

Gulf Coast Digital

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THE BUZZ: Hyde Park climbs off the mat

Those in the local venture finance community who snickered when **Hyde Park Capital** scuttled its plan to launch a venture fund might be wiping the smirks of their faces.

Hyde Park was formed around the core of the Rolodexes of two Johns – **John McDonald** and **John Hill**. The ex-**Ray James** investment bankers who decamped Carillon Park for downtown Tampa early last year are on a fast-track to becoming local funding heroes.

By the end of the year, the Hyde Park merchant bankers will have brought more venture investment to the Gulf Coast than any other player.

In June, they helped close a \$14 million deal for Bradenton's **Decision Management International**. Founder and CEO **Steve Hann** can't praise them enough. He told the Buzz the Johns took the VC's down to the mat in a steel cage match over the term sheet, risking "a seven figure" commission in the process.

St. Pete's **In.vision Research**, which counts national intelligence agencies among its clients, is said to be signing the papers now for a substantial equity investment. Hyde Park represents them, according to sources close to both firms.

And Florida Entrepreneur of the Year, **Ami Utji**, has signed up with the merchant bankers after more than a year of grappling with venture capitalists who want a piece of **Pilgrim Software** in exchange for the cash she needs to expand internationally. A VC deal reportedly will be inked this fall, timed to with an announcement that Pilgrim's quality control software will be used by, "a major aerospace manufacturer."

Utji can't say the name, but we can: **Boeing**.

When the scorecards are added up on New Year's Eve, look for Hyde Park to have been behind more than \$30 million in capital brought to the Gulf Coast. Not a bad recovery for two guys whose dream was punctured when the tech market went south last year.