're favored for the first time while christening a new home.

"We're going to try to make a tradition not to ever lose in that stadium," sophomore linebacker Randell Johnson says.

"The rah-rah and all the noise is going to be on our side," Hinds says. "That's going to be exciting to have. We're hoping to fill up the stadium and disrupt their team -- put some fear in their tummies."

Games could get noisy: The stadium's enclosed except for two corners, where royal palms and beach sand provide a subtropical flavor. There's also a large Tiki bar. The band and other students will sit in the end zone; VIPs can watch from a four-level press box that includes 24 luxury suites.

This week workers applied finishing touches, and the place smelled like paint, a reminder Schnellenberger and the Owls aren't quite done building.

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South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## Stadium opening draws former prOWLer back to Boca Raton

By Ted Hutton

9:24 AM EDT, October 13, 2011

**BOCA RATON** – Rick “Smitty” Smith expects to shed more than a few tears over the next couple days.

The Florida Atlantic alum and former director of the prOWLers, the university’s student group that supports athletics, is returning to campus for the first time in more than a year.

Smith is coming back so he can be at the first game ever played at FAU Stadium, the new on-campus facility that opens Saturday when the Owls host Western Kentucky at 4 p.m.

“I am going to have my quiet time in the stadium and no doubt have a cry,” Smith said. “I thought it would never happen. But it is a reality. It is here to stay.”

Smith lives in San Antonio and is the external business manager for athletics at the University of the Incarnate Word, a Division II school that began playing football in 2009. His career in athletics began when he arrived at FAU in 2002 as a freshman eager to get involved with campus life.

“I haven’t been on campus for more than a year. I probably won’t recognize it. When I got there [in 2002], all that was on that side of campus was an old runway and an often empty parking lot,” Smith said about the north end of campus that is the site of the Innovation Village complex that includes the two new dorms that house 1,200 students and the \$70 million stadium with a capacity of 30,000.

Smith will be looking for the individualized bricks embedded in the walkway in front of the stadium that was part of fund-raiser started in 2006 by the FAU Student Alumni Association.

At that time the stadium seemed like it could be coming soon, but then it became apparent the support was not there to proceed.

There is also a brick in the walkway that honors Smith. “Smitty – The Dream Lives On – Coach.”

It was a brick purchased by coach Howard Schnellenberger.

Schnellenberger has always made it a point to encourage the students to get involved in the program. And he is hands on about it.

“He was unbelievable,” Smith said about working with Schnellenberger. “He did the dirty work. Whenever and wherever I asked him to come speak to students, he came.”

One of Smith’s first tasks was to arrange a bus to take students to the South Florida game in 2002. That was the first of many bus trips Smith arranged, including buses to take students to FAU home games 14 miles away in Fort Lauderdale’s Lockhart Stadium.

Smith said he first felt momentum build when FAU made it into the Division I-AA playoffs in 2003.

“On a Thanksgiving weekend we got 150 students on buses to Bethune-Cookman,” Smith said.

Smith graduated in the summer of 2007. That fall, FAU went on a roll and on Dec. 1 the Owls beat Troy 38-32 to win the Sun Belt title and become the youngest team to ever get to a bowl game.

In the stands at Troy was a busload of fans who had made the 11 trip from Boca Raton, including many prOWLers. After the game, Schnellenberger walked into the crowd of fans.

But before he thanked them for being there, he had a question. “What is Smitty’s number?” he asked. Then he dialed it.

“He told me that I was the first person he called and that he wanted me to know that they couldn’t have done it without me and that he hoped to see me in New Orleans,” Smith said. “It brought me to tears, to think he would think of me at a time like that. But that is coach. He is a role model for everything I do.”

Smith did get to New Orleans, joining a couple thousand FAU fans who made the trip and watched the Owls win their first bowl game.

And Smith will be on hand Saturday for another milestone, the biggest in the program’s history, as they open the new stadium.

And he will not be alone. “Fourteen of those 30,000 fans will be with me,” Smith said about the relatives and friends in his group. “Finally, we will have a real college football experience.”



# New FAU Stadium: The House That Howard Built

[Schnellenberger's vision finally turns into reality](#)

By Ted Hutton, Sun Sentinel

12:07 PM EDT, October 13, 2011

Almost from the day he walked on to Florida Atlantic's main campus in 1998 to create a football program out of thin air, Howard Schnellenberger talked about the stadium that would be built.

To Schnellenberger, it was never a question of 'if,' but of when.

And it wasn't just words. He carried around an artist's rendering of a 40,000-seat domed stadium, and showed it to anyone and everyone.

That included Tom Donaudy, FAU's architect and Vice President of Facilities.

Donaudy was responsible for all construction projects on the Boca Raton campus, but had never heard about a stadium, much less authorized that that an artist put Schnellenberger's dream on paper.

"I was thinking to myself, 'How did he get a rendering?' " Donaudy said.

Welcome to the world of Howard Schnellenberger. A coach who doesn't use end-arounds, but instead lowers his shoulder and plows through obstacles. Sometimes he bounces off again and again, but eventually he breaks through.

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But it is an on-campus stadium, and it will transform FAU.

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# The Palm Beach Post

## About 5,000 tickets remain for FAU's first game at its new on-campus stadium

By **TOM D'ANGELO**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Posted: 4:54 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011

Approximately 5,000 tickets remain for Florida Atlantic's first game in its 30,000-seat on-campus stadium Saturday.

As of Monday, 12,229 tickets had been sold, including season tickets, single-game tickets, group tickets and mini plans; 3,469 tickets are complimentary and 7,500 are being held for students.

The general bowl seats 28,428.

Athletic Director Craig Angelos is confident the stadium will be full for the 4 p.m. kickoff against Western Kentucky.

"We've had a pretty good run and I think the walk up will be very strong," Angelos said. "People talk about it, make plans to go and the last few days that's when people get motivated and do it. I don't think it will be unusual to see a strong walk-up crowd.

"This is a big event that has been talked about in local circle for years."

South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## Fans, students impressed by FAU Stadium

### Select-A-Seat offers first glimpse inside the \$70 million stadium

By Ted Hutton, Sun Sentinel

8:59 PM EDT, October 11, 2011

BOCA RATON

George and Karen Feld walked onto the field at FAU's new football stadium Tuesday afternoon and their jaws dropped.

"Speechless," George Feld said, but his wife found some words.

"It is really breathtaking. This is really something," Karen Feld said.

The Felds have been attending FAU football games since 2004 when their grandson Kris Bartels started playing for the Owls. Another grandson, Marcus Bartels, now plays for the Owls and is a starting safety.

The Felds, who are from Deerfield Beach, took advantage of the Select-A-Seat event at the \$70 million, 30,000-seat stadium to get their first look inside.

"I never expected anything like this," George Feld said. "We can't wait for Saturday."

FAU hosts Western Kentucky on Saturday at 4 p.m.

After years of watching their grandsons play at Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, the Felds are glad the Owls have a new home.

"You can't even compare them, you don't want to say them in the same breath," Karen Feld said about the difference between Lockhart and the FAU Stadium.

After a sluggish start, tickets to the game have been selling well, according to Athletic Director Craig Angelos. As of Tuesday afternoon, fewer than 5,000 tickets remained, with the cheapest at \$28.

Keith and Deborah McLaughlin of Coral Springs will be two of those in attendance, and they were giddy after seeing where they would be sitting — on the 50-yard line about a quarter of the way up in the home side stands, with the tiki bar right behind them.

"This is unbelievable," said Keith McLaughlin, whose wife suffers from brain seizures and is in a wheelchair. That hasn't stopped the McLaughlins from attending home and away FAU games since the program started in 2001.

"We have been to a lot of stadiums, and they retrofit for the disabled, but it never is easy. This is so easy, from the parking to the elevator, and the best part, a family bathroom right nearby," Keith McLaughlin said.

Keith McLaughlin was not just impressed by his seats.

"We were at Auburn, and Jordan-Hare looked like a high school stadium on steroids. This is like a two-seat Jaguar. It is just really neat. Without anybody in it, it feels like home," he said.

FAU is setting aside seats for 7,500 students, and the students checking out the stadium Tuesday said they expect that many to show up.

"Absolutely," said Shane Marinelli, a senior from Coconut Creek.

"It is really nice," said Ana Mese, a junior from Miami. Mese is a member of the Owlettes, a student organization that helps during recruiting by giving recruits tours of the campus.

Mese is in her first year at FAU, but heard from veteran Owlettes about Lockhart. "It's going to be great showing them around this stadium," she said.

Students get in free to the games with a valid Owl Card.

FAU players practiced on the field for the first time Tuesday as part of the event.

"It was a dream come true. The school is right here," said Xavier Stinson. "It is where we got to class, the dorms we lived in. We don't have to travel down to Fort Lauderdale for a game."

# The Palm Beach Post

## FAU players experience rush of practicing in new stadium, but getting a win Saturday is their priority

By **TOM D'ANGELO**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 10:04 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011  
Posted: 7:47 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2011

A new era at Florida Atlantic University began Tuesday when the Owls held their first practice inside their new \$70 million on-campus stadium.

Many of the players appeared to be in awe - and a little confused - as they walked into their new home for the first time with several not sure which entrance to use and others circling the field following practice trying to figure out how to get to their cars.

Still, practice was more lively on a field adorned with the school and Sun Belt Conference logos, the video board lit up and a few hundred fans in the stands for select-a-seat day.

"Practicing in here was a different feeling, a feeling of this is our home," running back Xavier Stinson said.

With FAU at 0-5, its lowest point in several seasons, the hope is the excitement surrounding the stadium opening extends into a better performance on the field.

FAU officially opens the \$70 million, 30,000-seat stadium 4 p.m. Saturday against Western Kentucky. The Owls, who have dropped eight consecutive games dating back to last season (equaling the longest losing streak in program history) are one of three remaining winless teams in Division I-A.

"This is uncharted waters where nobody has ever been before," said coach Howard Schnellenberger, who began working on getting a stadium built since he was hired in 1999 to lead the fledgling program.

"You would hope the excitement will parlay into better performance and more yards gained and more touchdowns.

"The team itself is not demoralized and they know they can play better. They got a lot of making up to do but making up is not an impossibility."

The school has planned a week of festivities leading up to the opening.

"It's exciting to have the stadium but we all want to get a win," linebacker David Hinds said. "We're happy to be home. The rah-rah and all the noise will be on our side. That's going to be exciting. But we want this win. We need this win."

For one week at least, FAU should be able to feed off a true home-field advantage. About 5,000 tickets remain for the Saturday's game and officials are expecting a brisk run that should end with every seat in the stadium being filled.

The excitement and energy is something the team has lacked playing at Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale the past eight seasons.

"It definitely can help as a whole, the atmosphere, having that 13th man in the crowd does play a factor," running back Alfred Morris said. "We are looking forward to that."

Defensive coordinator Kurt Van Valkenburgh is the only coach other than Schnellenberger who has been with the program all 11 seasons. Van Valkenburgh has made the trips to Sun Life Stadium and Lockhart Stadium, an aging high school stadium where FAU was forced to dress across the street in the baseball stadium locker rooms.

"To think you're going to be in your own place after all this time is kind of amazing," Van Valkenburgh said. "It's above anything you could have thought."

"It seems like it's been forever but in reality it's been a very short period of time to get this done. This will rival a lot of places."

And on Saturday, it all becomes a reality.

"We've all just kind of cast that vision and tried to keep people on board that we're eventually going to have a stadium," Athletic Director Craig Angelos said. "For the first time since I've been here, and Howard, too, we won't have to say, 'it's almost here, it's right around the corner.'"

"It will be here. That's exciting."



South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## FAU players focus on getting first win

### Trying to ignore the hoopla around the new stadium

By Ted Hutton, Sun Sentinel

6:05 PM EDT, October 11, 2011

BOCA RATON

FAU players while they welcome all the activities going on surrounding Saturday's first game at the new stadium, but they are focused on one thing – the Owls first win of the season.

"I am interested to see the atmosphere," said running back Alfred Morris, " but the primary goal is winning."

"It is exciting to have the stadium, but we all want to get this win," said linebacker David Hinds. "We don't want to lose there. It is going to be a pride thing."

FAU (0-5) played its first five games on the road due to the stadium's completion date, so Saturday is the home opener as well as the first game to be played on campus in the \$70 million, 30,000-seat stadium.

"This is uncharted waters," coach Howard Schnellenberger said about how his team might handle the situation. "I would hope it would parlay into a better performance."

#### Quick hits

-- FAU held practice Tuesday at the stadium for the first time. They will also practice there Thursday. "I want the stadium to be an old hat by the time we get there Saturday," Schnellenberger said.

-- Quarterback Graham Wilbert has a hyper-extended elbow in his throwing arm and is day-to-day. "I am working hard to get back out there as quick as possible," Wilbert said.

-- A players' only meeting was held before Tuesday's practice. "We are going to try and find an answer to the question a lot of people are asking: What is wrong with our team?" said senior running back Alfred Morris.

-- **Next game:** Western Kentucky, Saturday, 4 p.m.

# Welcome home

*FAU's football team practices for the first time in the new on-campus stadium on Tuesday.*

Originally published on 10/11/2011

**by Marcus Nelson**

BOCA RATON – Florida Atlantic's new football stadium was open for business for the first time on Tuesday.

The only people with bigger smiles than the hundreds of fans who were there for Select-A-Seat Day were the players who took the field for the first time when the Owls went through practice at their new home for the first time.

FAU will play its first game at the new stadium on Saturday against Western Kentucky, but to the players it already feels like home.

"It was everything we expected," FAU junior fullback Xavier Stinson said. "It's a feeling like it's our own and our place. We just have to get used to it."

Many of the players had never even been inside the stadium and didn't know how they were supposed to get to the field for the workout.

"A lot of us were still trying to figure out how to get in," said Owls senior defensive tackle Jarvis Givens.

Owls coach Howard Schnellenberger noticed the players' reaction and said he could tell they were excited.

"They had extra energy," Schnellenberger said. "It was a good feeling."

And Schnellenberger was pretty excited himself.

"It was good to see," Schnellenberger said. "I was delighted to see so many people out here...It was good for the morale of everybody."

## Practice Browser: Compiled by Marcus Nelson

- **Making plays:** After making his first career start vs. North Texas CB **Curtis Cross** had some big hits in practice.
- **Stepping up:** With QB **Graham Wilbert** sidelined for virtually every drill, QB **David Kooi** took snaps with the first team with **Stephen Curtis** running the second team for much of the day.
- **What they're working on:** The Owls held a players-only meeting before practice when trying to rectify the team's problems was addressed.

- **Up Next:** The Owls will be back on the practice field at 3:30 p.m., but likely back at the Oxley Center.

## FAU's new stadium: 'House that Howard built' | Photo Gallery

By Jon Santucci

Wednesday, October 12, 2011

BOCA RATON — When Florida Atlantic hired Howard Schnellenberger to be its director of football operations in 1998, one of his first priorities was to have a stadium built on the school's campus.

Schnellenberger originally estimated the stadium would be completed by 2003.

It took a little longer than he originally hoped, but the 77-year old coach isn't complaining.

Florida Atlantic will play its first game in its \$70 million, 30,000-seat, on-campus stadium Saturday against Western Kentucky — tickets still are available.

Officially it's called FAU Stadium, but in reality it's the "House That Howard Built."

"It's a beautiful landmark," Schnellenberger said. "It's just majestic. That's the word that comes to mind whenever I go over there and see it.

"It's special. It's kind of like building anything or starting out your crusade. This is the fulfillment of Phase One of the development of this football program."

In previous seasons, FAU has played at Sun Life Stadium in Miami Gardens (2001-02) and Lockhart Stadium (2003-10) in Fort Lauderdale.

FAU Stadium always was Schnellenberger's vision and he started selling the idea as soon as he arrived on campus.

"I talked about it with everyone I spoke to," Schnellenberger said. "The reason you start a football team somewhere else is to get it back on campus."

The stadium is part of the university's Innovation Village and is similar to Knight's Plaza at the University of Central Florida. The long-range plans also include a 10,000-seat basketball arena and more on-campus housing.

"It's been a long time coming," FAU athletic director Craig Angelos said. "A lot of people have worked on it for a lot of years and weathered the adversity that's come with it. Now to see it come to fruition is very gratifying for everyone who's been involved with it.

"Even just for myself, after being here one month in July of 2003, I had a meeting about possibly using the Carrier Dome model (at Syracuse University). We've gone through a lot of different types of stadiums before settling on the Innovation Village model, and a lot of different ways to pay for it. It's had a lot of twists and turns along the way."

FAU Stadium is the lone stadium in the country with a view of the Atlantic Ocean. The east side of the stadium stands have the FAU logo built into it — thanks to strategically placed red and white seatbacks amidst a sea of blue.

The home side includes 24 luxury boxes, the 1,082 seat Delray Acura Premier Club level and the 3,920 seat Delray Hyundai Priority Club Level. The Priority Club level also has a covered 16,000-square foot Tiki Bar area.

The playing surface is Bermuda grass — the only Sun Belt Conference stadium not to have synthetic turf.

The south end zone, which is where the band and student section will be, features palm trees and sand. And the stadium can be expanded to hold 60,000.

"We started with 40,000 seats, but decided to start at 30,000," Schnellenberger said. "This is not a stadium built because of a lack of space. This is a stadium built to put it where it belongs — on the campus. We're going to have to go through an education process and a 'show me' kind-of-attitude. Show me the alumni coming back. Show me more freshman coming in — all the things the Ivy League (schools) proved was a good idea 150 years ago."

Both Schnellenberger and Angelos believe the stadium will give Florida Atlantic instant credibility with high school recruits.

And for Angelos, FAU Stadium also gives him an important card to play when he goes searching for the next football coach, as Schnellenberger will retire at the end of the season.

"I think coaches want to go someplace they can be successful and play in a first-class stadium in a talent-rich area," Angelos said. "I think that makes (FAU Stadium) very attractive."

Schnellenberger says he's done his part.

"I leave (FAU) sitting in a great place," Schnellenberger said. "Taking this program, I got to be a path finder; be a father of this infant. Conception came when (former Florida Atlantic president) Dr. (Anthony) Cantonese and I went to Tallahassee and asked the state legislators to let us start a new

program. Birth was when we played our first game and got killed by Slippery Rock (2001). Bar mitzvah or Confirmation came when we joined the Sun Belt Conference and went to the Bowl games.

"Now it's the next step. It's a driver's license. It's the first bank account. It's really exciting."

### **Going to the game?**

Are you attending FAU's first home game in the new stadium? If you are a Treasure Coast resident and are going Saturday we would like to hear from you. Contact sports editor Mike Graham at [mike.graham@scripps.com](mailto:mike.graham@scripps.com) or 772-692-8987

### **What they are saying**

"Ever since all the guys were recruited to play here, we've been excited about the thought of playing on campus. It will be awesome. As good as Lockhart (Stadium) has been, it will be great to be on campus."

– Max Karrick, FAU senior offensive lineman/South Fork High School graduate

### **If You Go**

Kickoff: 4 p.m. Saturday

Tickets: Less than 5,000 remain and are priced from \$11-\$90. Family plans (two adult and two youth tickets) begin at \$45. Tickets can be purchased at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).

Parking: \$15/Free for students

Directions/Where to Park: Single-game ticket holders should take I-95 to Glades Road. Go East and turn left (north) on West University Drive. Parking in lots G-1 to G-7.

Free Shuttle: Busses will shuttle fans to and from the Boca Raton Tri-Rail Station (just west and south of the Yamato Road No. 48 exit) and the stadium starting at 2 p.m. For Tri-Rail information call (800) 874-7245.

Tailgating: Campus lots open at noon, tailgating is permitted three hours prior to kickoff.

### **FAU Stadium Specs**

Architect: Schenkel Schultz/HKS (West Palm Beach and Dallas)

Capacity: 30,000

Cost: \$70 million

Construction materials: 3,916 tons of structural steel (press tower, scoreboard, bleachers), 400 tons of aluminum (bleachers) and 15,800 tons of concrete (building structures, hardscape, foundations)

Height: 145 feet (six stories, plus roof)

Lighting: 160 light fixtures in eight positions around the stadium (six stand-alone posts and two banks atop the press tower)

South scoreboard: Features a 50-foot-by-30-foot video board can show live video, replays, statistics, commercials and animations at a near high definition resolution.

Field: International FIFA soccer field measuring 120 yards by 75 yards, crowned at 7.5 inches from the sideline to the center of the field.

Surface: Celebration Bermuda Turf Grass

Did You Know?: There are 195 palm trees planted in and around the stadium.

### **Stadium Amenities**

Two suite levels consisting of 24 total luxury boxes

One VIP Party Suite with seating for up to 90 guests

Delray Acura Premier Club Level (5,000-square-foot, 1,082 seats, private lounging area with 136 loge box seats)

Delray Hyundai Priority Level (3,920 seats with 16,000-square-foot Tiki Bar area)

Stadium store

### **What FAU Stadium Means**

"This new beautiful stadium will provide the amenities for our young program to grow and spread its wings throughout South Florida. It will be remembered as a stadium that overcame many obstacles in such a short time to put in place a majestic, subtropical stadium in the heart of paradise." – FAU President Mary Jane Saunders

"An on-campus stadium gives you the ability to do whatever you're man enough to do and have a major impact. ... It's going to energize Boca Raton and in a short amount of time, this will become a college town" – Howard Schnellenberger, FAU football coach

"It sets up now to where we can compete for prospects with anyone in the country. You look at TCU, Boise State, the University of Utah and say why can they do that there and we can't do it here? One of the reasons has been our (football) facility has not been very attractive.." – Craig Angelos, FAU athletics director



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# Time to celebrate

*All week Owl Access will be your guide to the new FAU Stadium. Here's a calendar of events leading up to Saturday's big day and don't forget to check out our stories on each aspect of the new home of the Owls with the links underneath.*

Originally published on 10/11/2011

**by Owl Access Staff**

A calendar of events of activities surrounding the opening of FAU's new-on campus stadium:

## **TUESDAY**

- **5 p.m.** Select-A-Seat. Fans who have yet to purchase tickets for the first game can enter the stadium, choose their seat and purchase their ticket.

## **THURSDAY**

- **7 p.m.** Pep Rally. Students get fired up in front of the Forkas Alumni Center.
- **8 p.m.** Bonfire. Students will burn WKU's mascot Big Red in effigy, will be given t-shirts and can enjoy a live band. Open to the Public.

## **FRIDAY**

- **8 a.m.** Coach's Breakfast: The public is invited to eat breakfast and talk football with Howard Schnellenberger at the Delray Acua Premiere Club at FAU Stadium
- **4 p.m.** ESPN 760 live broadcast. Radio home of the Owls will broadcast live from the new home of the Owls until 7 p.m.
- **5:30 p.m.** Ribbon cutting ceremony. Coach Howard Schnellenberger, AD Craig Angelos, President Mary Jane Saunders and former President Frank Brogan will be among the dignitaries present to officially open the stadium. Afterward attendees will be allowed to enter the stadium.
- **6:30 p.m.** Former football player banquet. Rusty Smith, Rob Housler and a plethora of former players are expected to attend a dinner held in the Priority Club. This event is not open to the public.

## **SATURDAY**

- **10 a.m.** ESPN 760 begins six hours of pregame programming leading up to kickoff. ESPN 760 will also carry the game live.
- **Noon** Parking lots open: Tailgate parties on campus can officially begin.
- **2 p.m.** Owl Prowl: As part of what many hope will become a gameday tradition, FAU players will gather at the south end of the breezeway and walk north, past student tailgaters, the Forkas Alumni Center and the corporate tailgate village at the Southwest corner of the stadium before entering the home locker room.
- **3:45 p.m.** On-field pregame festivities: Members of the construction crew will unfurl a giant American Flag. Brett Loewenstern sings the national anthem. A live Eurasian Eagle Owl will lead FAU onto the field.
- **4 p.m.** Kickoff: The Owls officially begin their first-ever on-campus football game.



## Owls' new home set to debut Saturday

[WPEC - CBS12.com](http://WPEC-CBS12.com)

2011-10-11 20:25:13

BOCA RATON, Fla. -- It's hard to fathom where the FAU Owls would be without Howard Schnellenberger. He's gone to great lengths to get a new stadium built for Florida Atlantic University fans.

Howard Schnellenberger is coaching his final season at FAU. But this is no ordinary year, as the Owls set to play in their new on-campus stadium.

"I feel a sense of completion, pride. I am so happy so many people joined with me and the university to make this dream come true," said Schnellenberger.

It's been a struggle to attract people to home games, and Schnellenberger hopes this facility will enable the school to develop a strong fan base. The majestic stadium which seats 30,000 people should also help the Owls recruit more blue chip players.

"Now, we can go into a home of somebody that Miami, Notre Dame has recruited and start stating our case," said Schnellenberger.

When Howard coaches his last game, and heads off into retirement, the new stadium will be his crowning achievement at FAU and will pave the way for a bright Owls future on the football field.

"It will be the most meaningful thing that has happened in my coaching career," said Schnellenberger.

The Owls host Western Kentucky in a critical Sun Belt conference game at the new stadium this Saturday.

## **Paul Janensch: Louisville's old 'Schnelly' brings big-time college football to a galaxy —Florida Atlantic University — not so far away from the Treasure Coast**

Paul Janensch, a former newspaper editor, taught journalism at Quinnipiac University. His Treasure Coast Essay can be heard at 7:20 a.m. and 5:59 p.m. Mondays on WQCS, 88.9 FM.

Wednesday, October 12, 2011

Big-time college football is coming to the Treasure Coast. Well, to Boca Raton, anyway, just 45 minutes south of the Martin County line.

On Saturday, the Florida Atlantic University Owls will play their first game in FAU's new stadium. Their opponent will be Western Kentucky, which seems appropriate, as you will see.

Boca Raton is close enough in my book to be considered on the Treasure Coast. And the Owls in my book are close enough to be considered a big-time college team.

FAU's open-air concrete bowl seats 30,000 and cost \$70 million. It is the centerpiece of an FAU housing, recreation and retail complex called "Innovation Village."

The driving force behind the stadium is Howard Schnellenberger, FAU's first and so far only coach. He came to the university in 1998 to build a football program and immediately began campaigning for an on-campus facility in which to play.

Evidently, people, including people in power, listened to him. With his supreme confidence and friendly manner, he's hard to ignore. I know.

A native of Indiana, Schnellenberger went to Flaget High School in Louisville, Ky., and played tight end for Bear Bryant at Kentucky. He went on to be a college and NFL assistant coach and coach. As head coach at Miami, he led the Hurricanes to their first national title in 1983.

Later "Schnelly," which is what everyone called him, was head coach at the University of Louisville, having been recruited by John Y. Brown Jr., a former governor of Kentucky and an admirer of Schnellenberger for his success at Miami.

At the time, I was the executive editor of The Courier-Journal in Louisville. I remember Schnelly well, especially his aggressive mustache and his basso voice. I met him a couple of times. He did most of the talking.

Schnelly's won-lost record at Louisville was not impressive. In fact, in his early years it was embarrassing. But in time, the wins exceeded the losses, and he pulled Louisville football into the national spotlight.

Rick Bozich, sports columnist at The Courier-Journal, thinks Schnelly belongs in the College Football Hall of Fame. Back when I worked with him I thought Rick was an unusually perceptive sports writer. So who am I to argue?

I'm glad that in 2010 a Howard Schnellenbeger MVP Award was created to be presented each year to the most valuable player on the winning team in the Kentucky-Louisville football game. Since Schnelly played for Kentucky and coached at Louisville, I wonder which team he favors.

Schnellenberger, 77, has announced that he will retire as head FAU coach at the end of this season. Long after he stops roaming the sidelines, the FAU stadium will still be known as "The House that Schnelly Built."

Or it should be.



# Stadium makes nice first impression; Live Chat at 11 a.m.

By Ted Hutton October 12, 2011 08:06 AM

It was nice seeing the reaction of people at Select-A-Seat when they got their first glimpse of the stadium.

I was standing near Marcus Bartels' grandparents. They were speechless at first, then they started saying a string of words – “awesome,” “magnificent,” “breathtaking.” And they went on from there.

That's the kind of reaction you might expect if you have been watching games at Lockhart for years and years,

The students went for their phone cameras right away.

-

I talked to a bunch of folks, young and old, students and alum, old fans, new fans, and I think it is safe to say no one was underwhelmed by it. Just the opposite.

Sitting in the shade on the home side, a nice breeze blowing, the team practicing, it was pretty impressive.

## **BEST SEATS IN THE HOUSE**

I thought it was best captured by Keith McLaughlin.

Keith and his wife Deborah have been fans since day one. Deborah has been suffering from brain seizures for more than a decade and is in a wheelchair, and they started following the team as a kind of therapy.

Howard Schnellenberger was starting a program from scratch and was going to have to work hard to be successful, and that is the way they looked at what they faced.

They are at every home game and make it to a lot of road games, and Keith has to check and make sure the stadiums can accommodate Deborah and her wheelchair.

Tuesday Keith and Deborah found their seats.

-

-

Right on the 50 yard line, with the tiki hut bar right behind them, which meant shade and shelter, and, best of all, a family bathroom right around the corner.

Keith and Deborah were all smiles. The setup was perfect.

And then Keith waxed poetic. He had made the trip to Auburn, so he used Jordan-Hare stadium as an example.

**“Jordan-Hare, that was like a high school stadium on steroids. This is like a two-seat Jaguar. It is just really neat. Without anybody in it, it feels like home,”** he said.

For a 30,000 seat stadium, it does have an intimate feel about it.

-

The Voice sneaks a peak at The House That Howard Built

-

## **LIVE CHAT...**

And, coming at 11 a.m., our usual Wednesday morning chat.

Plenty to discuss this week – home opener in the brand new stadium.

# Local 10

## FAU Owls Set To Unveil New Stadium

POSTED: Monday, October 10, 2011

UPDATED: 9:22 pm EDT October 10, 2011

The 12-yearold FAU football program now has a home of its own. This coming Saturday when the Owls host Western Kentucky, the team's new stadium will be unveiled.

"I'm about as excited as a 77-year-old can be," said FAU Head Coach Howard Schnellenberger about the opening.

Although he doesn't sound too enthusiastic, the stadium has been a dream of Schnellenberger's since he took over the program in 1998.

"Without everything the football teams did, what the faculty did, this never would have happened," he said.

The stadium cost \$70 million to build and can seat 30,000 people.

The Owls opened the season with five road games and five losses. When the team takes the field on Saturday, they won't just be looking forward to the opening, but finally getting in the win column.

"I want to get back to winning and starting a new string against Sun Belt Conference teams," Schnellenberger said.



# Moment of truth

*Football in Paradise: Nearly a year after breaking ground on FAU's on-campus football stadium, FAU administrators say they are ready for the moment everyone has been waiting for.*

Originally published on 10/10/2011

**by Chuck King**

BOCA RATON - During the last few months FAU has attempted to bombard local airwaves with a message: Get Ready 'Cause Here We Come.

Late last week, FAU Vice President for Facilities Tom Donaudy added an addendum to that mantra.

"We are ready," he said. "We're ready. Completely."

Athletic Director Craig Angelos is a bit more guarded.

"Our response is: we hope we are ready," he said.

FAU officially took ownership of its new on-campus stadium from the Cummings-Balfour Beatty construction crew a little more than week before Saturday's first scheduled game.

Despite Donaudy's bravado, there are still many aspects of stadium operations that need to be finalized. That's how FAU staff will spend the last few days leading up to Saturday's 4 p.m. kickoff against Western Kentucky – testing, implementing and revising operational policies.

"We haven't operated a stadium," Donaudy said. "We've operated sports fields and an arena, but we haven't operated this kind of venue."

During the next few days FAU and its contractors will be running through the food, concessions, parking and custodial processes in an attempt to ensure everything runs smoothly.

"We want to do some run-throughs before 30,000 people show up," said Balfour Beatty Director of Operations Chris Long, who will keep many members of his crew on campus through November to deal with any problems that may arise.

"Our part is going to be logistic support, (to be there) if they don't know how to operate something or to be there for immediate attention if something is not operating properly."

While some members of the athletic department will spend the week focusing on gameday operations, others will be focused on efforts to get fans in the stadium.

FAU officials say that about 15,500 tickets had been sold or set aside for the Western Kentucky game, with another 7,500 set aside for the students.

With 28,248 seats (excluding suites and loge boxes) available for sale, that still leaves about 5,000 vacancies.

“That’s my biggest concern right now - just making sure we get a full house,” Angelos said. “It’s been long anticipated. People said things such as, ‘If we build it they will come.’ We spent a lot of money on an advertising agency. The word has certainly been out.”

Despite what seems like a hefty challenge, Angelos still believes selling out the first game is a possibility.

“It’s not unrealistic that we would have a huge walk-up crowd and good sales right up to opening day,” he said.

Nearly everyone involved in the project expects minor operational issues to arise amid the cheers and touchdowns, and most are quick to point out that they expect changes in policies and procedures from week to week as the theoretical processes are tested by practical application.

After a few sleepless nights as the project raced to completion, one of the most highly anticipated days in FAU history is nearly here. Along with the excitement of an on-campus gameday, FAU staffers also expect to experience a feeling of relief that they were able to beat the clock and bring the stadium to campus on time.

“There was a time three, four, five months ago that I wondered about the contractors’ ability to finish, but they never wavered,” Donaudy now admits.

And now?

“I’m sleeping good,” he said.

# South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## FAU hosting multiple events in leadup to Saturday's stadium opening

Select-A-Seat is Tuesday from 5 to 8 p.m.

5:11 PM EDT, October 10, 2011

BOCA RATON – Florida Atlantic will hold the first game in its new on-campus stadium Saturday, but there are many events scheduled leading up to the 4 p.m. kickoff.

All the events listed are free and open to the public.

**TUESDAY:** Select-A-Seat -- From 5 to 8 p.m. fans can go inside the stadium and check out the view from any seat. Single-game and season tickets will be on sale. The team will also practice in the stadium for the first time during the event. Parking is available in the lot on the west side of the stadium.

**THURSDAY:** Bonfire and Pep Rally – The event begins at 7 p.m. with free pizza and t-shirts available at the Alumni Center. The bonfire will be off Lee Street on the northeast corner of the track facility. It includes music by Stampede.

**FRIDAY:** Coach's breakfast – Begins at 8 a.m. in the Premiere Level of the stadium. Parking in the lot on the west side of the stadium.

Ribbon cutting ceremony – Begins around 5 p.m. on the plaza at the stadium entrance at the end of the breezeway.

-- Ted Hutton

**SATURDAY:** Game day -- Parking gates open at noon. Dedication of the Owsley statue at 1:30 p.m. Kickoff versus Western Kentucky at 4 p.m.

-- Ted Hutton

# The Palm Beach Post

## **FAU says new on-campus football stadium, which will open with game Saturday, 'better than we ever imagined'**

By **TOM D'ANGELO**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 7:25 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 9, 2011  
Posted: 5:40 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 9, 2011

When Florida Atlantic was seeking a signature theme for its new on-campus stadium, officials looked toward Sanford Stadium at the University of Georgia.

Bulldogs games are played "Between the Hedges," a reference to the bushes that have lined the stadium since 1929. The Owls were looking for a similar uniqueness.

"We thought we could have the best stadium in a subtropical climate, so we wanted to theme it that way with palm trees/beach club approach," FAU Athletic Director Craig Angelos said.

"Palm trees are unique, and I wanted to put them as close to the field as possible. That way, we'd be playing 'between the palms.' "

And that's how a theme for the 30,000-seat stadium was born.

FAU is in the final stages of a project that was part of Howard Schnellenberger's master plan when he accepted the chore of building a football program in 1999.

On Saturday, the \$70 million, 30,000-seat stadium will be unveiled, with FAU facing Western Kentucky at 4 p.m.

And it will happen "Between the Palms."

From last week - when the stadium received its certificate of occupancy and was turned over to the university - to the first game Saturday, the stadium will go through its final tweaks. It has risen in the northeast corner of campus, its signature a 145-foot press box tower visible from miles around.

"It quite literally takes your breath away to see this come out of the ground in one year," FAU President Mary Jane Saunders said. "To see the details in it, the FAU logo in the seats, the scoreboard with the palm trees and the size of the scoreboard it's beyond belief."

The tropical theme is most evident in the more than 300 palm trees in and around the stadium, including the royal palms and beach sand in both corners near the south end zone.

Crushed sea shells are used as ground covering in several other areas.

The theme is carried to the beach awnings that cover the walkway where the team will enter the field and the 16,000-square-foot tiki bar on the west concourse that will provide island fare and tropical drinks.

But nothing says South Florida better than the deep blue ocean - FAU is touting its stadium as the only one in the country that offers a view of the Atlantic Ocean.

"Majestic" is how Schnellenberger described the view and stadium.

That press box tower stands taller than any building on campus. It houses four levels of suites, including a 5,000-square-foot multi-purpose premier level suite that will be used for banquets and wedding receptions, among other events. The tower also includes 24 luxury suites, the president's suite that seats up to 90 guests and a press box level.

The ocean is visible from each level.

"We are always trying to recruit highly qualified students," Saunders said. "When they show this on TV in Massachusetts and New York and Michigan and you see those palm trees and the announcer says, 'I can see the Atlantic Ocean from the press box,' we hope that will attract highly qualified students to our school."

The stadium is enclosed with the exception of the two corners of the south end zone, where Schnellenberger someday envisions expanding the capacity to 40,000.

"That's where 10,000 seats will go the year we average a sellout," he said.

The south end zone seats 5,000 and is where students will sit, including the band, with the east side of the stadium handling any overflow. FAU expects more than 7,000 students for Saturday's inaugural game.

Every seat in the stadium has a chair back, the lone exception being where the band will sit.

Fans will be able to watch replays and keep up with statistics on the third-largest on-campus video board in the state, behind Florida and Florida State. The 30-foot-by-50-foot board is twice the size of Central Florida's.

The board is flanked by two large palm trees outlined in red lighting.

Several locker rooms, a merchandise room, an interview room, coaches offices and a multi-purpose recruiting room sit beneath the stadium. Outside the stadium, palm tree-lined walkways lead to the gates and 10,218 spots are designated for parking in several lots throughout campus.

"It's intimate. It's got high-end furnishings at every stop," Angelos said. "The palm trees, parking is right there, the decorum of it, being able to see the ocean from the suites ... it's better than we ever imagined."

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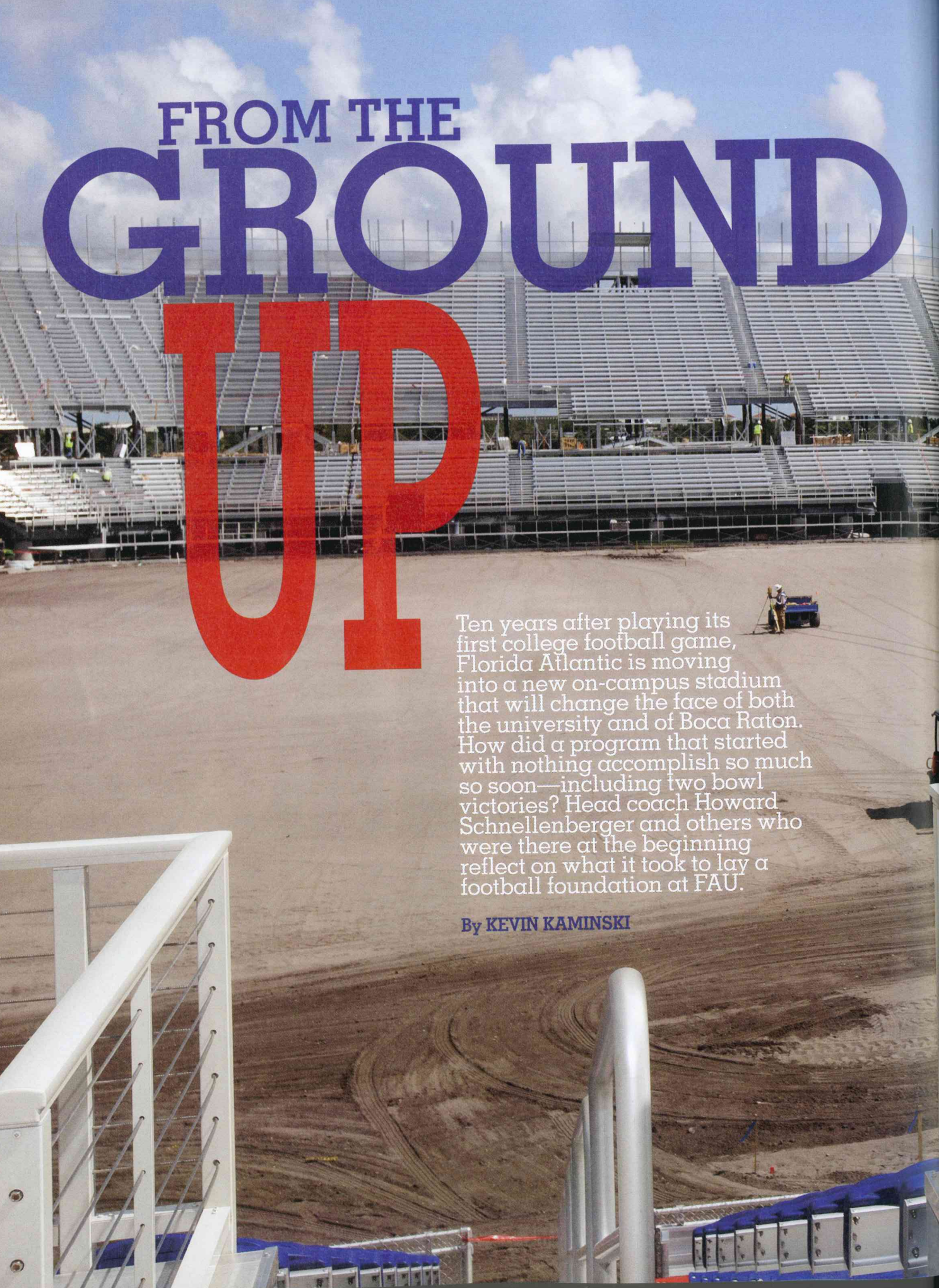
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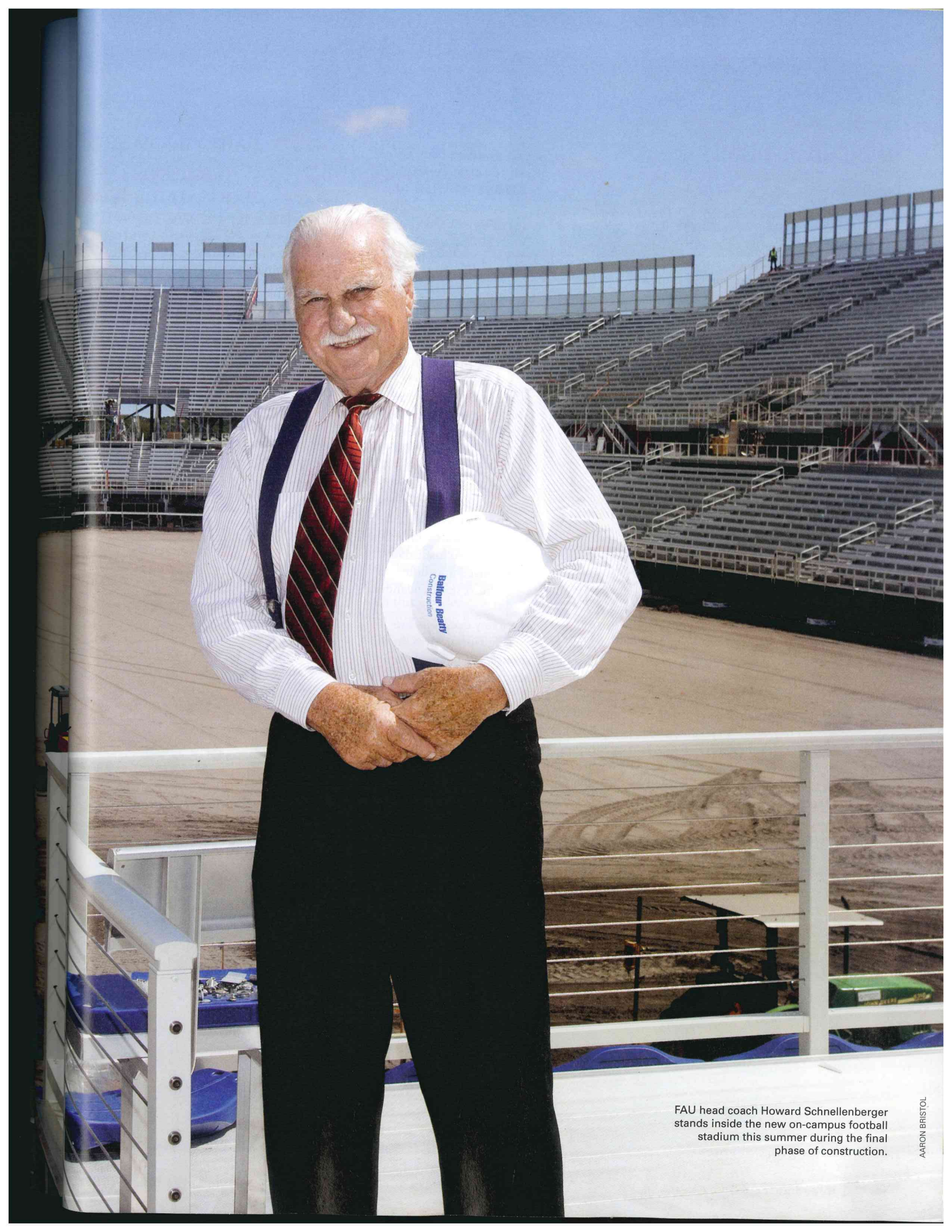
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# FROM THE GROUND UP

Ten years after playing its first college football game, Florida Atlantic is moving into a new on-campus stadium that will change the face of both the university and of Boca Raton. How did a program that started with nothing accomplish so much so soon—including two bowl victories? Head coach Howard Schnellenberger and others who were there at the beginning reflect on what it took to lay a football foundation at FAU.

By KEVIN KAMINSKI



FAU head coach Howard Schnellenberger stands inside the new on-campus football stadium this summer during the final phase of construction.



## IN THE BEGINNING

As far as the Florida Board of Regents was concerned, Florida Atlantic University could live without football. The sport didn't mesh with the commonly held perception of FAU as a commuter school. And the board, which set policy for the state's public universities from 1965 to 2001, didn't see how the college could cover the considerable costs associated with building a program from scratch.

Anthony Catanese had other ideas. He saw football as yet another game-changer for a university that already had taken significant academic leaps since opening its doors in 1964. Catanese even had made a case for football while interviewing for the presidency of the university in late 1989, a suggestion that fell on deaf ears. Seven years into his 12-year run as FAU president, he again raised the football flag. This time, Catanese (currently the president at Florida Institute of Technology) found enough back-channel support to green-light a committee that would study the feasibility of launching a program at FAU. A year later, in February 1998, the school began its search for the right person to orchestrate such a massive undertaking.

At any other point in his storied coaching career, Howard Schnellenberger would have been that man, no questions asked. In college football circles, he was a modern-day miracle worker, having led the University of Miami—a program close to being shut down in the late 1970s—to its first national championship in 1983. He followed that by putting football on the map at basketball-crazed Louisville, guiding that once-dormant program to two bowl wins during the most successful decade in school history.

But his reputation took a beating in 1995 when a much-heralded move to Oklahoma resulted in the Sooners' first losing conference record

in three decades. Schnellenberger quit after one season amid rumors of an alcohol problem. He returned to South Florida to spend time with wife Beverlee and his three sons, including eldest son Stephen, who was living with endocrine cancer. (Stephen died in 2008, at age 48.)

Schnellenberger, who stopped drinking and later gave up smoking his trademark pipe, was 64 when Catanese invited him to Boca for lunch in the spring of 1998.

**CATANESE:** We met at Uncle Tai's. I told him that I was thinking about starting a football program at FAU. He got this little twinkle in his eye and said, "I'll take the job." I hadn't even told him what the job was yet.

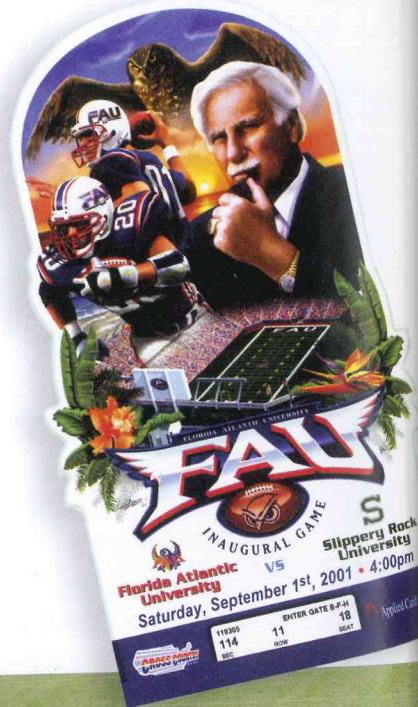
**SCHNELLENBERGER:** It shook down in my mind very quickly that this was a good place to start a football team. Look at the campus; you have 1,000 acres about a mile from the ocean. Boca is a center of affluence and financial stability. And this was something I'd never done before—conceive and give birth to a program. I could start with a fresh group, players that we picked instead of weeding out someone else's unproductive players. ... And yes, I didn't want Oklahoma to be my swan song.

**CATANESE:** Of the many decisions I've made in my life, hiring Howard was one of the absolute best ones. We named him director of football operations [in May 1998].

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** They took me over to the swimming pool facility and asked one of the coaches there to move into the gym. So I got his office, which was so small that there was no room for my secretary. She had to work in the hall. ... The football program didn't have a nail to hang a jockstrap on—much less a room to put the nail in.

"Of the many decisions I've made in my life, hiring Howard was one of the absolute best ones."

—Anthony Catanese



## THE MONEY TRAIL

*Catanese and Schnellenberger spent the next year on a veritable barnstorming tour to raise private funds for the program, creating a "Founders" group for individuals and businesses that made substantial donations.*

**CATANESE:** Howard had such wonderful friends that he could bring to fundraising events. He'd bring Paul Warfield, Don Shula, Jim Kelly. It was amazing. We also got a lot of people who used to be University of Miami supporters that donated to FAU just because of Howard. We were able to get in the door of every major business leader in Palm Beach and Broward counties. That astonished me.

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** I was the offensive coordinator with the Dolphins during their two Super Bowl seasons. And we'd won a national championship at Miami. That opens some doors. Of course, we didn't always talk about FAU as much as we did the Hurricanes or the Dolphins. But at least they had lunch with us.

**CATANESE:** I was pleasantly surprised at his energy level, at his willingness to go the extra yard for this program.

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** We flew up to Tallahassee in March 1999 to get final approval [from the Board of Regents] to start the football team. I had an outline of how we were going to put the program together—but I also brought a cashier's check for \$5 million in my back pocket. So I'm explaining the plan, and the board members are nodding their heads, but the meeting is going much slower than I thought it should. So I pulled the check out of my pocket. The meeting went much better. We had lunch,

and they voted. We returned to Boca victorious. It was too late to back out at that point.

## STUMPING FOR FOOTBALL

*Not everyone within the university was sold on football at FAU. Faculty, in particular, expressed concerns that football would lower the academic standards. Schnellenberger took every opportunity he could to talk up football around campus.*

**CATANESE:** Howard would go into the student dining room with this wooden tree stump, plop it down and, literally, give his stump speech. It was the darndest thing.

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** I was trying to teach the students a little political science—Lincoln and Douglas debated on stumps, right? ... The only time I could get a good group at the cafeteria was Wednesdays; most people had classes that day. I'd have somebody carry my stump, and I'd visit as many students as possible. I'd tell them I was their football coach and that we were developing a team.



**Above:** Schnellenberger and then-president Catanese return from Tallahassee after the Board of Regents gives the green light to football at FAU. **Below:** The team's first on-field practice, Aug. 29, 2000. **Opposite page:** Ticket from FAU's inaugural game.





The first 10 times, I couldn't keep their attention at all. I'd get up on the stump and whistle really loud, but that just pissed them off. They'd look at me like, "Stop screwing up my lunch."

**CATANESE:** After that first year of fund-raising, I made Howard head of the search committee for a coach. We used to joke at the time that we had a national search for Howard Schnellenberger—and we found him.

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** I actually talked to both Mark Richt [the Boca High graduate who would become head coach at Georgia] and David Shula about the job. Neither of them wanted it. So I had to come up with the next best candidate. People in the community and donors were telling me that they would feel better about sending their kids here if I was coach.

### **BUILDING FROM SCRATCH**

*Schnellenberger began assembling a staff that included assistant head coach Kurt Van Valkenburgh, who had been with him at Louisville and Oklahoma. In addition to initial recruiting, the coaches often found themselves doing anything and everything to prepare for football at FAU.*

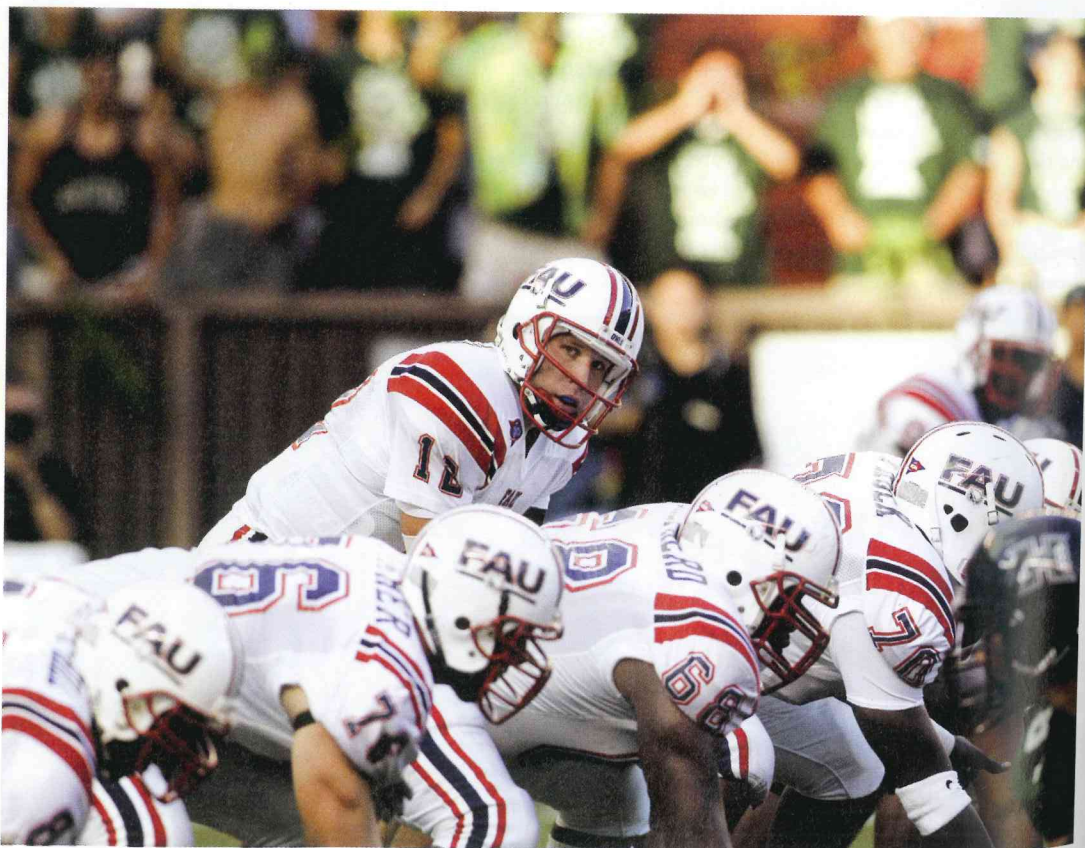
**VAN VALKENBURGH:** This truck pulls up with the weights to our weight room—but there are no delivery guys. That's the day I learned how to drive a forklift. We were always moving equipment, painting, putting tables and chairs together; that first year, the maintenance people at FAU thought we were part of their crew. ... One day, I'm meeting with architects about where to place electrical outlets for the training room at the Oxley Center, which was under construction. I said, "We have four architects and six engineers working on this building—and you're asking the phys-ed major to make decisions? You guys are overpaid."

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** The University of South Florida started football five years ahead of us. So I spent a few days in Tampa and met with people there to see how they were doing it because there are no books for this kind of thing. That trip gave the staff more confidence than it gave me. I was still trying to find the trail. But the trail looked like someone had just knocked a few weeds down.

**VAN VALKENBURGH:** We were wheelin' and dealin' to get things. When the XFL franchise in Orlando went out of business, we put in a bid and got all kinds of things at reduced

"There was nothing here. No stadium. No players to talk to me about the program. Coach had to sell me on the vision. And I bought into it."

—Jared Allen



**Above:** Todd Poitner scores the program's first touchdown on a blocked kick against Slippery Rock in 2001.

**Right:** Quarterback Jared Allen leads FAU to an upset win at Hawaii in 2004.

# THE EVOLUTION OF FOOTBALL AT FAU

**MARCH 11, 1997:** A 40-member feasibility committee, including faculty, students and community leaders, begins analyzing the prospect of adding football at FAU.

**FEBRUARY 1998:** Then-president Anthony Catanese and athletic director Tom Cargill begin the search for someone to run the football program.

**MAY 1, 1998:** Howard Schnellenberger is hired as director of football operations.

**MARCH 11, 1999:** Schnellenberger and Catanese travel to Tallahassee and receive approval from the Florida Board of Regents to launch a football program.

**JULY 1999:** Tom Oxley, son of oil baron John Oxley and a member of FAU's first graduating class in 1966, donates a combined \$4 million for a practice field and a 54,000-square-foot on-campus athletic

complex. Oxley, the program's largest benefactor, died of brain cancer in December 2009.

**JULY 1999:** Schnellenberger decides to take the head coaching position and receives a seven-year contract.

**AUGUST 29, 2000:** After being forced inside the Palm Beach Community College gym the previous day due to rain, more than 160 would-be players take the practice field for the first time at FAU.

**SEPT. 1, 2001:** FAU, competing as an independent at the Division I-AA level, hosts Slippery Rock in the program's inaugural game. Slippery Rock wins 40-7 in front of 25,632 fans at then-Pro Player Stadium.

**SEPT. 8, 2001:** The Owls notch the program's first victory, 31-28 at Bethune-Cookman. The 2001 team goes on to finish 4-6.

**AUG. 28, 2003:** FAU, in just its 22nd game, becomes

the fastest program to defeat a I-A opponent, knocking off Middle Tennessee State 20-19.

**DECEMBER 2003:** The Owls finish their third season with an 11-3 record and advance to the semifinals of the I-AA playoffs.

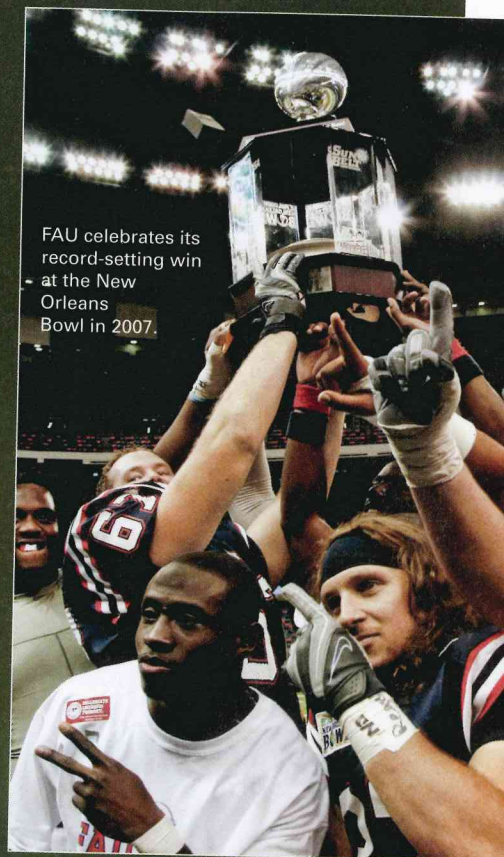
**SEPTEMBER 2004:** FAU hands Hawaii its only home loss of the year with a 35-28 opening-game upset. As hurricanes sweep through the state, the Owls win their first five games, all on the road.

**SEPTEMBER 2005:** FAU, now a Division I-A team, begins play as a member of the Sun Belt Conference.

**NOV. 18, 2006:** FAU defeats North Texas 17-16 to finish with a winning record in the Sun Belt (4-3) in just its second season of conference play.

**SEPT. 15, 2007:** FAU defeats its first Big Ten opponent, stunning Minnesota 42-39—just two years after the Golden Gophers crushed FAU 46-7.

**DEC. 21, 2007:** After defeating Troy for its first conference championship two weeks earlier, FAU becomes the fastest start-up football program in history to qualify for and win a college bowl game. The Owls, in just their seventh season of existence, defeat Memphis 44-27 at the New Orleans Bowl.



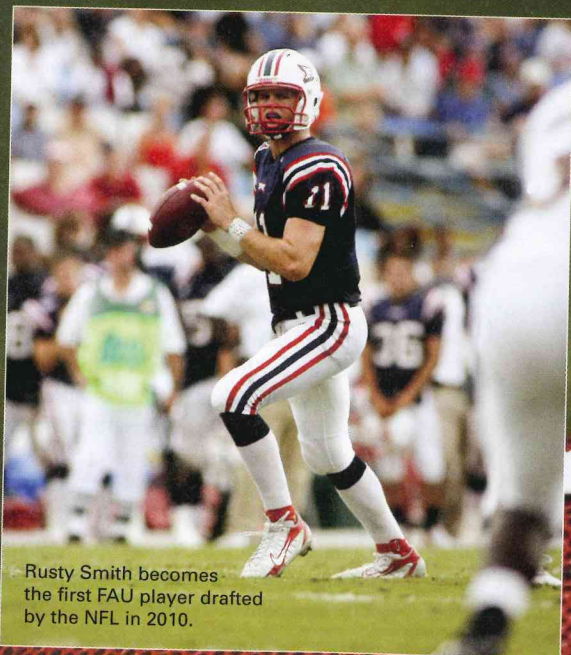
FAU celebrates its record-setting win at the New Orleans Bowl in 2007.

**DEC. 26, 2008:** Schnellenberger improves his coaching record in bowl games to 6-0 as FAU stops Central Michigan 24-20 in the Motor City Bowl.

**APRIL 2010:** Former quarterback Rusty Smith becomes the first FAU player to be drafted by an NFL team (in the sixth round by the Tennessee Titans).

**OCT. 15, 2010:** FAU breaks ground on its new 30,000-seat football stadium at the Boca Raton campus.

**OCT. 15, 2011:** FAU will host Western Kentucky—the first of five games in 2011 at the new stadium.

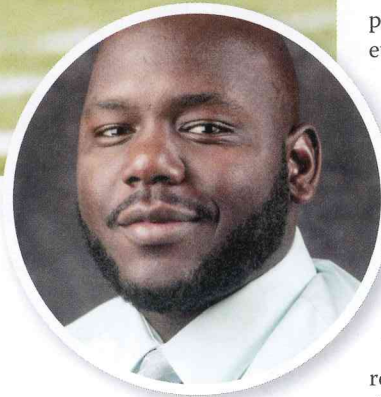


Rusty Smith becomes the first FAU player drafted by the NFL in 2010.





Running back Anthony Jackson, then (above) and now (below)



"That first year was difficult. Week-in and week-out, the same routine. Scrimmaging against the same guys. It was like 'Groundhog Day.'"

—Anthony Jackson

prices. We even cut a deal to get equipment from the football movie shot down here with Al Pacino, "Any Given Sunday."

**SEAN TODD (assistant director of football operations):** We negotiated for the big transport trunks from "Any Given Sunday." When we opened them, we found they were loaded with a hodge-podge of stuff. There were a few gems—like some big parkas ... just in case we ever played a cold-weather game.

**VAN VALKENBURGH:** It was like being in a carnival. If there was anything going on in the community, we were there. One time, FAU's ocean engineering department had a boat in one of the boat parades on the In-tracoastal. A handful of us had to go down there to decorate it. We're looking at each other going, "What the frig are we doing? Did Bear Bryant have to decorate boats?"

## THE PITCH

*Schnellenberger and his staff faced the challenge of luring talent to a program that had no history and no frills. But a trail that seemed fuzzy at the outset became clearly defined for the head coach when it came to selling players on FAU—and laying the foundation for success on the field. In August 2000, more than 160 players participated in the team's inaugural practice. The first game was still a year away.*

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** You gather unselfish players, kids with a burning desire to win and be the best—even if their best isn't very good. I've always built my teams on givers. If I can put together a bunch of givers and play a bunch of takers, we're going to win every time. So I'd tell a prospect that if you come and be the pied piper—if your example leads others to play at FAU—this university is going to revere you.

**VAN VALKENBURGH:** All the things you'd normally do in recruiting we couldn't do. We couldn't show them our facilities; we showed them a pile of dirt with a sign. We'd show them pictures of what our uniforms *might* look like. Normally, during a visit, you have recruits spend time with your players. We didn't have players. So we'd have them visit with baseball players, basketball players and students who knew the area.

**JARED ALLEN (quarterback from 2001-04; current wide receivers coach at FAU):** I'm from Edmond, Okla.; I had never been to Florida. I talked to Coach on a Tuesday, flew to Boca on a Friday and signed by Sunday.



AARON BRISTOL

“With the stadium in place ... we’ve expedited the growth of this program by at least 10 years.”

—Joe Corozza

There was nothing here. No stadium. No players to talk to me about the program. Coach had to sell me on the vision. And I bought into it. I thought about being part of the foundation; that’s what I fell in love with. **ANTHONY JACKSON (running back from 2001-04; current academic counselor at FAU):** That first year was difficult. Week-in and week-out, the same routine. Scrimmaging against the same guys. It got old real quick. It was like “Groundhog Day.” You had to be mentally tough and understand that the future holds something better.

**ALLEN:** We dressed in the basketball locker room at Palm Beach Community College on campus and took the bus to the practice field at the Oxley Center, which was being built. You’d have to change in the hallway because the basketball locker room was so small.

**JOE COROZZA (volunteer intern on the original 2001 staff; current tight ends/special teams coach):** The players were so young. All they had was their high school experience. They didn’t know how to act. And there were no seniors to show them how to act.

**ALLEN:** They had to be patient with us. We made so many mistakes. And we were immature. We just were.

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** I promised the players two things: 1) You will be in better physical condition than anybody we play. 2) You will be better prepared because we’re going to work longer and harder than our opponents. There will be times when we’re behind at the end of a game, but we’ll never be beaten.

## THE OWLS’ NEW HOME

HERE’S THE LOWDOWN ON FAU’S NEW ON-CAMPUS FOOTBALL STADIUM

—AND ITS IMPACT ON BOTH THE UNIVERSITY AND THE CITY OF BOCA RATON.

**SEATING:** 30,000 capacity, including 24 suites, 26 loge boxes, 1,000+ outdoor Premier Club seats and 4,000+ Priority Club seats. Features include four-level press box, 8,000-square-foot indoor Premier Club, covered 16,000-square-foot outdoor Priority Club.

**COST:** Approximately \$70 million (FAU took out a loan to pay for it)

**IMPACT ON FAU/BOCA:** Construction of the stadium created an estimated 2,000 jobs; the Palm Beach County Sports Commission predicts that the new stadium could mean nearly \$2 million to FAU and the city on game days; the number of freshman applications for the fall 2011 semester, some 20,000, nearly doubled the number received for fall 2010; the stadium is part of FAU’s Innovation Village, an on-campus housing, recreation, dining and retail center that, school officials predict, will push the resident student population on the Boca campus to more than 5,000.

**IMPACT ON RECRUITING:** “With the stadium in place, FAU will begin to recruit kids who have a chance at becoming first- and second-round NFL draft picks. ... We’ve expedited the growth of this program by at least 10 years.”—Joe Corozza, tight ends/special teams coach

**THE LAST WORD:** “We’ve been playing in the dark up to now. This stadium is going to snap on the spotlight. Everything this program does now will be seen in its proper perspective.”—Howard Schnellenberger, head coach

"We couldn't show recruits our facilities [in the beginning]. We showed them a pile of dirt with a sign."

—Kurt Van Valkenburgh

**COROZZA:** Coach's style is old-school. He pushes the kids hard. They're either going to go forward, or they're not going to last. His players are very, very competitive. We're not bigger, we're not faster. We have talent, but we're not the most talented. But they work and compete so hard.

**JACKSON:** We were just going off a dream that Coach Schnellenberger envisioned. For guys that believed in the dream, it paid off.

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** We started having bonfires and pep rallies leading up to the first game. When you build a bonfire, the fire marshal has to be there, and he has to measure it to make sure it doesn't exceed a certain height. The marshal would make us take some wooden planks off the fire because it was always too high. Then he'd leave, and we'd pile the planks back on. The marshal eventually caught wind of that.

## GAME TIME

*The Owls, playing as a Division I-AA independent, kicked off a new era in FAU history Sept. 1, 2001 at what was then Pro Player Stadium, home to the NFL's Dolphins. After dropping the opener to Slippery Rock, FAU recorded the program's first win the following week at Bethune-Cookman. Three days later, terrorists launched attacks against America.*

**CATANESE:** The only thing I wondered about was our first opponent. Howard felt, because Slippery Rock was a program followed by the national media, that we were going to get national attention. We did. But we lost 40-7. To this day, I think we should have played Our Little Sisters of Charity.

**SCHNELLENBERGER:** Incoming freshmen have to pass through a clearinghouse regarding the required classes, grades, etc. We had one compliance officer here—and 118

**Below:** Bonfires (below) became a tradition leading up to the first game.

## 2011 FAU FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 3	at Florida
SEPT. 10	at Michigan State
SEPT. 17	Open
SEPT. 24	at Auburn
OCT. 1	at Louisiana-Lafayette*
OCT. 8	at North Texas*
OCT. 15	Western Kentucky*
OCT. 22	Middle Tennessee*
OCT. 29	Open
NOV. 5	Arkansas State*
NOV. 12	at Florida International*
NOV. 19	at Troy*
NOV. 26	Alabama-Birmingham
DEC. 3	Louisiana-Monroe*

\* Sun Belt Conference games



Schnellenberger receives a victory ride at the New Orleans Bowl.

new athletes on campus. We wanted to clear all the kids, but 13 starters didn't receive NCAA clearance. That killed us in that game. **JACKSON:** We're minutes from going on the field, and we have to deal with this shock. We'd left a lot of blood, sweat and tears on that practice field to get to this moment. And then, just like that, they're not playing. We took our lumps that day. **VAN VALKENBURGH:** Slippery Rock comes onto the field stone-faced, ready to play. Our kids are hopping around like a bunch of high school kids. They had no idea yet what the college game was about. But they learned quick. **ALLEN:** Garrett Jahn and I were battling for the quarterback spot. We were roommates and he became one of my best friends; he was in my wedding. Coach didn't know who to start; it was too close to call. So he flipped a coin. I called tails. It was heads. Garrett started the first quarter, and then I came in the second quarter and played the

rest of the game. We switched out every now and then after that, but I started eight of the games. And then I started the next three seasons. **JACKSON:** We'd have such intense warm-ups before games that season; guys would go back to the locker room drenched in sweat. We felt like we played an entire quarter before the opening kickoff. **COROZZA:** A few weeks after 9/11, we played at [Drake, in Des Moines, Iowa]. This was the program's first road trip involving a flight. Some of the players had never been on a plane before. So we take off, and something happens to the landing gear—they're not sure if it's locked in place. We fly around the Everglades for more than an hour. Later, we found out they were dumping fuel in case we had to make an emergency landing. ... When we finally land, emergency vehicles are out there, lights are flashing, people are in fire suits. We had a few people get off that plane—and keep right on walking.





## GROWING UP FAST

In only its third season of existence, FAU became the fastest program to defeat a I-A opponent (Middle Tennessee, in the Owls' 22nd game) en route to reaching the semifinals of the I-AA playoffs. Two years later, the Owls joined Division I-A as a member of the Sun Belt Conference. In 2007, FAU became the fastest start-up program to qualify for and capture a bowl game, winning the New Orleans Bowl. It's been a full decade since players, coaches and supporters took a leap of faith—a decision, with the opening of the new stadium at hand, that promises to pay dividends for years to come.

**CATANESE:** I did an interview with the *New York Times* when we hired Howard. The reporter asked me if I thought football was important for colleges. I told him that we had just announced an antigen in our cancer research program—and the *Times* didn't cover it. I asked him, "If we hadn't started college football, would you even be talking to me?" He said, "No."

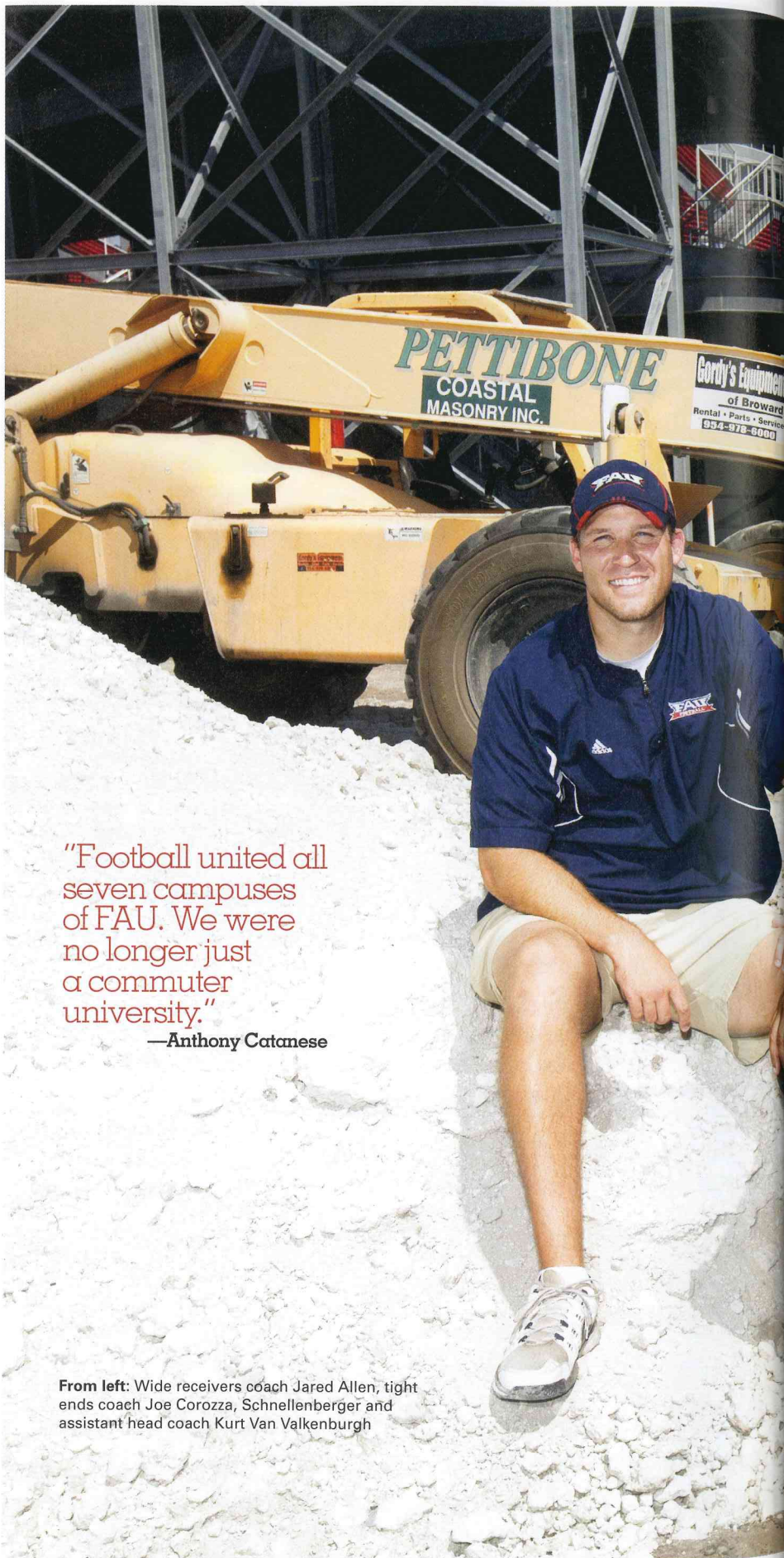
**SCHNELLENBERGER:** I wasn't surprised by our success, but it was unusual. How the hell did we get to this point this quick? I had to go back to my basic premise—if the players did the things we asked of them, we'd win. And they did.

**JACKSON:** All the weight fell on our shoulders. There were no seniors to guide us. We had to be the guys that stepped up. ... By the time we were juniors and seniors, we were the first group of mentors for players that would go on to win bowl games.

**ALLEN:** You have to use your mistakes to make you better. That's why we had success in 2003 and '04. We got rid of the mistakes that killed us the first two years. The other thing is belief. Belief in doing something that no one else thinks you can do. Coach is a visionary that way. He sees things before others see it. And he knows how to put the pieces in place to get there.

**VAN VALKENBURGH:** To this day, that first group is incredibly tight. It wasn't easy for them. We challenged those players hard. They developed a lot of pride that they were a tough bunch; you could see them come together. Sometimes, adversity does that.

**CATANESE:** Everyone told me, with seven campuses from Dania to Port Saint Lucie, that we'd never be able to unite the university. Football did it. Football united all seven campuses of FAU. We were no longer just a commuter university. 📍



"Football united all seven campuses of FAU. We were no longer just a commuter university."

—Anthony Catanese

From left: Wide receivers coach Jared Allen, tight ends coach Joe Corozza, Schnellenberger and assistant head coach Kurt Van Valkenburgh



# Sun-Sentinel

## "Select-A-Seat" for FAU stadium is Tuesday

### First chance for fans to get inside look at the new stadium

October 05, 2011|By Ted Hutton, Sun Sentinel

BOCA RATON — Fans will get their first chance to get an inside look at FAU's new football stadium Tuesday at the "Select-A-Seat" event.

The \$70 million, 30,000-seat stadium will be open from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. and fans can check out the available seats and purchase season or single-game tickets.

Single-game tickets range from \$11 to \$90 and season tickets start at \$150 for five home games. Parking is \$15 on the day of the game and \$12 in advance.

FAU is expected to take over control of the stadium from the builders Friday, and the Select-A-Seat event will be the first held there.

The first game is Oct. 15 when FAU hosts Western Kentucky at 4 p.m., and the remaining home games are Middle Tennessee on Oct. 22, Arkansas State Nov. 5, Alabama-Birmingham Nov. 26 and Louisiana-Monroe Dec. 3.

#### Quick hits

-- North Texas opened a new stadium very similar in size and price to FAU's, and it has averaged 24,628 in the first two games played there, a record for consecutive home games for the 95-year-old football program.

-- FAU will play its first home game and first game in the new stadium next week, but players said their focus is on the Mean Green and getting their first win of the season. "Right now we are just thinking about this game. North Texas is on our mind," said tight end Nexon Dorvilus.

-- The Owls open this season with five straight road games, and the final one in that stretch is Saturday. "It was exciting the first couple weeks, but now I am ready to stay home," said defensive back **Keith Reaser**.

-- **Next game:** At North Texas (1-4, 0-1), 7:30 p.m., CSS.

# South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## FAU has enough parking to handle stadium traffic

### All fans can park on campus and walk to the stadium

By Ted Hutton, Sun Sentinel

7:46 PM EDT, October 5, 2011

While Florida Atlantic University is trying to shed its image as a commuter school, the fact that it has thousands of parking spaces on campus means fans will not have to park off-campus and take shuttle buses to the new stadium.

With 11,000 parking spots available, including some on the Palm Beach State College campus located on the north side of the stadium, FAU can accommodate all the expected traffic from a sold-out game on its campus.

"We worked with the city of Boca Raton and showed that we had room for all the cars," said Melissa Dawson, FAU's associate athletic director for Facilities and Operations.

While having enough spaces solved one potential problem, the other objective is to make sure the traffic arriving to the game makes it onto the campus quickly enough so that there is not a backup onto I-95, which is where most of the fans are expected to be arriving from.

"That is the key," Dawson said. "Getting cars off Glades and into the parking lots as efficiently as we can."

To help avoid that, three entrances will be used, each leading to different parking lots. Those fans purchasing advance tickets will be assigned an entrance to use, and that should help avoid a crush of traffic at one entrance.

There will be two entrances off Glades Road on the south end of campus, and one on Spanish River Boulevard on the north end. There are a total of 29 lots spread around the campus, with 14 permit-only for donors, boosters and employees and 15 cash lots. The cash lots closest to the stadium will be filled first.

FAU hired USA Parking to help handle the game-day traffic on the campus. A combination of Boca Raton, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and FAU police will also be assisting in directing traffic before and after the games.

Dawson said FAU parking lots are full on many weekday mornings when school is in session, and with gates opening four hours before kickoff, she said she is confident parking won't be a problem.

"We expect some glitches, but overall we think we have a good plan," Dawson said.

### **Setting a price**

Parking is \$15 per car and \$10 for students. Advance parking passes are available for \$10.

FAU charged \$5 for parking at Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale.

"Now we have a product we need to pay for, so we moved up to \$10 if you purchase in advance," said FAU Athletic Director Craig Angelos. "We felt that was a fair price."

Angelos said they wanted a good-sized discount for advance purchases because it will make things more efficient on game days.

What could slow things down is when the lot attendants are taking cash from drivers and having to make change.

And while Angelos said he wanted a price of \$12 per car, the USA Parking officials said that would create a backup since the attendants would have to handle dollar bills and slow down the process.

"As a matter of practice, you want it in denominations of \$5," Angelos said.

Angelos said he doesn't expect the \$15 fee to turn potential fans away.

Parking prices vary around the state for college games.

Miami charges \$25 at Sun Life Stadium, while at FIU and UCF it is free for most cars. South Florida fans pay \$15 at Raymond James Stadium.

North Texas just opened a new stadium and parking is \$10.

"People are used to paying for parking in South Florida, and with the advance price of \$10 available, we think it is reasonable," Angelos said.

Tailgating will be allowed in all the parking areas, as long as it does not impede traffic.

Dawson said there will also be portable toilets in all the parking areas.



Howard Schnellenberger will wrap up a career of more than half a century of football during the debut season of Florida Atlantic University's new stadium on the school's Boca Raton campus. Photo by Tim Stepien

## Boca Raton

### Parking meters feeding city coffers

But residents not happy with fees and tickets

By Angie Francalancia

Depending on whom you're asking, the new parking meters in Boca Raton's Mizner Park and at the city's beaches are either a boon or the bane of residents' travels.

Five months after the city installed new meters at what Mayor Susan Welchel calls the "primo" spots near the beach and in Mizner Park, one thing is certain: The program is a boon to the city's coffers, bringing in more than \$250,000 from the \$1.50-per-hour fees. About 75 percent of that comes from Mizner Park.

And the average 25 to 30 parking citations the city is writing each day has added another roughly \$150,000, Assistant City Manager Mike Woika said. Contributing to that pot: Mayor Welchel and council members Constance Scott and Anthony Majhess, who each got parking tickets this summer in Mizner Park.

There were 129 meters

See METERS on page 6

## The house that Howard built

By Tim Norris

Riding shotgun across campus on a Florida Atlantic University golf cart, Assistant Athletic Director Katrina McCormack at the wheel, Howard Schnellenberger lets his right leg slide loose into an eastern breeze.

Two weeks before, doctors at the Sports & Orthopedic Center in Boca Raton had removed Schnellenberger's right hip and installed a high-tech version to improve the original, tested and tortured through hard-core playing days and the practice-and-sideline exertions of Schnellenberger's 77 years.

### FAU ready to kick off first season in new football stadium

He was back on the practice field the following week.

He is about to climb, this September morning, into the school's nearly finished and still unnamed football stadium, on a survey tour. He approaches it as he would any of his shared efforts. "Let's start down here," he says, "and work our way up."

To make sure no one confuses the

surgery with his status, FAU announced in August that Schnellenberger's first year in the new stadium he fought so long to realize also would be his last, his final year as a coach, head or assistant. Anywhere.

Schnellenberger has nurtured young men and, with them, campuses and communities for more than 40 years. He learned his trade, he says, from a few of the best teachers football has ever seen — Paul "Bear" Bryant, Blanton Collier, George Allen, Don Shula — and also from his coach at Flaget High School in

See HOWARD on page 12

## Along the Coast

### St. Andrew's marks 50 years of educating

By Mary Jane Fine

A bit of perspective: It was the year Gov. George Wallace allowed two black students to be enrolled at the University of Alabama. President John F. Kennedy guided a nervous nation through the Cuban missile crisis. Diet Rite and Tab debuted that year, and

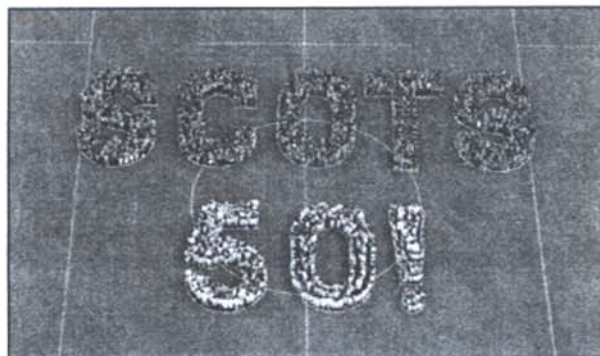
ABC began broadcasting in color. The Beach Boys turned *Surfin' Safari* into their first hit. A gallon of gas cost 31 cents.

Back then, the western reaches of Boca Raton were a vast tract of scrubland and alligators. It was 1962, the year St. Andrew's School welcomed its first class

"This was the only thing around here," says Carlos Barroso, with a sweeping gesture that takes in the school's perfectly manicured 81 acres. "Lynn University didn't exist. FAU didn't exist."

Barroso, the school's director of marketing and

See ST. ANDREW'S on page 10



All of St. Andrew's 1,313 students turned out to mark the school's first half-century. Photo provided

**HOWARD:**

Continued from page 1

Louisville, Ky., Paulie Miller, whom he ranks among them.

He has been part of national championships in college and pro football, but he never has stooped to imitation.

McCormack pulls the golf cart up to the stadium's south end, nosing near a dozen royal palm trees stacked sideways under a looming six-story tower and its massive electronic scoreboard. The trees want planting.

Schnellenberger steps out and walks, with a determined limp on his right side, over machine-furrowed ground toward the nearest entry. McCormack, serving as his guide and aide-de-camp, prepares the way.

Sunlight fans across a tightly cropped field that looks ready for play, but at the south end the goal posts have been yanked out. They were too low, McCormack says.

"How did they screw that up?" Schnellenberger says. Ah, but everything else, the multilevel press-and-coaches box with the latest communications links, the air-conditioned indoor 8,000-square-foot premier club, the al fresco priority club with its tiki bar seating 150, the 24 suites and 26 lodge boxes, the curving front ticket gates and drive-up valet area ... Schnellenberger extends a right hand and pronounces the place "palacious."

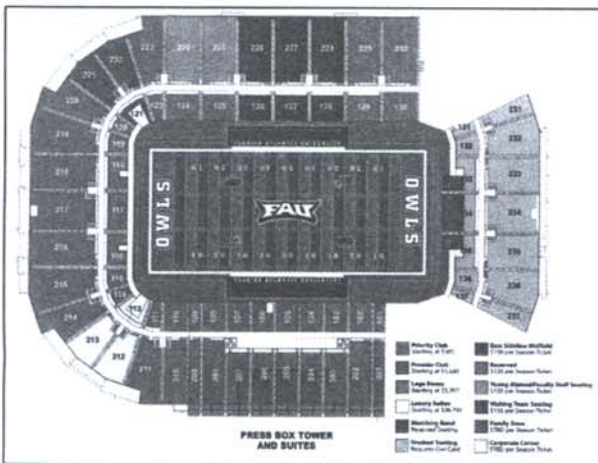
"Look at the beauty of this stadium," he says. "It's not some concrete monstrosity." Around a majestically elevated bowl, seats ascend in blue rows, ready to be bolted down. "We're gonna add over 2,000 palm trees in here," the visionary says. "We're gonna have sand around here, maybe a blue lagoon. And we got an ocean view. It's the only stadium in America with an ocean view."

That view, he and the other builders hope, will expand by another 30,000 seats, with public support, a winning record and a place in a major conference.

"We're making compromises," Schnellenberger says. "The vice president of finance tells us 'no, no, yes.' For the first time (in five years of planning), I've seen a little bit of cutting back, but not to the point you'd notice."

Then they step into the recruiting room. This, the coach says, is crucial. "The players and the parents come down here and watch us play," he says. "It's one of the major reasons a stadium on your campus is so important. They'll come in here before the game, we'll have cheerleaders and students who will act as ambassadors, and it's a great place to get together."

Beyond it, a carpeted dressing room displays 80 wooden lockers. "When I got



ABOVE: Howard Schnellenberger, FAU's head football coach, discusses the newly built FAU stadium with Channel 25 TV reporter Angela Rozier and cameraman Randy Bray. Photo by Tim Stepien

LEFT: Florida Atlantic University's football stadium will have a capacity of 30,000. Map provided

here," the coach says, "you didn't have a nail to hang a jock strap on."

**Bringing big change**

At this moment, much of the FAU stadium appears unfinished. Fine tuning follows the finished-by deadline of Sept. 15.

The stadium opens Oct. 15 with a game against Western Kentucky, and the school hopes for a capacity crowd of 30,000. More than 3,000 people, by McCormack's measure, are physically building the stadium, not counting donors and bankers, not counting architects and planners and overseers of the general contractor, Balfour Beatty Construction.

She could say, with as much confidence, that Howard Schnellenberger inspired and worked for every inch of this place. It will stand as the last of his other legacies on campus: the Tom Oxley Athletic Center, the baseball and softball fields and practice grounds spreading beyond, the recreation and wellness center nearby.

No state or federal money will go into it, the coach says. It belongs with the school's larger Innovation Village project, but it's also the most visible end-product

of Howard Schnellenberger's construction of an entire Division I football program, from the ground up.

Until 1964, Florida Atlantic's Boca Raton campus was what was left of an Army airfield and palmetto scrub. Most of the athletics facilities came much later.

Since Schnellenberger arrived in 1998 as director of football operations and became head coach a year later, the Owls' home field has been Lockhart, a 20,000-seat high school stadium 20 miles away. Now they'll have a home of their own.

"Boca will never be the same," he says. "It'll be better. It'll be a major college town. Gonna have conference centers around here, gonna have hotels. Got the med school coming on line. This can be a centerpiece."

For the moment, the centerpiece might be him. Media people call him "The Voice," and from his silvered height, 6-3, he delivers encouragements and responses in a weathered basso profundo. He is not, he says, what Paul "Bear" Bryant was, not the one all eyes turned to when he entered a room.

Maybe. Today, at least, all eyes are turning to

Schnellenberger. "Big fan! Big fan!" one worker says, grinning, and another says, "That's a legend right there. A legend!"

His own eyes are focused outward. After a ride up an elevator, to the sixth level, he is looking for the ocean view.

Howard Schnellenberger grew up land-locked, transported by his parents from Indiana at age 3 and raised in Louisville. He played sandlot football with neighborhood kids and showed a gift for the game, and he excelled in high school, where he also played baseball and basketball.

By his senior year in college, a tight end at the University of Kentucky, he was voted a first-team All America. Nothing was handed to him.

As a coach he never has seemed limited in his horizons, even when his attention-getting pronouncements about contending for national championships brought public ridicule. Most of his seemingly off-the-cuff promises, he kept.

**Working themselves out of jobs**

"How ya doin'?" one of the workers says, stepping up. "My name's Steve. If you

would just sign my hard hat, here, I'd appreciate it." The coach signs with a message to Steve and says, "Thanks for being here."

On promotional posters and billboards, the grayer rendition of Schnellenberger is pictured, hands wrapped around a football, under his latest slogan, "Get ready, 'cause here we come!"

He has been crafting such unifying slogans since he led the University of Miami to a national championship. Schnellenberger may envision, but he does not pretend. Through this tour, among the workers, he revels in what he sees and also in thinking of the next stage, when Florida Atlantic's football program will join a major conference.

"OK," Katrina McCormack says, "the next level is priority. Stairs or elevator?"

"Looks like the stairs are blocked," the coach says. He lingers, weighing the climb, before conceding the lift. Stepping onto priority, gazing across 16,000 square feet, he says, "I can't get over the width of the halls in this place, the spaces in it."

The ocean view, well, Howard Schnellenberger's been wanting one since the family first ventured to Florida. Now he has it.

"It took us 40 years to get to the ocean," he says. They were living down in Miami Lakes and kept a home there even when he worked out-of-state.

When he joined the FAU staff, he and Beverlee found a home in Ocean Ridge at Coventry Place, now Turtle Beach, where they can watch the sun rise over the Atlantic.

This, he says, is his last neighborhood.

Walking back through construction debris to the golf cart, he talks about support, about 100 early donors who pledged at least \$50,000 each, about 50 of them who together gave \$13 million and gained the right to approve details; about gifts-in-kind from local businesses and newspapers; about the \$44.6 million finance plan from Regions Bank and the \$12 million development rights deal with Crocker Partners.

"So many people have helped us," he says. "This is going to deliver on the promises."

As he slides into the golf cart, another worker calls to him, "They gonna name this place after you when you retire?" The coach shakes his head. "S-c-h-n-e-l-l-e-n-b-e-r-g-e-r?" he says. "How they gonna fit that up there?" The worker answers with the coach's own philosophy: "We'll find a way."

The coach asks another man under a hard-hat nearby, "Working yourself out of a job, huh?"

The worker winces and then smiles, and Schnellenberger returns the smile and says, "Me, too." ★

# Work before play

*FAU center Jordan Sessa is enjoying the unique experience of helping to build the new FAU on-campus stadium where he will eventually play. We look at Sessa's summer contribution during this week's installment of our FAU Stadium Series.*

Originally published on 7/11/2011

**by Chuck King**

He is building it so they can come.

While most of his teammates look forward to the first time they'll step into the new on-campus football stadium, FAU center Jordan Sessa is part of the construction project.

Sessa, who in the fall will battle Jimmie Colley to be FAU's starting center, is spending his summer as an intern with Balfour Beatty Construction, working out of an office in a construction trailer adjacent to the stadium.

"I can't imagine many people have had the opportunity to be a part of building the stadium that they are going to play in," said Sessa.

A civil engineering major who would like to make a living in design aspect of construction when his football career is over, Sessa says he's been inside the stadium most every day this summer.

In recent week's he's been working on "punch lists," checking areas of the project that are near completion looking for work that contractors still need to finish.

"I think his heart is in it a little more than the average person because he is going to be utilizing the facility afterward," said Balfour Beatty senior project manager Aaron Goldberg, Sessa's boss.

Managing football, family life (he's married to Deja Sessa and the couple has a child, Skyly), school and football has been a challenge for Sessa. He frequently leaves the early morning weight lifting sessions early in order to get across campus to his internship on time.

Sessa says he frequently heads back to the weight room after leaving the construction site to finish working out.

At least one person wouldn't mind see him get in a little more heavy lifting at the stadium.

"He can ride a bicycle to work and come back over here and lift weights – do the things he needs to do because the downside of that job is that it's not very physical," FAU coach Howard Schnellenberger said with a smile. "But he's close enough to the weights to have a physical experience along with the educational experience."



Sessa figures he's about on schedule physically to play football, but is a little worried he might be lagging behind mentally.

"I don't have enough time to really get in there and watch film," Sessa said. "I would say out of everything that's probably the biggest thing I'm missing out on. It's something that during camp I really need to focus on."

With a report date of Aug. 4 for fall training camp, Sessa's last day with Balfour Beatty will be July 29.

A few weeks later Sessa will realize the completion of his work, charging onto the on-campus field on Oct. 15 for the first true home game in program history.

"It think it's going to be a really exciting moment, not just for me but for the entire team - for coaches, for everyone that's been just kind of involved trying to get the stadium up," Sessa said. "It's definitely going to be something amazing to see the finished product – something I put time into and helped getting it built."

# END OF AN ERA

*Howard Schnellenberger, the only coach in Florida Atlantic's history, announces he will step down at the end of the 2011 season.*

Originally published on 8/11/2011

**by Marcus Nelson**

BOCA RATON – Florida Atlantic's football program lost its legendary coach on Thursday.

The Owls also gained a great ambassador for the university

Schnellenberger, 77, announced at an afternoon press conference that 52 years after embarking on his coaching career - the past 11 being at FAU - he would step down as the only coach FAU has ever had after the 2011 season. Schnellenberger instead will take on a role next season as an ambassador for the university to promote and raise money for the football program he started from scratch and the on-campus stadium he finally will coach in.

"All of us know, there comes a time that, after 52 years, it's a pretty good indication," Schnellenberger said. "If it's a situation where there is any possibility of making the wrong decision, you are better off making a decision to have a seamless exit, period."

After spending more than 10 years campaigning for the on-campus stadium, Schnellenberger will coach in it just one season.

And Schnellenberger wants to make sure it's a memorable one.

"We came to the conclusion that rather than get into a situation that so many other schools around the country get into when the coaching days come to an end for a coach, (we wanted) to be able to do it with a great deal of zeal and a great deal of effort in the final year of our coaching career," Schnellenberger said.

Schnellenberger was hired by Anthony Catanese at Florida Atlantic in 1998 to start the football program and put FAU athletics on the map.

"In my humble opinion, Howard Schnellenberger is one of the greatest football coaches of all time," Catanese said. "It has been an honor to work with such a great man."

After naming himself the coach, the Owls took the field in 2001 losing to Slippery Rock 40-7 in the program's first game. The following week, FAU defeated Bethune-Cookman for the program's first victory.

In 2003, FAU, still a I-AA team, defeated I-A Middle Tennessee in the season opener and made it to the semifinals of the I-AA playoffs, finishing with an 11-3 record.

The following year the Owls started the transition to I-A and were invited into the Sun Belt Conference.

FAU won the Sun Belt Conference championship in 2007 and defeated Memphis 44-27 in the New Orleans Bowl.

A year later, FAU made its second consecutive bowl appearance when the Owls defeated Central Michigan 24-21 in the Motor City Bowl to run Schnellenberger's record in bowl games to 6-0.

Even after building FAU's program, Schnellenberger is perhaps best known for leading Miami to the 1983 National Championship, its first title and starting what would become one of the great dynasties in college football.

However, Schnellenberger wasn't around to see it as he left the Hurricanes after their historic victory over Nebraska in the Orange Bowl for a job in the USFL that never materialized.

Instead Schnellenberger returned to his hometown of Louisville to resurrect the Cardinals' struggling program. He planned an on-campus stadium there as well, but left before it opened.

After a one-year stint at Oklahoma in 1995, he was out of football until he was hired at FAU.

FAU senior nose tackle Jarvis Givens was surprised by the announcement but sensed something was awry when Schnellenberger missed a few practices this week.

"We noticed he wasn't out there at practice like he normally is," Givens said. "When he wasn't out there, we knew something was up."

FAU will begin to search for Schnellenberger's replacement, with a coach possibly hired by December, according to Craig Angelos, FAU's athletic director.

"The fortunate thing for me is that as an athletic director I don't have to go out and hire one in a two week period," Angelos said. "There is a three-to-four month period of time before we have to name one. It will be a nice, smooth transition."

FAU President Mary Jane Saunders believes the job will attract some quality candidates.

"I'm hopeful with the stadium, a great team and being in South Florida with all the things we have to offer down here that we'll get very good candidates," Saunders said. "I've seen that as we hire faculty and hire administrators that everyone sees that we are a university heading on the way up."

# The Palm Beach Post

## FAU coach Howard Schnellenberger, 77, says this will be his last season

By **TOM D'ANGELO**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 7:43 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 11, 2011

Posted: 11:21 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 11, 2011

In the end, the timing was right for Florida Atlantic's Howard Schnellenberger to coach one more season and then step aside to become an ambassador for a school he helped put on the map.

Schnellenberger announced Thursday the 2011 season will be his last as head coach at FAU, making the season even more historic.

Schnellenberger's final year on the field for a program he built from scratch will also mark the opening of a \$70-million, 30,000-seat on-campus stadium - a facility he helped get built.

"It's hard for a coach to even fathom doing this kind of a thing," Schnellenberger said about a decision he said he made several weeks ago.

Schnellenberger's contract was restructured so he would be able to coach one season in the new stadium, which opens Oct. 15 when FAU plays Western Kentucky.

"Ever since we started planning, we always thought it would be important for Howard to run out the team in the new stadium," athletic director Craig Angelos said.

Schnellenberger, 77, has not spent much time on the practice field this week because of a problematic hip, but he said health was not a factor in his decision. He said he will be having the problem "fixed" soon.

"That was going to happen," he said of stepping down. "Health had nothing to do with it.

"This appears to me to be the most seamless and the best way to (do it). It was in our minds even at contract-time."

Schnellenberger has no plans to be a figurehead in his role as an ambassador to the university. He will work with Angelos and president Mary Jane Saunders in a fund-raising role.

"It's not semi-retirement," Schnellenberger said. "It's going to be a job I intend to fulfill with a great deal of enthusiasm."

Angelos will begin his search for a new coach immediately but acknowledges Schnellenberger's potential successor could still be coaching this season. He hopes to name a new coach by December.

"Everybody is in play until the very end and I'll go after anybody, make them tell me no," Angelos said.

Angelos said Schnellenberger's "input" will be very important when it comes to naming his successor, but added, "I don't think the outgoing person selects their successor generally speaking."

This season will be Schnellenberger's 11th at FAU, where he has been the only coach in the program's history. He has had 52 years total in coaching, a career that includes 14 years in the NFL - including eight as a Dolphins assistant and two as head coach of the Colts. He has spent 27 years as a head college coach, compiling a 157-140 record (57-63 at FAU) and has been credited for building three programs - Miami, Louisville and FAU - from various stages.

At Miami, he turned a dormant program into a national champion, winning the title in 1983, his fifth season. That title was the first of five for the Hurricanes and forever changed the reputation of college football in the state.

Former Florida State coach Bobby Bowden said Thursday that Schnellenberger would tell people he patterned his program after the way Bowden built the Seminoles. But "then he beat us and won the national championship," Bowden said. "I always thought he showed us the way."

Schnellenberger and Bowden worked hard to promote football in the state as friendly rivals.

"When I was coaching I'd always hear talk about Joe Paterno and Bobby Bowden and I always wondered how come they don't include Howard," Bowden said. "He's had an amazing career. If I had to pick the top coaches I ever played against he would be one of them. His teams were always so well-coached."

Schnellenberger was pushing for an on-campus stadium before the Owls played their first game in 2001 and never gave up hope that the facility would be built in time for him to be on the sidelines when it opened.

"The House that Howard Built is the right acronym for that stadium," Saunders said. "He means so much to this university and this community."

Fittingly, Schnellenberger made his announcement Thursday in the founder's lounge in the Tom Oxley Athletic Center, which he was the driving force of raising money to get built.

"The vision he was able to create and eventually bring to reality is unmatched," Angelos said.

But FAU has taken a step back the last two seasons, going 9-16 and finishing in the lower half of the Sun Belt Conference last season.

"The last two years have been difficult," Schnellenberger said.

He vowed to work just as hard to right the program for his successor and his players have more motivation to avoid a third consecutive losing season.

"I care for this coach," said senior running back Alfred Morris. "He gave me my opportunity. He saw good in me when nobody did. I want to send him out on a good note."

# Stadium puts on game face



MARK RANDALL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Florida Atlantic University football stadium under construction on the Boca Raton campus was unveiled Thursday afternoon. FAU football coach Howard Schnellenberger showed Sun Sentinel columnist Dave Hyde around the fancy new digs on Thursday. Hyde says the stadium is coming together the way the legendary coach builds his teams: piece by piece, with an eye on every detail. The 30,000-seat, \$70 million stadium is scheduled to open Oct. 15 when the Owls host Western Kentucky. **1C**

## Photo gallery

See more pictures of FAU's new stadium.  
**SunSentinel.com/**  
**faustadium**

# The Palm Beach Post

## Florida Atlantic shows off its new 30,000-seat on-campus stadium under the lights for first time

By **TOM D'ANGELO**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 11:49 a.m. Friday, Aug. 5, 2011

Posted: 10:10 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 4, 2011

For the record: The first pass under the lights at the new FAU Stadium was thrown by university president Mary Jane Saunders to Owls quarterback David Kooi.

The completion came Thursday night, minutes after Saunders and coach Howard Schnellenberger pulled the switch for the ceremonial lighting of the new \$70 million on-campus facility.

"Three presidents were involved in this but one coach," Saunders said. "And it's coach Schnellenberger who made this happen."

The stadium is about 85 percent complete and remains on schedule for the Oct. 15 unveiling against Western Kentucky. Most of the work will be done in a month before testing and tweaking during the final month. The Owls will start the season with five road games before playing 5-of-7 games in the 30,000-seat stadium.

Schnellenberger stood on the sodded field, surveying the lights, boasting that the structure that houses the press box and several floors of suites in which the Atlantic Ocean is visible is designed for a 65,000-seat stadium and posing for pictures with Saunders and players.

"We were able to get the castle of the university," Schnellenberger said. "It's now the most prominent thing on campus and will have the biggest affect in its development, and I'm not talking about the football team I'm talking about the university. I'm talking about Boca Raton."

Several players joined the ceremony decked out in safety vests and hard hats.

"I drive by here every single day," quarterback Graham Wilbert said. "To see FAU (painted) in the stands pretty cool.

"This is just more motivation. We can't let people down who are coming out to see us because you know the fans will be coming to our new facility."

FAU will have plenty more motivation when it opens practice Saturday.

The Owls are coming off back-to-back losing seasons and have steadily declined since sharing the Sun Belt Conference title in 2007. Now, FAU enters the 2011 season picked to finish last in the conference, not a good way to start a new era as the program prepares to move into its new home.

"It's motivation," safety Marcus Bartels said. "It (ticks) me off to be honest. They say don't let it get to you but it (ticks) me off. We are going to prove people wrong."

The Owls finished 4-8 last season, 3-5 in the Sun Belt. The offense dropped dramatically, finishing last in the conference with 302.6 yards per game. Now, the Owls will have to break in a new starting quarterback with Wilbert holding the edge over Kooi at the start of camp. Both are juniors.

The breakdowns last season started with an offensive line that entered the season with little experience and then endured several injuries. That line must do a better job of opening holes for senior running back Alfred Morris, who dipped to 983 yards last season after leading Sun Belt Conference in rushing as a sophomore with 1,392 yards.

The defense improved last season and is looking to take advantage of a talented group of linebackers by going to a 3-4 scheme. End Kevin Cyrille, linebacker David Hinds and safety Marcus Bartels are the anchors.

FAU practices will be held behind the Oxley Athletic Center and are open to the public.



# South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## FAU players glad to finally be home

**"We finally have our own house to play in"**

By [Ted Hutton](#), Sun Sentinel

10:19 PM EDT, August 4, 2011

BOCA RATON

Florida Atlantic players walked onto the field of their new stadium Thursday night like awestruck kids getting their first look at Disney World.

They smiled, they ran around and took pictures, and then they stood still and soaked it all in.

And then it sunk in: They were home.

"We finally have our own house to play in," said senior offensive lineman Sam McRoy.

"It has been a long time coming and I am thankful for everyone who made this dream come true," said senior running back Alfred Morris.

"I get chills through my bones when I see this stadium," said senior defensive back Marcus Bartels.

The players reported for preseason camp in the afternoon, and then they had a tour of the stadium before a ceremonial first lighting, when coach Howard Schnellenberger and FAU President Mary Jane Saunders.

"Three presidents were involved in this, but one coach, and it is coach Schnellenberger that made this happen," Saunders said. "It is really Coach's day."

Schnellenberger has been pushing for stadium since he created the program, which played its first game in 2001 and played first at Sun Life Stadium and then at Lockhart Stadium in Fort Lauderdale before building the \$70 million, 30,000-seat stadium that will open on Oct. 15.

The stadium is 85 percent complete, on budget and on schedule.

Beside the stadium are new dormitories that open later this month and will house 1,200 students, part of the Innovation Village complex situated at the north end of campus.

Saunders believes the stadium will draw big crowds on game days.

"I started my career at South Florida when there was no football. I went back last year for our away game, and you saw how that grew," Saunders said. "You go to one game and you are going to be want to be part of the whole thing."

McRoy said there is a buzz not just among students, but even when he makes a trip to the grocery store.

"People see me with my FAU gear and they ask about the stadium, saying they can see it from I-95 and how they want to go to a game," McRoy said.

The players said seeing the stadium rise up while they worked out in the offseason also helped them work harder than they have in the past.

"It is just more motivation, like we have got to make sure we step up our game to, we can't let people down because they are coming to see us," quarterback Graham Wilbert said.

"We know the only way we are going to fill this up is by winning, so that is our number one goal," Morris said.

The state Board of Governors gave final approval for the stadium on Sept. 16 last year, and construction began in October.

FAU already had chosen a project manager and architect and they had been working over the summer so most of the preliminary work was completed before the final approval came, and that head start allowed the stadium to be completed in 12 months.

# South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## FAU stadium is Schnellenberger's masterpiece

### Owls' coach gives tour of The House That Howard Built

Dave Hyde

Sun Sentinel Columnist

8:21 PM EDT, August 4, 2011

BOCA RATON

Howard Schnellenberger is trying to explain how he builds things from nothing. That's how he's constructed his legend, after all. He builds players, teams, programs, even new football stadiums like the one he's standing in now at Florida Atlantic University.

His voice rumbles across the newly laid sod just as you'd expect. He adjusts his personal construction hat that's designed like a FAU helmet. But as he talks about building something catches his eye like radar picking up a curious blip. He stops.

"Look at that," he says.

Some construction workers are putting the new play clock by the new stands at the back of the new end zone.

"It's too low," he says.

He walks under the construction tape. He marches across the end zone. He walks up to the construction workers and says, not belligerently, "That needs to be higher."

People standing there could block it, he said. Quarterbacks wouldn't be able to read it.

"How high do you want it, coach?" one of the workers asked.

"Two feet higher," he said.

"You got it," he said.

Do you see? Isn't that the answer? Doesn't that explain Schnellenberger's gift for building all these years?

He wears a University of Miami championship ring on his right hand, a Dolphins Super Bowl ring on his left hand and has helped pull off perhaps the greatest achievement of a \$70 million

stadium without a cent of public money to give the program he started a forever foundation.

And, at 77, nothing gets by him. No detail is too small for his attention. Not the play clock's height. Not the 139 mid-level loge seats that he wanted fashioned like at Churchill Downs. Not the number of steps from one suite level to the ground.

"It's 62," he said. "I've counted before."

The House That Howard Built, they're calling this stadium, though it's not beyond him to hope it's called something else soon. He says about seven years ago he had three people vying to put their names on the stadium.

"Then the tech stocks sunk, and that was that," he said. "I can't believe someone who loves their wife doesn't want her name on a stadium."

He gives a nudge. "Put that in the paper," he says. "Maybe some loving husband will read it and call."

There he goes again playing all angles to win. That's how he's built so much. As he stands atop the stadium from the six-story press and suite box, he points out to the Atlantic Ocean.

"This is the only stadium in the country you can see the ocean from," he said.

There's probably another stadium you can see the ocean. But that's not the point. Schnellenberger says things to sell. Remember when he said upon starting FAU football in 1998 it would compete for a national title in a decade?

People asked what he was smoking in his the trademark pipe (which he doesn't use anymore). But they noticed him. That was the point. He won't be ignored. He's the guy who recruited Joe Namath to Alabama from Pennsylvania.

He built Miami by realizing the best recruits were the ones in town that previous regimes ignored. He went to Louisville and built a top program and a new stadium.

Now, 13 years after standing holding weekly rallies on a stump, he moves FAU football into this new stadium.

"So many good people at this university got this built," he says.

He says the first game will be, "Awesome." He says he can't enjoy the idea much because he plays Florida, Michigan State and Auburn in the first month.

But Schnellenberger senses the achievement of building something new and lasting for his final time. You can see it in his prideful look. Then you see how he did it as he stops and stares across the field while leaving the stadium.

"They still haven't raised the play clock," he says.

It's still too low. He leaves his stadium, construction hat still on, saying he's going to have to call someone about the clock.