

UM BOOSTER CASE 'These allegations have made us stronger'

University of Miami has risen above scandal, attorneys say

 by John Pacenti
 jpacenti@alm.com

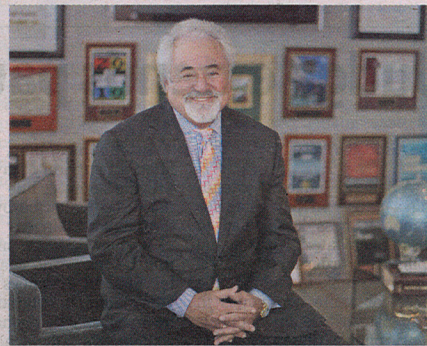
Coral Gables attorney Stuart Z. Grossman is a long-time and well-known sports booster at the University of Miami.

He and another long-established booster—Arthur Hertz, the owner of Miami Seaquarium—never ran into Nevin Shapiro. The imprisoned con artist who almost destroyed his alma mater's sports program knew better than to mix with real boosters.

Grossman, sports attorneys and agents said Tuesday that UM rose above its scandal with Shapiro while the National Collegiate Athletic Association disgraced itself during the investigation.

"They should be very proud. They were willing to acknowledge their issues, take it on the chin and wait this out," he said.

The NCAA announced after a 2½-year investigation

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"The sanctions are certainly livable," attorney and UM booster Stuart Z. Grossman says.

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UM: Detractors may end up worse off than the university

that the university will lose nine scholarships over three years. UM had imposed on itself a postseason ban of two years, missing out on two bowls and an Atlantic Coast Conference championship.

"The sanctions are certainly livable," Grossman said of the lost scholarships.

In the end, UM's detractors may end up worse than the private university.

■ Shapiro, who ran a \$930 million Ponzi scheme and showered illicit gifts on UM athletes, is serving a 20-year federal prison sentence. In a letter to the Miami Herald in August, Shapiro painted himself as a victim and said UM would get the death penalty if the matter were put before a judge as a criminal matter.

■ Maria Elena Perez, the outspoken Coral Gables attorney for Shapiro, came under Florida Bar scrutiny when it was learned she was cooperating with NCAA investigators. She had no comment on the sanctions by deadline.

■ The NCAA, who fired the main investigator in the case, launched a separate investigation into itself centering on the use of subpoenas in Shapiro's federal bankruptcy case to take depositions of witnesses who had refused to cooperate with the UM probe.

'WITCH HUNT'

Miramar-based NFL sports agent David Canter of DEC Management Inc., who graduated from UM School of Law,



J. ALBERT DIAZ

"UM definitely can take a sigh of relief about the sanctions," Miami sports attorney Christopher Lyons says. "I think they came out of this pretty good."

said alums had been holding their breath waiting for the NCAA public infractions report.

"Let's be honest, the NCAA botched this from Day One," he said.

"Investigators were sort of on a witch hunt."

Grossman said UM suffered under the cloud of the long investigation, losing key recruits such as Teddy Bridgewater, the quarterback for 18th-ranked Louisville. He said Hurricanes football coach Al Golden and basketball coach Jim Larranaga were key to getting young athletes to weather the storm and stick with them.

The basketball team went to the Sweet 16 last year, and the

football team is ranked No. 7, its highest since 2005.

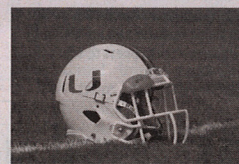
"I don't think we will ever see this lack of institutional control again," Grossman said.

Athletic director Blake James issued a statement that seemed to echo that sentiment.

"Our honest and committed efforts to address these allegations have made us stronger," James said. "We have already taken many proactive steps to ameliorate any concerns, and we will continue to improve in all areas."

Miami sports attorney Christopher Lyons said he dealt with NCAA disciplinary tactics when he represented two University of North Carolina football players during a similar investigation in 2010.

He said he was appalled at the lack of fairness toward stu-



dent athletes, learning they are compelled to cooperate or face further sanctions. But he said the UM investigation was particularly egregious.

"The length of the NCAA investigation was unprecedented, and the tactics they used were deplorable," Lyons said.

"It seems like UM definitely can take a sigh of relief about the sanctions. I think they came out of this pretty good. The way this investigation was being conducted by the NCAA, I'm sure they thought this was going to be far worse."

Others, though, were critical of the sanctions. On sports websites and talk shows, the comparison was to the University of Southern California, which lost 30 scholarships, was stripped of a national championship and was banned from two bowl games after running back Reggie Bush and another student athlete took gifts from a sports agents.

'CHALLENGING CHAPTER'

But UM president Donna Shalala, who served in President Bill Clinton's cabinet, aimed to stay ahead of the scandal from the time Shapiro went public in 2010 with claims he showered

gifts on UM athletes for nearly nine years, including paying for prostitutes, clubbing, high-end dinners and other extravagancies.

Shalala was photographed at a fundraising event where Shapiro handed her a \$50,000 check.

Shalala released a statement Tuesday apologizing to "the Hurricane family," saying the report "closes a challenging chapter in the history of the University of Miami."

She brought in attorney Michael Glazier, whose nickname in NCAA circles is "The Cleaner," as outside counsel. He is the lead attorney in the collegiate sports practice at Bond Schoeneck & King in Overland Park, Kansas. He previously represented Florida State, Iowa, Kansas, Ohio State, Villanova and Minnesota in NCAA matters and is known for his ability to protect a university's reputation.

In August, Shapiro's letter to the Herald said, "There are people that love and care for me who know what exactly was done to me that the public has not become aware of yet."

Shapiro's posturing rangles Grossman.

"He is a bitter ... who is sitting in federal prison," Grossman said. "You are talking about a bad human being who picked on poor kids who were athletes. It was sad. He is a predator."

John Pacenti can be reached at (305) 347-6638.