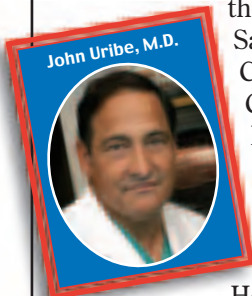


# Doctors Hospital: where the

**B**efore the 2005 Super Bowl, Ed Garabedian geared up to help big battered bodies recover from injuries and prepare for the next NFL season. By mid-January, Mr. Garabedian, director of rehabilitation at Doctors Hospital, was working one-on-one with ailing players from the New York Giants, San Francisco 49ers, Cincinnati Bengals, Chicago Bears, Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Jacksonville Jaguars.

Amid the players' rehabilitation from surgery, the Miami Heat's Shaquille O'Neal slipped into the hospital for an MRI of his left knee after a fall during a game. Doctors orthopedic surgeon Harlan Selesnick, M.D., the Heat's team physician, determined to the relief of coaches and fans that the All-Star center had suffered only a mild strain.



**Fred Taylor, a Jacksonville Jaguars running back, uses a biofeedback technique to keep his inner thigh muscle in shape while he recovers from knee surgery.**

Torn tissue and broken bones are routine occupational hazards for professional athletes. Successful surgery and rehab can make the difference between a dazzling comeback and an early retirement.

**F**or years, the Sports Medicine Program at Doctors Hospital has quietly attracted elite athletes from around the country and the Caribbean. Through word of mouth, its reputation has spread from Olympic sprinters to high jumpers, from the college sports scene to the pros. Doctors Hospital is the official sports medicine provider for the Miami Heat, Florida Marlins, University of Miami, Florida International University and FedEx Orange Bowl.

"For all my surgeries I like to come here to Doctors. They're the best in the business," said Bengals linebacker Nate Webster, a former UM standout recovering from extensive knee surgery. "History has shown that guys taken care of here have made a full recovery."



**Physical therapist Ed Garabedian stretches the leg of Andrew Williams, a San Francisco 49ers defensive end recovering from his latest knee surgery.**

# pros go to heal

After an initial operation in Cincinnati failed, Mr. Webster returned to Doctors' surgeon John Uribe, M.D., the longtime physician for UM athletes and former Miami Dolphins and Florida Marlins doctor. Dr. Uribe had to take ligament from Mr. Webster's good knee to repair the injured one.

Mr. Webster is hoping for the type of dramatic recovery that NFL running backs Edgerrin James and Willis McGahee, both UM alumni, have accomplished after reconstructive knee surgery with Dr. Uribe and rehab with Mr. Garabedian. Each suffered potentially career-ending ligament damage, Mr. James in 2001 as an Indianapolis Colts star and Mr.

McGahee as a UM senior in the 2003 Fiesta Bowl. Millions of fans watching the Fiesta Bowl on TV witnessed Mr. McGahee's knee buckle backwards in the stomach-turning injury.

Mr. Garabedian, who takes a "creative, hands-on approach" to rehabilitation, worked for months with Mr. James and Mr. McGahee. He sensed when to go easy and when to push. "Early on in rehab, the movements are deliberate to prepare for later exercises and to prevent the weakening of uninjured muscles," Mr. Garabedian said. "You have to understand the healing process and emphasize soft tissue recovery in the early phases of rehab."

In 2004, Mr. James made the NFL's All-Pro team — his lofty goal during rehab, Mr. Garabedian said. Last season, Mr. McGahee — who many sports authorities predicted would never play football again — rushed for 100 yards in five of his first seven starts.

"They had serious injuries," Mr. Garabedian said. "To be able to get back and compete like that still blows me away."

Working with Dr. Uribe are John



**Miami Heat center Shaquille O'Neal limps into Doctors' Hospital, where an MRI of his left knee revealed only a mild strain.**

Zvijac, M.D., Doctors' chief of staff and the team physician for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and Keith Hechtman, M.D., head team physician for Florida International University.

"Your best advertisement is a satisfied patient," Dr. Uribe said. "These guys make their living with their bodies. The fact that they trust you is the greatest compliment."

The surgeons have published medical journal articles about new techniques they've developed to repair knee, shoulder and elbow injuries.

Former FIU All-American sprinter Tayna Lawrence is one of Dr. Zvijac's success stories. She suffered stress fractures in both her lower legs from her high-impact sport. Dr. Zvijac placed metal rods inside the bones. She not only recovered but won Olympic gold last summer in Greece, representing Jamaica as the lead-off runner in the 4-by-100-meter relay.

On the walls of Dr. Selesnick's office are framed photographs from such grateful athletes as tennis star Anna Kournikova. He also has treated tennis ace Boris Becker and basketball legend Michael Jordan.

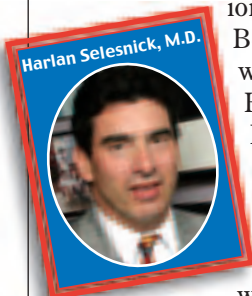
"Sports medicine is not just treating the injury. It's understanding how it happened, rehabbing it and preventing it from happening again," Dr. Selesnick said.

At least half the surgeons' patients are regular active people of all ages. "The best part of the job is eliminating patients' pain and correcting the problem," Dr. Hechtman said. "The vast experience we have helps us treat both elite athletes and weekend warriors."

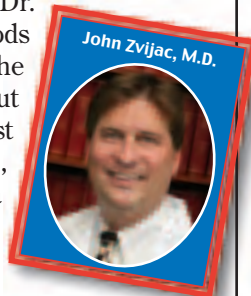
The doctors developed a program to give free care to Miami-Dade schools, organizing physicals for athletes and doing preventive healthcare.

"I felt a strong need to give medical care to high school kids, organizing physicals and treating athletes, especially in the inner city, which was underserved," Dr. Uribe said. "It's a cornerstone of our practice."

— *Patty Shillington*



Harlan Selesnick, M.D.



John Zvijac, M.D.



Keith Hechtman, M.D.

Photo: Patrick Farrell/The Miami Herald