

Terps lose Smith, will still be an ACC force

Four returning starters will make Maryland an ACC favorite despite losing NBA's top pick



Courtesy of Maryland Sports Information

In his six years as Head Coach, Gary Williams has brought Maryland back into the limelight.

By MARK RABUANO
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REPORTER

There are quite a few fans who, for good reason, believe that the Maryland Terrapins (26-8 in 1994-95) will be in for a great letdown now that star Joe Smith has darted for the NBA.

The fact is that his veteran teammates may be so talented that he will not be missed.

Maryland, which is ranked No. 19 in this year's pre-season poll, has advanced to the Sweet 16 in the NCAA Tournament for the past two years, and four of their five starters from last year's team return.

Head Coach Gary Williams returns Johnny Rhodes, Duane Simpkins, Keith Booth and Exree Hipp.

The one new starter is Mario Lucas, who was the best sixth man in the ACC last year.

The 6-8 senior averaged 15 minutes per game, with seven points and three rebounds.

He is expected to reach double-digits often, but nothing like Smith.

His one shortcoming is his free-throw shooting. He only shot 57 percent last year.

Rhodes is Maryland's all-talented player. He will score, pass and defend the opponent's backcourt. He led the conference with 85 steals last year.

Rhodes is a very consistent player on the offensive end,

except from behind the three-point arc.

Simpkins will fill the point guard position on the team. He excels from the floor, the free-throw line and in assists.

Booth, a 6-5 power forward, is undersized for the position. He is very strong bringing down rebounds but has trouble in scoring more than six feet from the basket.

Last year he had 102 turnovers, a number he must lower substantially this year if he wants to have a great impact.

Hipp is the most consistent player on the team and the most durable. He is very strong and fast on his feet and will always have an effect the Terrapins' play.

The team's new sixth man is Rodney Elliot. His size and flexibility will translate to more minutes this year.

The recruiting class produced no new Joe Smiths, but it does give the Terps some solid players. Obinna Ekezie has played the game for only three years, playing in Nigeria.

With his size, 6-9 and 250 pounds, he will get a lot of playing time and experience.

The non-conference schedule is a challenging one. They open the season with Kentucky in the Tipoff Classic and play Massachusetts and UCLA in the following three weeks.

This team has good talent and great experience. With this, the team could go further in the NCAA Tournament than last year.



Head Coach: Gary Williams
Record at Maryland: 105-77
Overall Record: 312-205
1994-95 Record: 26-8 (12-4, tied for 1st ACC)

Fuller, Benjamin lead talent thin N.C. State team

By JASON McENANEY
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

N.C. State Head Coach Les Robinson leads his Wolfpack into the 1995-96 season coming off a 12-15 overall record last year. The Wolfpack finished eighth in the ACC, going 4-12 in conference play.

The consensus is that it is imperative that senior center Todd Fuller and sophomore point guard Ishua Benjamin emerge as dominant role players and productive scorers if the Pack has any chance to climb back into contention in the ACC.

Robinson hopes that with Benjamin, a member of the ACC All-Freshman team, and Fuller, a likely candidate for first-team All-ACC honors in 1995-96, the Wolfpack program will regain the respect it once demanded from its opponents. Junior swingman Jeremy Hyatt, senior forward Marcus Wilson and junior college transfer Danny Strong are the likely trio to round out the Pack's starting five.

The lack of a dominant forward could present major problems for the Pack, who are likely to concentrate on the perimeter game of Hyatt and Benjamin. However, Benjamin's promising 14.0 scoring average and consistent 4.6 assists per game in 1995 provide a solid foundation for Robinson to build upon by adding in a combination of Hyatt's shooting and the possibility of some offensive production from Marcus Wilson.

Spreading the floor and getting the ball to Fuller will be the responsibility of the talented and aggressive tandem of Benjamin and Hyatt. This year, Hyatt is expected to emerge from his traditional role of small forward/defensive specialist and looks to

be a fine complement to the consistent Benjamin.

Robinson believes that Fuller's strong offensive game will allow him to prove once again that he has superstar potential. Some publications have listed him as high as the eighth-best center in college basketball.

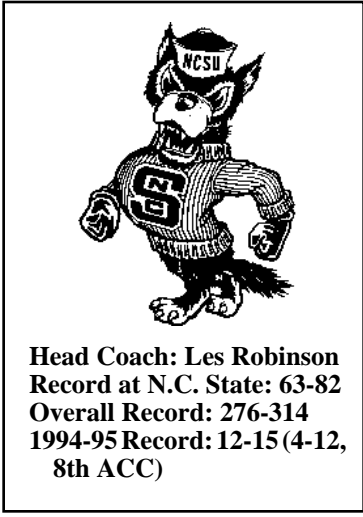
In his junior season in 1994-95, Fuller led the Pack in scoring (16.5), rebounding (8.4), blocked shots (45), field goal percentage (51.9) and free throw percentage (84.1). He is expected to have improved to an even greater degree this off-season and is likely to repeat as an All-ACC performer. He also has the potential to achieve All-American honors. Although Robinson classifies Fuller as "a quiet leader," he will look for him to be an outstanding leader by example.

Whether or not the potential for consistent offensive contributions by both Fuller and Benjamin is realized will be the major factor in determining if the Wolfpack will continue its slow climb back into contention in the ACC.

The counterpoint that has been argued by many from N.C. State is that the improvement and the tremendous strides the Pack has made in the past few years have been overshadowed by the tal-

ent-rich ACC.

Robinson's optimism forces him to say that if the productivity of Fuller, Benjamin and a solid supporting cast is consistent, the Pack may even contend for an ACC title this year. However, a championship is not the likely outcome for a team that focuses on the offensive prowess of so few of its potential contributors, especially in the ACC.



Head Coach: Les Robinson
Record at N.C. State: 63-82
Overall Record: 276-314
1994-95 Record: 12-15 (4-12, 8th ACC)



Courtesy of N.C. State Sports Information

Senior Todd Fuller is arguably the only center in the conference who could stop Tim Duncan in the paint.

Maturing FSU squad will rebound from Sura loss

By ROBERT NEELY
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REPORTER

The Florida State Seminoles have the ACC's leading returning scorer to headline one of the most talented squads in the conference.

The question is whether Head Coach Pat Kennedy can improve on last year's 12-15 record and find a go-to guy to replace NBA first-round draft pick Bob Sura.

James Collins will be the thoroughbred in Florida State's up-tempo attack. Collins earned third-team All-Conference honors last season after averaging 18 points a game. The 6-4 shooting guard was the only player in the ACC to score in double figures in every game last season, and should be the focus of an explosive Seminole attack.

Collins will be joined in the backcourt by one of three point guards. Senior Scott Shepherd is a solid player who lends experience to a generally young Seminole team.

LaMarr Greer started 24 games at point last year as a freshman, and should again be the starter. The former McDonald's High School All-American averaged 5.6 points and 3.0 assists in last year's campaign.

Avery Curry also will battle for time at the point guard spot after playing 15 minutes per contest last season.

Also in the backcourt for Kennedy are Geoff Brower, a redshirt freshman, and

Kelvin McClendon, a junior-college transfer who averaged 25 points per game last year for Palm Beach Community College.

The Seminoles' front-court revolves around sophomore center Corey Louis, who finished in the top-10 in the ACC in six statistical categories last season. Louis averaged 10.9 points, 7.8 rebounds and 2.7 blocks to earn a place on the ACC All-Freshman team.

Kirk Luchman also returns for the Seminoles. The sturdy, 6-10 forward averaged 3.5 points and 3.2 rebounds last season. His presence allows the Seminoles to supplement the wiry Louis inside.

Tim Wooden, a senior, will compete for time with freshman Randell Jackson, a McDonald's All-American last season, and sophomore Gentry Sparks, who played last season at Barton Community College.

The Seminoles have a wealth of talent that may be comparable to their team that entered the ACC in 1993 with four future NBA first-round draft picks in Doug Edwards, Sam Cassell, Charlie Ward and Sura.

But the ability of Kennedy to use his talent effectively has not been present the past two seasons, and that is the main question this season. With a non-conference schedule that includes Tulane, DePaul, Connecticut and Florida in consecutive December games, the Seminoles will have to gel early to have a chance at a post-season berth.



Head Coach: Pat Kennedy
Record at FSU: 169-105
Overall Record: 293-165
1994-95 Record: 12-15 (5-11, tied for 6th ACC)

Rebuilding Tigers look to improve with freshmen

By ROBERT NEELY
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REPORTER

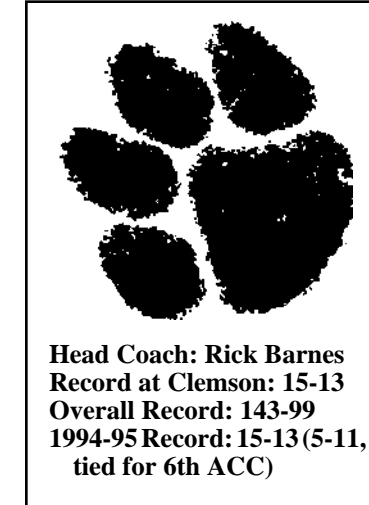
Rick Barnes had three outstanding accomplishments in his first year as head coach at Clemson.

He started the season with a school-record 10 consecutive wins, including a win at Duke, while reaching 18th in the Associated Press poll. All this was accomplished despite the Tigers starting no one taller than 6-7.

He signed seven players, including four that were ranked in the top 100 nationally, for one of the strongest recruiting classes in the country.

He took on North Carolina Head Coach Dean Smith — and lived. Smith and Barnes got into a shouting match during the ACC Tournament after Smith yelled at a Tiger player. Smith later apologized.

Now that Barnes has proven he is not scared of anyone in the conference, it is time for him to put fear into the hearts of



Head Coach: Rick Barnes
Record at Clemson: 15-13
Overall Record: 143-99
1994-95 Record: 15-13 (5-11, tied for 6th ACC)

other ACC teams.

The Clemson Tigers return three starters, including ACC Freshman of the Year Greg Buckner. The 6-4 forward had an outstanding freshman campaign, leading the Tigers with 12.0 points and 5.9 rebounds per game.

Buckner would have been joined up front by Iker Iturbe, the Spaniard who started at center for the Tigers last year. But Iturbe is out for the year, forcing the Tigers to play with freshmen in the front court.

Six of Barnes' seven recruits will play up front. Tom Wideman, named a high school All-American by *College Sports*, is the biggest of the group at 6-10.

Freshmen Patrick Garner, 6-9, and Harold Jamison, 6-8, are players who chose to stay in-state to play for the Tigers. Both participated in the Converse All-America game.

High school teammates Tony Christie and Andrius Jurkunas are ranked as top-100 recruits by analyst Bob Gibbons.

Ledarion Jones, the other recruit in the frontcourt, was the 4-A player of the year in Florida.

The Tiger backcourt is keyed by junior point guard Merl Code, who led the team in assists and steals last year while averaging 11.8 points a game.

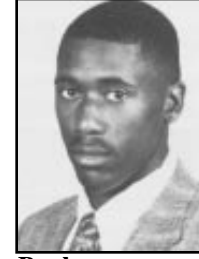
Bill Harder, former Southern Conference Player of the Year at Furman, also returns to help the Tigers run the perimeter.

Danny Johnson and freshman Terrell McIntyre, 5-8, fill out the Tiger backcourt.

The Tigers face a tougher non-conference schedule this season, including matchups against Minnesota and Miami.

But with significant increases in talent and a head coach who will not be frightened by anything, the prospects for the Tigers are as bright as they have been since the Dale Davis-Elden Campbell era that saw a regular season ACC Championship and a trip to the Sweet 16.

Barnes has Clemson ready to play the role that Providence played in the Big East under Barnes: a well-disciplined, well-coached team that no one looks forward to playing.



Buckner

AP Preseason Top 25

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|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Kentucky | 14. Missouri |
| 2. Kansas | 15. Maryland |
| 3. Villanova | 16. Arkansas |
| 4. UCLA | 17. Michigan |
| 5. Georgetown | 18. Stanford |
| 6. Connecticut | 19. Virginia |
| 7. Massachusetts | 20. North Carolina |
| 8. Iowa | 21. Cincinnati |
| 9. Mississippi State | 22. Virginia Tech |
| 10. Utah | 23. Indiana |
| 11. Wake Forest | 24. Purdue |
| 12. Louisville | 25. California |
| 13. Memphis | |



Courtesy of Florida State Sports Information

The Seminoles hope that Kirk Luchman will be a force at center this year.