



# MR JAI ALAI

With Todd Sorensen

## Dania Jai-Alai News and Notes for the New Year

#46 Arrieta will be out of action for several more months after surgery was finally completed on his right wrist. The young American star tore two ligaments in the wrist, one completely. Originally slated to have the surgery in October, Arrieta had to wait a few more weeks because of Hurricane Wilma.

Named one of the Hunks of Hollywood in 2005 by the local Jaycees, Arrieta will be out of action until at least March. Because the injury was to the throwing arm, that time frame is prone to changes or setbacks. Arrieta should begin physical therapy in January after his cast is removed.

#44 Azpiri finally returned to play after nine months of sitting on the sidelines with a torn ACL. The ACL, or Anterior Cruciate Ligament, is the main ligament that holds your knee together, and is one of the most feared injuries in all of professional sports. Azpiri's slow start is expected, as it will take a while for him to become comfortable running around competing.

Physical therapy to heal an ACL is nothing short of brutal, and in most cases still leaves much to be desired from the athlete's viewpoint. Unlike many other injuries, where the physical therapy can pretty much fully prepare the athlete to return, the ACL is much more difficult.

It's not just the ring rust that affects ACL tear recipients. The dynamics of your knee changes, and no amount of exercise or practice can prepare an athlete for how the "new knee" will respond in game situations. It took former University of Miami tailback Willis McGahee a full year and a half to get back to full health after is ACL tear, and about one half an NFL season before he really got going.

So expect Azpiri to take a few months to get back to normal on the Dania cancha. The surgery to fix a torn ACL usually leaves the ligament shorter, but stronger. This results in a knee that is a bit tighter when moving, and less flexible. Until Azpiri can gain



Lecue looks completely focused as he sets up for the two wall carom shot.

confidence in how his knee will respond in certain situations, he'll have a hard time finding a groove.

#41 Enbil's hiatus continues as the three time World Champion is at home with a sick family member. Originally scheduled to return to Dania Jai-Alai on November 1<sup>st</sup>, it's still unknown exactly when Enbil will make his Dania return.

#38 Lopez has charged into the lead in the Singles Championship race with 10 victories. The 21 year old prodigy of the backcourt has leapfrogged the and now holds a two game lead roughly a third of the way into the season. Hitting the board 28 times through 53 appearances, Lopez is still over .525% in the money, an astounding number for a backcourt player in singles competition.

Arriaga has slipped back into the hunt with 7 victories, and still has to be the heavy favorite to win his 11<sup>th</sup> singles title. But Lopez seems to be the man to challenge Arriaga into the future. Lopez still has a long ways to go, especially in the catching department. While he makes many catches that are star quality, his overall consistency is holding him back. That will only improve with experience, along with his throwing, serving, shot selection and just about

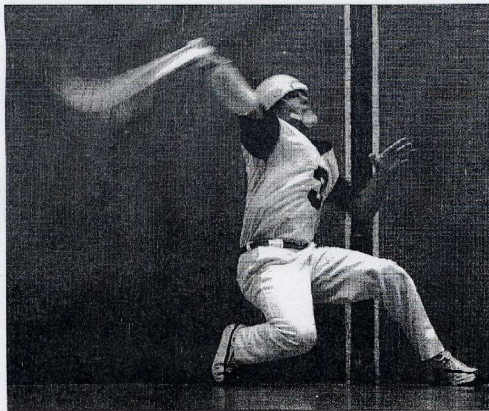
everything else. Right now, one can only wonder how much better can this kid get, and will he soon be a real contender for Arriaga in singles action?

#27 Eibar left the Dania roster in December to prepare for Orlando Jai-Alai's 2006 season. The veteran backman performed surprisingly well all summer long, earning himself quite a few late game starts during his six month Dania stint. At 38 years of age, his career is starting to wind down, but it's always great to watch a player who plays the game the way it was meant to be. Eibar used his experience to his advantage in many situations, and he will be missed in the Dania backcourt.

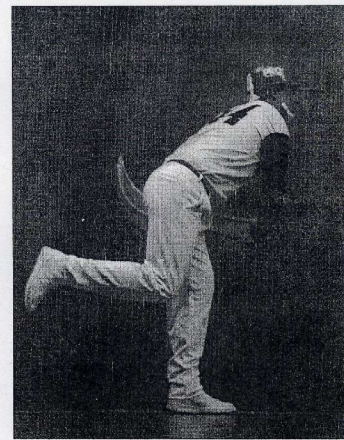
#54 Lecue made a run for the ages on Tuesday matinee, December 6<sup>th</sup>, winning 18 straight single points on his way to three consecutive runout victories. It all started in the 7<sup>th</sup> game, teamed with Eibar in post 6 when the duo took six straight points their first time up to win the game (the first 3 points were in the first round, while the second 3 double points were in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round, totaling the 9 points for the game).

In the afternoon's eighth game singles, out of post 3, Lecue took 7 straight points. In the ninth game he kept on rolling, this time teamed with Carvalho in post 8 to win 5 more points and make it 18 in a row. In the matinee's tenth game, Lecue filled in for the injured Urkidi to team with Leo in post 8, but the duo lost the point their first time on the court.

The most amazing thing about the run was that Lecue won two superfecta games in a row without losing a point, teamed with different backcourt partners. That's quite an accomplishment, but in the end Lecue finished one point off the modern day record of 19 points, set by Arriaga on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The only other player in modern Dania history to win at least 18 points in a row was Ochoa, who accomplished the feat on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2000.



Arrieta contorts his body to make the difficult rebote save.



#44 Azpiri watches the ball as he follows through on the forehand shot.