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Tampa Bay's

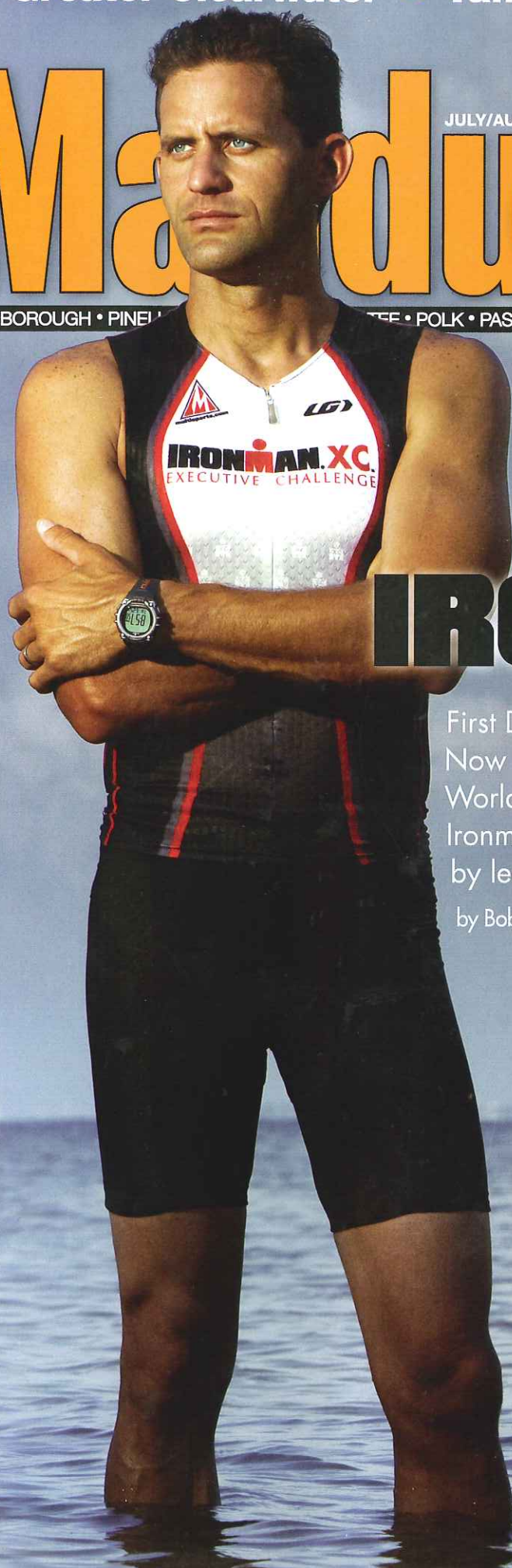
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IRONMAN®

First Dr. James Gills made it viable. Now CEO Ben Fertic is at the wheel of World Triathlon Corporation, growing Ironman and its sister brands by leaps and bounds.

by Bob Andelman

Monster Media



Cash for Vacant Storefronts

Orlando-based Monster Media has an innovative way to bring in some cash for landlords of vacant properties. The company sells vacant storefronts as street level advertising space, with interactive displays.

Last year, for example, an Ybor City storefront was transformed into a moving display for the Red Bull Flugtag Tampa Bay, a competition of human-powered flying machines. Projectors inside the vacant space showed moving images on customized window film and touted the Red Bull energy drink. The projection sits idle until someone walks by.

"It's a unique way to drive money back into the landlord's pockets," says John Payne, company president.

The amount of money a landlord can make varies widely, depending on the space, the client and the display itself. Besides extra cash, Payne says, some landlords end up with something even better – a lease.

"It drives people to look who wouldn't normally. That's one benefit. And, it takes away another big 'for rent' sign."

Payne says the company (www.monstermedia.net) recently created street level aquariums for Carnival Cruise Lines, where consumers could generate and interact with their own customized fish via texting.

"It's all done in-house, with our own technology," Payne says.

Bank CEO Sees the Future

Get ready, everybody. The recession will end on April 5, 2010.

At least, that's the way David Dunbar, Chairman and CEO of Synovus Bank in St. Petersburg sees it. What's so special about that date, you ask? Dunbar writes that on that Monday morning, "economists, industry analysts, academics, and government experts will get their first look at economic data for the first quarter of 2010."

They'll have the chance to compare those stats with Q4-2009 numbers, and see a positive improvement in unemployment, GDP, housing starts, retail sales growth, trade, etc., Dunbar predicts. It will all be enough to declare that the recession is over, although he says it won't be "roaring back to the rock 'n roll days of irrational exuberance that started this mess."

So is he psychic, super confident or just a full-blown optimist?

"Just confident," Dunbar says. "I do have an optimistic personality, and I believe the data will bear it out."



It's Now Hip to Be Poor?

Each year the International Council of Shopping Centers hosts an annual convention. This year William Henry, Ph.D., a real estate development consultant and president of Tampa's RGA Group, an architecture and construction management firm, attended the Las Vegas event and came back with some interesting anecdotes. It's no secret that the retail sector of the economy is distressed. But to enliven the conference, Henry says, several retailers gave substance to the phrase "green sprouts are pushing through the scorched landscape." They include:

- Dollar General – It and similar stores are thriving, since they offer the "necessities of life" at low costs.

Imagemakers :: Cyber Spy

Earlier this year the Central West Coast Chapter of the Florida Public Relations Association held a conference titled "Tell Me, Show Me, Teach Me: Hands-on Marketing Tools for the Frugal Communicator." Alex de Carvalho, co-founder of StartPR of Miami, was the keynote speaker at the Sarasota event.

The take-away from the conference: Monitor your company in cyberspace.

A great example, de Carvalho says, is how Domino's Pizza employees created a video of themselves tampering with take-out food and posted the video on YouTube. The piece rapidly went viral, and nearly destroyed a 50-year



reputation. Domino's responded aggressively and the employees were fired and charged, but the nightmarish example of trial by social networking proves every business should be alert to its online reputation.

How do you monitor what's being said?

Companies can protect themselves, de Carvalho says, by tracking with key words, creating social media policies for employees, and most importantly, creating their own blogs, Twitter accounts or web sites that invite consumer feedback.

"Whether you like it or not, social media is in your marketing mix," says de Carvalho (alexdc.org).