

## STATE COLLEGES

# Benoit comes full circle with MDC volleyball

BY WALTER VILLA  
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Former Miami Dade College women's volleyball coach **Ilida Medero** and her successor, **Kiko Benoit**, have combined to win 24 state titles and seven national championships in the past 27 years, and their relationship has come full circle.

Their friendship started in the 1990s when Benoit was a student at MDC. He would hang around the Kendall Campus gym, playing pickup volleyball and befriending players on the women's team.

"I was kind of like their water boy during matches," Benoit said.

Soon enough, however, he became a volunteer coach, working under Medero as she stockpiled national titles — six of them in 15 years.

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Benoit, who majored in business at MDC, took a liking to coaching.

"I thought, 'This is fun,' " Benoit said. "Coaching under her was a great opportunity. I knew how to play volleyball. But there's a big difference between playing and coaching. I learned from her."

Medero won 15 consecutive state titles before resigning in 2004 because of health issues.



Her resignation hit her hard. Leaving her team hurt her so much that, once she stepped down, she could no longer bring herself to attend MDC matches.

"I went into a deep depression," Medero said. "I couldn't eat. It was [spiritually] painful. I would teach my classes [as an MDC professor], and then I would have nothing to do in the afternoon."

Medero was fine attending other volleyball matches. But it took her six years before coming to see her former team play.

Last year, when MDC was in the midst of its latest national championship season, things really changed for Medero. Two of Benoit's assistant coaches, **Kelly Dantas** and **Nataly Gutierrez**, were gone on maternity leave.

Medero, no longer dogged by health issues, started coming out to MDC's practices in order to help the short-handed Benoit.

And Benoit, whose current MDC team (24-0) is preparing for the state finals Nov. 3-5, was all for the idea.

"She's my mentor," said Benoit, 45. "She's the reason why I'm here as the coach."

Medero, 60, said she just wants to help.

"We have 13 players and two courts, and [Benoit] cannot see and evaluate everything," Medero said. "It's not like a duty. It's something I like to do.

"I know [Benoit] respects me. We have a wonderful relationship. He will listen to whatever advice I give. I give him feedback and he decides."

One of MDC's players, middle blocker **Paula Barbosa Louro** of Brazil, said that both coaches bring value to the team.

"Kiko is creative," she said. "He uses players in different positions, and it surprises opponents. Medero helps a lot. She has a lot of experience, and she really understands us as women. With one word, she helps us adjust our movements."

## THIS AND THAT

- Former FIU pitcher **Garvin Alston** was named Minnesota Twins pitching coach by manager **Paul Molitor**. Alston joins **Tony Diaz** as former FIU players serving as major-league coaches. Diaz coaches first base for the Colorado Rockies.
- NSU's **Jenna Johns**, a freshman from Pennsylvania, recently made her collegiate debut, winning the 100 butterfly and the 100 backstroke. She was also named the Sunshine State Conference Women's Swimmer of the Week. NSU senior **Franco Lupoli** won the 500-yard and 1,000-yard freestyle events and won the SSC Men's Swimmer of the Week honor.

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