



# The Buoniconti Group

## MARC A. BUONICONTI FOUNDING PARTNER

If courage is grace under fire, Marc Buoniconti ranks among the bravest men you'll ever know. A 1985 spinal cord injury left him unable to move a muscle below his neck. Yet, each day he moves people; moves them to understand the tragedy of paralyzing SCI – and to join him in finding its cure. The son of legendary All-Pro and Hall of Famer linebacker and former Miami Dolphin Nick Buoniconti serves as President for both, The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis and The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis, The Miami Project's fundraising arm.

Born September 29, 1966, in Boston, Massachusetts, Marc moved to Miami with his family when the Boston Patriots traded Nick to the Miami Dolphins in 1969. Two Super Bowl victories and increasing fame never stopped Marc's parents, Nick and Terry Buoniconti, from providing their kids with an All-American family life. The athletic Marc excelled in sports, but football remained his first love. His prowess merited a full scholarship to The Citadel, South Carolina's premiere military institution.

The 220-lb., 19-year-old sophomore earned a starting position on the football team. Marc was doing what he loved best when tragedy struck. On October 26, 1985, in a play against East Tennessee State, Marc Buoniconti sustained a spinal cord injury (SCI). In that second, he joined millions worldwide who know the devastation of SCI. Life changed dramatically for Marc, his family, and for a fledgling neuroscience research effort at the University of Miami that the world would soon know as The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis.

Marc had suffered a dislocation of the C-3, 4 vertebrae, and a severe spinal cord injury that would leave him paralyzed from the shoulders down. He faced a long, agonizing recovery, with no hope of walking again. Medical wisdom taught that damage to the spinal cord was irreversible and irreparable. For Marc, "rehabilitation" meant learning to breathe without a ventilator, and mastering the breath-controlled wheelchair that would provide his only mobility.

Marc began the painful journey to a new life under the care of neurosurgeon Dr. Barth A. Green, who along with the Buonicontis, co-founded The Miami Project to answer the dire need for research into the mysteries of spinal cord injury. As Marc struggled to free himself from the ventilator, he committed his energy to raising the funds for The Miami Project's revolutionary strategy: to gather in one institution the finest minds in neuroscience and launch an all-out assault on SCI. With the completion of the new Lois Pope Life Center in October of 2000, The Miami Project was finally housed under one roof, and has unified the efforts of The Project, promoting the collaboration between the scientific and the clinical approaches to finding a cure for paralysis.

The indomitable spirit that brought Marc through months of grueling rehab led to further achievements. He returned full-time to the University of Miami, making the Dean's List and graduating in 1993, with a degree in psychology. Marc became Ambassador for The Miami Project and now serves as president, undertaking a vigorous campaign to let the world know that paralysis does not have to be forever. The message – that powerful new scientific tools can unlock the secrets of spinal cord repair and regeneration – has touched millions of paralyzed persons around the world. Marc has served on several local, state and federal committees, given hundreds of interviews, spoken at countless public appearances, and inspired millions with his courage.

"One day I was a normal kid – thinking about school, sports, and girls," muses Marc. "The next thing you know, I'm out there talking to people about paralysis. My goal is to get everyone out of these wheelchairs." To reach that goal, the Buonicontis formed The Buoniconti Fund, and have been the catalyst in raising over \$200 million for Miami Project research through special events; cause related marketing initiatives and the development and management of a nationwide network of volunteer Chapters.

Says Marc: "I truly believe in my heart that The Miami Project holds tremendous promise for people who are spinal cord injured. In 1985, The Miami Project was a dream. Today, it's reality."

## PAST AND PRESENT AFFILIATIONS

President, The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis

University of Miami School of Medicine

President, The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis

Member of the Board of Trustees, University of Miami

Director, Gloria Estefan Foundation

Director, Points of Light Foundation

Director, National Institute of Health

National Advisory Board of the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research

Federal HUD Committee for the Disabled

Appointed by Jack Kemp, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, 1988

Director, Florida Head and Spinal Cord Injury Council, 1988 to 1990

Honorary Member, Orange Bowl Committee

Active member, Rotary Club of Coral Gables

Chairman, Citizens Independent Transportation Trust, Miami Dade County

## SELECTED AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Honorary Doctor of Public Service – The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, 2010

Recognized as a “Governor’s Point of Light” by Florida Governor Charlie Crist for his services on the Governor’s Commission on Disabilities, January 2010

Laudare Medal, Barry University, 2010

Cover Story “The Rehabilitation of Marc Buoniconti” Sports Illustrated, August 2009

Spinal Cord Injury Hall of Fame, National Spinal Cord Injury Association, 2008

Commencement Speaker, University of Miami, 2007

Spirit Award, ESPN, 2007

Volunteer of the Year Award, The American Lung Association of South Florida, 2004

Henry K. Stanford Award, University of Miami alumnus of the year, 2000

Twelve Good Men Award, Ronald McDonald House, 2000

Paul Harris Fellow Award, Rotary Club International, 1999

Alumnus of the Year Award, University of Miami School of Arts and Sciences, 1998

Featured on "Wheaties" Commemorative Cereal Box, Breakfast of Champions Series, 1998

Florida Healthcare Communicator Award, Florida Hospital Association/FSHPRM, 1996

Up & Comer Award, Price Waterhouse and South Florida Business Journal, 1995

Gene Autry Award for Courage, 1995

Inductee, Good Shepherd Hall of Fame, 1995

"Maxwell House Real Hero" Award, Maxwell House, 1993

"TOYA" Award for Outstanding Young Americans, U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce, 1993

Founder, University of Miami (youngest on record)

Iron Arrow Award, University of Miami (highest award bestowed)

The Jefferson Award for Greatest Public Service by an Individual,  
Thirty-Five Years or Under by the American Institute of Public Service