Diver Dissed

Olympian is a lightning rod for loathing

May 1, 1997 By Walter Armstrong and Ronnilyn Pustil

More nasty news from the Sunshine State: A state senator whining about morality demanded that the University of South Florida cancel a speech by Olympian Greg Louganis. John Grant, a Tampa Republican, threatened to oppose future spending increases for state universities if money went to the four-time gold medal winner. Louganis, who is openly gay and HIV positive, was paid $14,000 from an annual student-activity fee to speak in a gay-awareness lecture series. “It represents moral decadence and is an embarassment,” Grant wrote to the university president, referring to Louganis as a "former Olympic gay *swimmer.*" He also slammed the school for invited Louganis “to promote homosexuality.”

After a media uproar, Grant complained he was misunderstood. It’s not about Louganis’ campus gig, he said, it’s the fee to get him there. Yet Leonard Nimoy is also lecturing--and everyone’s favorite Vulcan is raking in $25,000.

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