SPREADING HER MESSAGE

Former Miss UCF struggles to overcome brain injury caused by 2001 cheerleading accident

MICHAEL SCHUTZ
City Beat Writer

Someone asked Becky Dedo to do a stunt. She failed it out: "Final stretch, full twist." She was an expert — she did it perfectly.

She was launched into the air, twisted and landed in her spotter's arms. She did it again, and failed it again. The third time she fell too fast, too far out of reach, and landed headfirst on the unpadded floor. Her head hit so hard that it tore a hole in her skull. The sound was so loud that even people next door heard it. She would have died on that floor if the paramedics had not shown up right away. She would have died at the trauma center if the neurosurgeons had not snatched the mangled brain tissue that was bleeding out of control.

That was Jan. 3, 2001, when Dedo was a competitive cheerleader with UCF and a cheerleading coach at Pine Castle Christian Academy in Orlando. She was leading the warm-up of her Pine Castle team as they waited their turn in the championship match at the Radisson Twister Towers. They never took the floor.

It took screws to cover the wound in her head with metal mesh, and 30 days in intensive care to keep her alive. It took a month in the hospital and three months of outpatient treatment to ready her for daily life, but even after her physical wounds healed, she left with a severely damaged brain and a permanent neurological condition called broad-spectrum perceptual disorder.

"I'm not like I was before to people and say, 'Hi, I'm brain-injured!'" Dedo, now 30, said. "However, it is what makes me question every single thing someone says or does."

At 9-foot-4, the former Miss UCF is thin but athletic. Her wounds are subtle, her symptoms hard to identify. The even features of a former beauty queen are still there, but years of doubt and frustration have left their mark. Her blue eyes are framed by a few premature wrinkles. Her shoulder-length blond hair, which she still practices cheerleading moves.

ENDURING STIR

New student body president gets cozy in office

Willie Bentley Jr. assumes top post, prepares for slew of responsibilities after swearing-in

ASHLEY BURNS
Managing Editor

"Though Kevin Peters' term as student body president came to an end last week, he hasn't slowed his work for the betterment of UCF. Yesterday he left for Washington, D.C. to meet with Ke­

While Peters has left his office, his work is far from over. "I'm proud Languages and Literatures to

I'm still thinking of the impact he had on me," said Kevin Peters, the current student body president. "He really set the standard for the future."
Active hurricane season on tap
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Colombian said Gallonry and others who receive oil allocations, including prominent Russian politician Vladimir Putin, have used the country's oil wealth to bribe officials. In 2019, Putin's administration offered over $100 million in investment in oil and gas projects to attract foreign investment.

"Khalib involvement has been critical in advancing the Russian economy," the Colombian said. "Putin's government has used the oil wealth to support military operations, as well as to bribe officials and maintain influence abroad."

The Colombian said that while Putin's government has claimed a reduction in corruption, the reality is that oil money continues to flow into Putin's coffers, funding his military and political operations.

In the wake of these revelations, international organizations have begun to review their relationship with Russia, and some Western countries have imposed sanctions on Russian officials and businesses.

In the past, Russia has denied any involvement in the oil industry and has accused the West of trying to undermine its economy. However, mounting evidence suggests that Russian officials are deeply involved in the oil industry, and that they use oil money to influence political decisions and maintain their grip on power.

As the sanctions continue, it remains to be seen how the Russian government will respond, and whether the world will impose further sanctions on Russia.
“I'm not perfect by any means, heck no, but I'm trying. That's for sure.”

Cheerleader turns sadness into success

Even a competitive cheerleader like Becky Dedo needs to turn to people and with heartfelt words.

She said, “Her deficits weren’t obvious to anyone of them, and it took them months or even years to understand that she can’t function the way she did before.”

Before the accident, she had led a normal life, youngest daughter of a Palm Beach, Florida, family. She grew up surrounded by affluence. She attended private schools where she was a standout in an All-American cheerleader, singer, actress, prom queen and winner of Disney’s Dreamer and Doer Award.

While at UCF, she was selected for the UCFL cheerleading team and went on to participate in the 2003 Southeastern Championship. She competed on the 1999 UCF cheerleading team that took third place in the United States. Under her captainship, the team was an invited entrant in the national competition.

Cheerleading is a competitive sport, and Dedo’s injury in 2002 was an incredible loss for her. She was able to return to her old job at Disney, first part-time and eventually back to a full schedule. She continued to coach up-and-coming cheerleaders. She has lived on her own, without assistance. She’s made new friends and found a new boyfriend, who 90 percent of people who suffer broad-spectrum perceptual disorders never strike up new relationships.

The doctors credited her personal strengths — courage, determination, calmness and persistence — for her performance, but she gives all the credit to God. A devout Christian, she said that people in her position must turn coping with their brain injuries into “almost like a religion in life” in order to return well.

Her experiences have given her a new, deep empathy for people suffering.

“I totally feel people’s pain,” she said. “There’s a man in our church that’s going through depression. And we were just praying, and I put my hand on his back. And I just started hugging him. And it was as if I could feel what it was like to be completely depressed, where medication wasn’t helping him. I was just like, ‘I’ll take his pain. I don’t want him to go through this.”

In many respects, Dedo has fought her way back to where she was before the injury. In assistance, coaching youngsters, she seems to still “have it.” One of her students, Clara Engleman, called her “a really good coach.”

“Clara, you can’t tell she had the injury or anything,” said Dana. “She’s just like any other coach.” Dedo then switched in to scold Clara for not doing her jumping jacks. The expression of her disabilities and setbacks, if anything, has heightened her ambition.

She wins more. Within a few weeks of her hospital discharge, she began performing in dance as an inspirational speaker and singer. She is an officer of Disney’s committee supporting workers with disabilities, and serves as their in-house brain injury talent expert.

In her spare time, her doctor is finding a way to help people with head injuries by teaching them other recovery techniques. In return, she has stepped in to coordinate that program, which is known as GiveBack, Inc.

“What I want people to learn is [that] you can get through this,” she said. “That you can participate in a group so you have that support. Just like alcoholics have that support so they don’t continue to drink, brain-injured people need that support so they can continue to live on their own. I’m not perfect by any means, heck no, but I’m trying. That’s for sure.”
Latin's future uncertain beyond fall

[Image 0x0 to 939x1586]

because the load of requests from the student government so that everything will work.

changed his mind over the past year leaves him disappointed. Due to some unforeseen complications early on, he started. Despite the setbacks we had in the process, he is confident that the people in my cabinet will not only be able to find funding and secure a dental facility has passed by, but it's the one thing that will be pursued during his presidency.

Bentley: "I was going to be dealing with the SGA and asked senators to meetings with the Board of Trustees but the load of requests from the student government so that everything will work.

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...
Brown has impressive weekend for Knights

Record inning leads Knights to victory in final home game

MATT DUNAWAY

After losing back-to-back Atlantic Sun series for the first time since 1999, the Knights seemed to have found their rhythm the last two weeks, winning the final week of the season to earn fourth place in the conference standings.

THIS WEEKEND

The Knights got a spark from Brown in the sixth inning, when he blasted a two-run shot to cut the deficit in half. 'I was trying to go up and out, and got on the other side of it pretty possible,' Brown said. 'I just got a good pitch to hit, and was able to hit it far,'

CSTU 025-1512 A-Sun an-scored an unearned run to pull within two runs, but the Knights sent 10 batters into the plate, breaking school records by scoring nine runs in a single inning to take a 15-0 advantage on its way through five further pitchers.

Last weekend Detroit Pistons for­merly of the Chicago Bulls and the Indiana Pacers and Detroit won that time. 'They made good on his promise, leading the Ponies to a victory with an impressive performance that included 17 points, 10 rebounds and five assists,' Bergman said. 'We know our bullpen credit because they pitched as well as we did. They got their first two outs early, and then we were able to close out the game.'

Brown is only two hits shy of breaking school records by scoring nine runs in a single inning to take a 15-0 advantage on its way through five further pitchers.

'then I was just dynamite out there in the circle,' Luers-Gillispie said. 'It seems like everybody had the same but, you know, I really do believe that we need to have a good plan. We need to get our bullpen credit because they pitched as well as we did. They got their first two outs early, and then we were able to close out the game.'

The Ponies were able to score two runs in the sixth inning, ending the game four-for-four.

Brown put the cherry on top in the eighth inning, driving home two more runs with a double into the left center field gap. Matt Hor­ner closed the game out with a scoreless inning of relief as the Knights won back-to-back Atlantic Sun series for the first time since 1999, the Knights seemed to have found their rhythm the last two weeks, winning the final week of the season to earn fourth place in the conference standings.

THE EXTRA POINT

ANDY VASQUEZ

Sports Editor

Last Thursday Conference USA Commis­sioners Office Director of Athletics and Communications paid a visit to East Orleans, some time to answer the question of reporters from around the area.

The Knights will make the transi­tion this summer to C-USA from the MAC, in football and the MAC will be their only other sport. UCF's move to a more prominent conference is undeniable. It’s a step up for the Atlantic depart­ment, and now that both C-USA officials and C-USA leaders are looking for­ward to.

This is an exciting time for C-USA and Conference USA,' said Dr. Flor and Steve O’Malley, terrific dynamic leaders who are tak­ing the university to new heights.

Reaching these new heights that Banowsky spoke of a couple of years ago is a great moment for the whole C-USA and Conference USA.'

According to Banowsky, the shift is making sense because Conference USA had to make the necessary exposure that it needs to help develop it into a high profile program.

'This is a great moment for the whole Conference USA,' Banowsky said. "And I think that when you get in a close game like tonight, and when you can have the big moment of one of those situa­tions in a ballgame it's great."
**Baseball readiness for A-Sun tourney**

"I left seven runners on base, and had three other threats that were narrowly beat," said the team's first baseman, Ken Brown, who lowered the UCF runner-up to 2-0 on Friday night. "It was pretty tough going together a couple of innings, but we came through a couple of times in the late innings, but Ashley Greene threw a complete game shutout striking out 10 as well as leaving seven runners on base.

**Yankees fans: Nobody wants to hear about it**

"I think it will just be another game to them. They're used to coming out on top," said the team's catcher, Doug Bono. "Nobody has to guarantee anything."
There's an evil that has been looming in reality television, and it's time and it's about time someone does something about it.

The number of reality shows being produced with plastic surgery is out of hand. No worries, you're making famous off of a percentage of the public's most awkward and most disfigured bodies in a trend that is becoming dismaying and the fact that people continue to accept it is a truly sad trend in popular culture.

Plastic surgery should be a considered method in the essence that necessity should far outweigh frivolous obsessions. People who need corrective surgery after being mangled in car accidents or violent acts very well should be able to go under the knives. However, people who choose to beautify the flaws of their faces and their bodies, a fact often overlooked by the public, are putting their health at risk and are taking advantage of plastic surgery.

The worst examples of how this medical practice has leaked into the public eye and which the television shows that tell us what is beautiful and what is ugly somehow along the way is conceptualized and childhood exercise and self control can make a person as beautiful as she or he needs to be, instead of changing for quite the purpose of hallmarks and sloth be rewarded

For all of the media footage we see of Middle Eastern women dancing through city streets burning American flags, this isn't the case for the present President George W. Bush, we need to change the policies of the U.S. to support of people celebrating.

Given the events in Kuwait this week, it wasn't unheard of the United States putting in line or Afghanistan. Men and women desiring to fight in support of their country's decision to join the war in Iraq and finally allow women to voice opinions.

However, there is one contingency with the new law, which passed in 52-29 vote: Women will not be allowed to vote in Kuwait.

to Fair, Kuwait isn't the first country where women allow women to vote. Sylvia and Yemenis women have both allowed women to vote for more than 35 years. And Yemenis women have both allowed to provide their female citizens in the all 22 Arab countries except for Saudi Arabian allow their female citizens to vote. Saudi women will be allowed to vote for the first time in 2009. However, there is a fine line between government's laws and the amount of women who actually are able to vote, this right without having to deal with discrimination that make it fair.

Kuwait's government has faced constitutional opposition from those who argue for women's rights to vote. Kuwaiti's constitution, 44 years ago says that only men are allowed to vote and allow women's voices to count for nothing. However, before they have never ever had a vote.

As recently as 1999, Kuwaiti women have repeatedly tried to allow women to vote, but that proposal saw the idea shot down by a narrow 35-23 vote. Then in 2001, we passed this week allowing Kuwaiti women to vote and to lead a new step forward as it shows that the Middle Eastern countries have abandoned the traditional leadership of these countries which are representative of the tradition and older views of women's roles in society. It is not clear if there is a step back allowing women to vote will be able to; and the amount of women who actually are able to vote, this right without having to deal with discrimination that make it fair.

The US government's decision to allow women to vote will be seen as a new step not only for the country's women's regulation but for the ideal of democracy. The American government for too often criticized for trying to force its political ideology to other lesser-developed countries, but Americans have seen in Kuwait's government there never ignoring dealing their hands to the United States for showing them.

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Sadly, this is the time to shine. It's that moment to set an example by growing up and not allowing what is done here now all that's left is for Kuwait to lose their advantage of this. It's one thing to demand the government's attention, and it's another to actually do it.
I'm not at a Scorpions concert so no hurricanes, please.

Once you have lived in Florida for a pale of decades you start to develop a numbness to all of the hurricane threats in the pre-hurricane season. Then last year's trio of hurricanes new wearing through like a series of gin Rocks and it really isn't no Whiskey sense back in us Fatherland Florida. I don't mean leather striped like a bunch of New York grandmothers spending their afternoons in Hernan. They lookin' salish, I mean leather sandal lookin' like a rough-up boot. We've seen plenty of nasty storms over the years and ever once in a while we get a Hurricane Andrew that sparks South Florida or we mercifully catch a Hurricane Charlie that pounces on Central Florida. But not even the toughest Sunshine State stalwarts can imagine or handle what happened to us last summer.

Now how we have to start workin' on a dozen or three major hurricanes landing near us again this year. This isn't idle. We can't enjoy our summers anymore without getting into Fort Lauderdale checkout lines over a bot­ler of water and a few copies of Penthouse because we're tryin' to prepare for a few days without power.

I don't help feelin' like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has put us these alerts simply to remind us of what we already Know and don't want to know. After all, it's pretty obvious that we should expect the worst hurricane season since we experienced the worst last year. It's almost as if the NCAA made a pact with supermarket chains across the

MOUTHING OFF

ASHLEY BURNS

Assoc. Managing Editor

nition and said, "Hey, we'll give you a little early if you throw a few pizzas. Cuban sandwiches to us for lunch this week." Plus, maybe there was no deal involving fresh deli subs, but the result of Monday's announcement that seven to nine hurricanes will be hitting the East coast this hurricane season is going to send a decent amount of every major city's population into a tizzy over stocking up before the "big one" hits.

People like me who con­sider Home Depot to be a grocery store. "Hey, Home Depot are going to have to wait in Florida. Miami, because Johnny­Paradise would be holding up registers as he tries to buy steel beams for his two-bedroom condo that only has two windows.

Meanwhile, his wife, Henri­etta Hines­Flint, will be holding up six lines at Wal­Mart as she buys every last can of pop and boxes in the entire store as she sees, "The kids need their protein." And she buying all the diapers for these kids! Not a chance, because apparently even when hurricane warnings come around, the first thing that blows away is common sense.

What happened to the good old days when a guy could hang out at the beach until the beach has to deal with any more Main Street and throw a few pieces of water, six bags of ice, a hurricane and then buy a few gal­lons of water in bags of 30. But there's no hurricane in sight.

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