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# South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## South Florida's other teams wait for their turn in spotlight after Heat vacates stage

### Panthers gear up for draft, free agency; Marlins ballpark developments coming; Dolphins biding time in lockout mode

By [Craig Davis](#), Staff Writer

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The South Florida sports scene is stuck in a whiteout of the Heat's NBA Finals melodrama against the Mavericks.

It is easy to overlook that three other professional teams share territory with the White Hot Heat.

Understandable if the Dolphins, Panthers and Marlins are a bit green with envy, though all have been publicly supportive. The Marlins had a "Let's Go Heat" banner on the wall in the right-field corner at Sun Life Stadium, and Larry Beinfest, president of baseball operations, expressed the same sentiment at the end of a radio interview early this week.

"We compliment the Heat. We applaud what they did and hope to experience similar success down the road," Panthers President and COO Michael Yormark said.

There is evidence that a championship by one team does have a positive trickle-down effect on the other teams in the market as well as the region itself, according to Dr. Kathleen Davis of Sport Management Research Institute.

"What our studies have shown is community pride comes to the surface and you have pride of ownership, or a more positive view toward South Florida. And as a result fans are more engaging with the other teams," Davis said. "Everyone wins when one team wins."

The Panthers this week launched their own color-themed marketing campaign, "We See Red." Billboards have begun to appear featuring a fierce panther face with glowing red eyes.

The Heat have been color-coordinating playoff runs since 2004, utilizing at various times black, red and white to galvanize fan support and spur merchandising. Other NBA teams have copied the idea, including the Mavericks with a Royal Blue theme.

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Yormark said the Panthers are aiming to reconnect with their early success when they quickly rose from expansion to Stanley Cup finals with red as their primary color.

He does acknowledge attempting to emulate the Heat in one regard. Shedding veteran contracts this past season cleared significant salary cap space for the Panthers to spend in free agency.

"We've taken a page out of Pat Riley and the Heat's playbook, so to speak," Yormark said. "What [GM] Dale [Tallon] did in clearing a lot of cap space from the roster has given us flexibility as far as being a real player come July 1.

"It's a huge summer coming up for us."

Win or lose, the Heat will soon vacate the stage. The Panthers' hiring of coach Kevin Dineen got minimal splash, but their turn will come. They have seven of the first 60 picks in the upcoming draft (June 24-25) when they will present a new red-dominated jersey to their first selection.

The flood of support for the Heat may not be all bad for the Marlins. It has distracted from a run of agonizing one-run losses on a long homestand.

The Marlins do have an attractive attention-getter rising on the Miami skyline. There have been some blimp shots of the new ballpark on NBA Finals telecasts and inquiries from visiting media, said P.J. Loyello, Marlins senior vice president of communications and broadcasting.

The team has scheduled a media tour of the ballpark for next Thursday, two days after a potential Game 7. Loyello said the Marlins expect to announce naming rights for the ballpark within the next two to four weeks.

Meanwhile, the team that has dominated the South Florida landscape for decades is treading water due to the NFL lockout. In a show of business-as-usual, the Dolphins this week announced the sale of four-game ticket packages.

A recent poll by Sachs-Mason/Dixon showed that 27 percent of NFL fans may avoid attending or watching games on television if games are lost to the lockout.

"If we go about our business of putting a winning team on the field, and if we do the right things like community relations involvement to let people know we have still deep roots here, we'll be fine," Dolphins spokesman Harvey Greene said.

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