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Butler already getting '09 commitments

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By **BRANDON ZIMMERMAN**

Sun sports writer

Here's yet another indication that Amanda Butler is making strides to turn Florida's women's basketball program into a winner: Butler is already getting verbal commitments for the class of 2009.

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For the Gators women's hoops program, that is a true rarity.

Lily Svete, a versatile 6-foot-2 junior forward at Mishawaka Penn High School in Granger, Ind., has committed to play for Florida. Svete made her decision last weekend after her second visit to Gainesville. She chose Florida over in-state power Purdue, an NCAA Tournament Elite Eight team a year ago.

Svete said she chose Florida because, among other things, she is excited about the future of the program with Butler at the helm. She also respected the honest advice Butler told her.

"I talked to (Butler) and she said, 'Making a decision to come here is not a safe decision. But I think it's one worth making because you can be a part of making a tradition here'," Svete said. "That's something I want to be a part of."

Butler has already received two verbal commitments for the class of 2008 and has one scholarship remaining for that class. The Gators were in the running for Destini Hughes, the No. 2-ranked point guard in the country, but Hughes committed to LSU on Tuesday.

Gators catcher to seek transfer

Catcher Cody Neer has left the Florida baseball team and will seek a transfer, school officials confirmed this week.

Neer, an Orlando native, started 41 games for the Gators last season as a sophomore. He hit .271 with five home runs and 31 RBIs.

Neer's signature moment last season came when he blasted a three-run walk-off home run against South Carolina to lift the Gators to a 9-8 win.

With Neer gone, sophomore Hampton Tignor is expected to assume the Gators' catcher role this season. Tignor split time with Neer last season.

Tignor, whose is best known for his arm, hit .286 with no home runs and 11 RBIs and made 23 starts.

Soccer rises, volleyball maintains

The Gators soccer team returned to the top 25 this week, lading at No. 23 in the NSCAA top 25. The Gators (9-4-2, 6-1 SEC) are riding an impressive five-game win streak in which they are outscoring their opponents, 14-1.

Florida's volleyball team (18-1, 11-1) stayed at No. 10 for the second straight week in Monday's AVCA top 25.

Bowers benefits from more swings

Junior volleyball middle blocker Kelsey Bowers, of Gainesville High, was named the SEC's offensive player of the week Monday.

One reason is that Coach Mary Wise gave her more swings in wins at Auburn Friday and Georgia Sunday. Bowers exploded for career-highs 17 kills Friday and nine Sunday.

"If she were a basketball player who's best skills were scoring in the paint, we are now giving her the ball in the paint," Wise said. "Kelsey is best off one foot behind the setter. She has a fast arm and we can set that ball as fast as anybody in the country. You've got to wonder about the coach and why she waited so long to do it."

Tobias named Swimmer of the week

Junior Tobias Work was named the SEC Male Swimmer of the Week Tuesday. Work finished Florida's dual-meet with Michigan with top five finishes in all five events swam. Work also posted first-place finishes in the 400 freestyle and the 1,500 freestyle.

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