

Loss of Marbury puts pressure on Tech frontcourt, Harpring

By ADAM ROTHSCHILD
SPORTS COPY EDITOR

No matter how well Georgia Tech plays this season, there is one question that everyone will ask. How good could they have been if ... ? The Yellow Jacket who will be scrutinized more than any other does not even play for them anymore. Instead, Stephen Marbury, last year's ACC Rookie of the Year, a first-team All-ACC selection and the Tech leading scorer, passed up his final three years of eligibility and is now running the Minnesota Timberwolves' offense. And, as if that were not enough, the Yellow Jackets lost Marbury's backcourt mate, Drew Barry, to graduation. Barry's leadership, toughness and 13.3 points per outing will also be missed. Together, Barry and Marbury accounted for 65 percent of Tech's offense.

Not surprisingly, the Yellow Jackets' strength this season will be found in their frontcourt, which returns all three starters from last year's 24-12 squad. Foremost among the frontcourters is junior forward Matt Harpring.

Harpring was perhaps the ACC's surprise star of last season. He averaged 18.6 points per game and led the Jackets with a 42.9 percent three-point percentage.

Harpring was the only player in the league to be among the ACC's top 10 in scoring, rebounding, field goal percentage, free throw percentage, three-point percentage and steals. Appropriately, Harpring was named first-team All-ACC and was a member of the ACC All-Tournament Team.

"Harpring is unbelievable," Georgia Tech Head Coach Bobby Cremins said. "You hardly ever notice Harpring until after the game, and then you see the stat sheet. He deserves everything he gets."

The other starting forward is Michael Maddox, a 6-8 junior who can bang around inside or drain the three pointer.

He averaged 9.2 points per game last year and came up big in the ACC Tournament, where he hit eight-of-12 treys and averaged 21.3 points per game.

Senior Eddie Elisma is the starting center. "Eddie Electric" had a reputation as a bit of an underachiever early in his career, but came alive last season, setting a school record with a 63.9 percent field goal percentage, increasing his scoring and rebounding, and blocking 65 shots.

"Eddie Elisma's a great story," Cremins said. "Eddie was one of the most improved players in the country last year."

The backcourt, however, already depleted by the departure of Marbury and Barry, will be further weakened by the news that sophomore Gary Saunders, projected as a starter, is academically ineligible and will miss at least the fall semester, and perhaps the entire season.

"That leaves us thin," Cremins said. "Two freshmen will start and two will come off the bench."

Freshman Kevin Morris will start at the point for Cremins's club. Morris, like Marbury, was the New York City Public School Athletic League Player of the Year, and is one of the top five freshman point guards in the country.

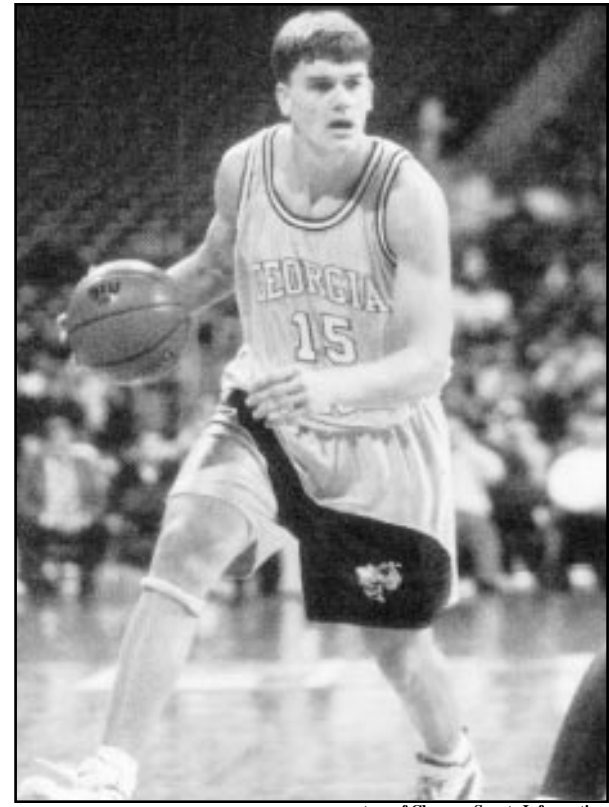
The other starter in the backcourt will probably be freshman Jason Floyd. A 6-6 swingman, Floyd has marksmanship skills from the outside and can also rebound well for a guard.

With the exceptional veteran frontcourt and the thin, young guards, this should be an intriguing year in Atlanta. Another No. 1 seed in the ACC Tournament is unlikely, but, if the freshmen come through, an NCAA at-large berth is not out of the question.


The Yellow Jackets were picked to finish sixth in the conference, according to the ACC Operation Basketball media poll.

"We were hoping to be a little deeper this year," Cremins said. "We're dealing with seven scholarship players right now."

Further complicating the Yellow Jackets' chances is another ambitious slate of opponents, which, along with their ACC foes, will include dates with defending national champion Kentucky, Georgia, Temple and Louisville.



Junior forward Matt Harpring will return as a team leader for Georgia Tech.



Head Coach: Bobby Cremins
Record at Georgia Tech: 298-172
Overall Record: 398-242
1995-96 Record: 24-12 (13-3, 1st ACC)

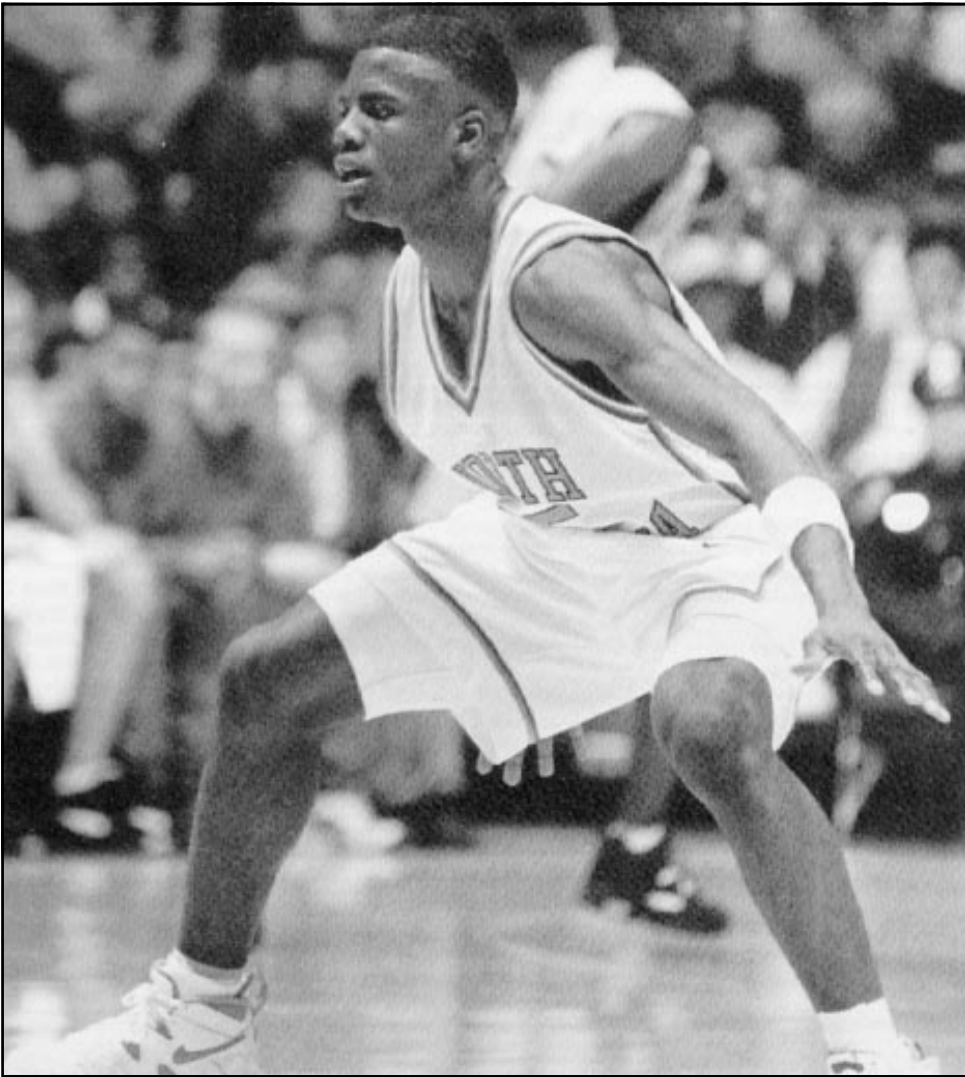
UNC young, but still a strong force

By KAREN HILLENBRAND
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Every year Head Coach Dean Smith says that North Carolina will not be very good. Every year, he is wrong. Despite having a long list of star players who have left school early for the NBA, Smith's team always finds a way to finish near the top of the ACC.

"I think we'll be competitive, but we won a lot of close games last year," Smith said. "Next year we'll be good-if everybody stays."

In the last two years, if all the players who



Junior Shammond Williams will have to step up in the backcourt to recover after the loss of Jeff McInnis to the NBA.

7.5 points per game.

Sophomores Antawn Jamison and Ademola Okulaja join Carter as the most experienced players at forward. Jamison was a first-team All-ACC player last year, one of only five freshmen in league history to do so. He averaged 15.1 points and 9.7 rebounds per game.

Okulaja added 6.2 points and 5.2 rebounds per contest last season.

In the middle, Carolina will rely on Zwikker, the lone scholarship senior on the team. Zwikker improved remarkably last season, averaging 9.5 points and 6.2 rebounds per game and blocking 49 shots on the season.

"I think he looks quicker to me. He looks stronger," Smith said.

Makhtar Ndiaye, a junior transfer from

Senegal who has made his way around the college circuit (starting as a Demon Deacon, then playing for Michigan, and now joining Carolina), will be another strong presence up front.

At center or forward, Ndiaye will be a strong defensive force after his redshirt season last year.

The Tar Heels were 21-11 overall and 10-6 in the league last year, and finished in third place. They advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Smith's squad has another young team with six newcomers and four true freshmen. They return their top four front court players, but the guard position remains a major question mark for the squad.

Florida State returns starters for second try

By VINTON BRUTON
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REPORTER

Disappointing. Underachievers. These two words pretty much sum up Florida State's basketball program over the past two seasons.

After breaking into the ACC with a pair of second-place finishes, Seminole Head Coach Pat Kennedy has seen his team plummet almost to the bottom of the conference standings.

A 9-2 start last season only raised false hopes among the Seminole faithful, who saw their team go 4-12 the balance of the season. The 'Noles limped to the finish with a 13-14 overall record, 5-11 in the ACC good for eighth place and an early exit in the play-in game of the ACC Tournament.

When Kennedy flirted with the head coaching job at St. John's during the off-season, more than a few Florida State fans would not have been sorry to see him go.

But hope springs eternal in Tallahassee. The team returns all five starters from a year ago, and Kennedy hauled in four heralded newcomers in a recruiting class that ranks among the top 15 in the nation.

Kennedy said, "I think the pressure we feel right now is a legitimate pressure."

No kidding, coach.

Senior guard James Collins poured in 18.3 points per game in 1995-96, but must share the ball if the Seminoles want to move into the league's upper echelon. The addition of junior college transfer Kerry Thompson, a 6-1 point guard, should provide the floor leadership the team missed last season.

"I think last year, our lead guard position really hurt us," Kennedy said. "It has become the one position you can't play without. We almost had to manufacture every bucket last year."

If Thompson can adjust to the rigors of ACC play, he will have plenty of talented players to whom he can distribute the ball. Sophomore forward Randell Jackson was

ranked among the top 10 high school prospects a year ago, and averaged 9.5 points and 5.3 rebounds last year. The 6-11 Jackson needs to add strength to his 215 pound frame to compete inside, but

his outstanding athletic ability should compensate for his thin frame.

6-9 junior Corey

Louis will look to bounce back from a disappointing sophomore season in which his scoring and rebounding averages dropped from his freshman output.

Louis chipped in 9.4 points and 6.5 rebounds, and blocked 43 shots in 1995-96, but is capable of putting up All-Conference numbers.

Senior center Kirk Luchman (9.2 points,

6.4 rebounds) brings a workman-like presence to this athletic frontcourt.

Two starting guards from last season will have to step up their games if they want to continue to see major minutes. Junior LaMarr Greer, 6-5, played point guard last year, and will have to make the transition to the wing, where he seems to be more comfortable anyway.


Sophomore Geoff Brower, 6-4, showed flashes last year, and should be able to find a niche as an outside shooting specialist.

The addition of four newcomers will make the Seminoles much deeper than last year's squad.

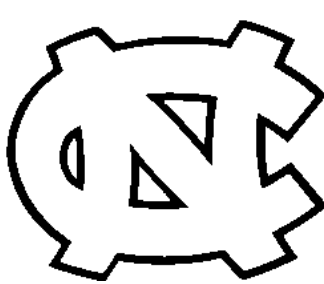
"We'll be pressing again," Kennedy said. "In our league, if the defense doesn't generate some offense for you, you're not going to win consistently."

Florida State should be able to avoid a repeat of last year's debacle on talent alone. If Kennedy can inspire his charges to play defense and get the ball down low to Jackson and Louis rather than settle for jump shots, Florida State may be able to push for fifth place in the ACC.

Keep in mind, though, those are some pretty big "ifs".



Head Coach: Pat Kennedy
Record at Florida State: 182-119
Overall Record: 306-179
1995-96 Record: 13-14, (5-11, 8th ACC)



Head Coach: Dean Smith
Record at UNC: 851-247
Overall Record: 851-247
1995-96: 21-11 (10-6, 3rd ACC)

went to the NBA had stayed with the Tar Heels, Smith would have a senior class of Jerry Stackhouse, Rasheed Wallace, Jeff McInnis and Serge Zwikker. Instead, Smith has just Zwikker.

The Heels are depleted in the backcourt with the loss of McInnis to the NBA as a junior and Dante Calabria to graduation. Junior Shammond Williams is the only experienced backcourt player for Carolina, averaging 8.3 points per game last season.

"I think Shammond is off to a good start," Smith said.

Smith will have to depend on several freshmen to fill the other spot at guard. Ed Cota, a 6-1 freshman from Brooklyn, N.Y. was a McDonald's All-American and should make an immediate impact. Terrence Newby, 6-2 from Siler City is the other freshman in the backcourt.

Sophomore Vince Carter can also be used at defensive guard, but spent most of his freshman season at small forward, averaging

Clemson looks to strength and depth for better finish in ACC

By PAUL GAETA
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Ask third-year Head Coach Rick Barnes of Clemson, and he will tell you his basketball team gets no respect. "People who said Clemson will never win in basket-

"Last year we tried to play a much higher tempo game. This year, the team has to be more positive and play with more intensity."

Rick Barnes
Clemson Head Coach

try to be the best we can be every night. We have a real smart and real good defensive basketball team."

Obviously, the greatest factor benefiting this year's team is its depth. Eight quality players all have legitimate chances at starting and will definitely see ample playing time each game.

"We could be a different team that starts a different lineup every game," Barnes explained.

One might think that with so much depth it would be tough to satisfy each player. Barnes, however, thinks this prediction is over-exaggerated.

"If you ask most of the players they'd say they like playing less because you are more productive in the time that you are out there," he said.

Leading the way for this year's team will be senior guard Merl Code. The 6-2 Code can light it

up from outside as he showed last year, as one of the team's field-goal leaders. The native of Greenville, S.C. who was the MVP of the team the last two years, will also be a strong contributor in rebounding, passing, and stealing the ball.

"He is, without question, the best pure shooting player on our team," Barnes said.

Helping Code in the backcourt will be senior guard Bill Harder, junior guard Danny Johnson, and sophomore Terrell McIntyre. The 6-0 Harder has been deemed

the biggest threat in back. He is a consistent shooter from outside who can hit the three. He also was among the team leaders in assists last year.

Johnson, a native of Morganton, played in every game last year, starting in most. The Tigers look to the 6-3 player for ball-handling, assists, and hitting the trey.

"Danny Johnson is one of our best ball handlers," Barnes said. "He gives us another guard who can break a press, and press defensively."

The 5-9 McIntyre is another one of the Tigers' many reliable guards. The native of Raeford is quick and plays strong defense.

"He will cause some problems for the opposition with pressure defense. He is a left-hander who is a scorer and he can leap also," Barnes said.


As talented as the Tigers are in the backcourt, their frontcourt will present much more of a challenge for opposing teams this year. Leading the way for the team will be juniors Greg Buckner and Iker Iturbe and sophomores Tony Christie and Harold

Jamison. Buckner, a 6-4 forward from Kentucky, was named the ACC Rookie of the Year and has played only better since. He is a force in the paint who can rebound furiously.

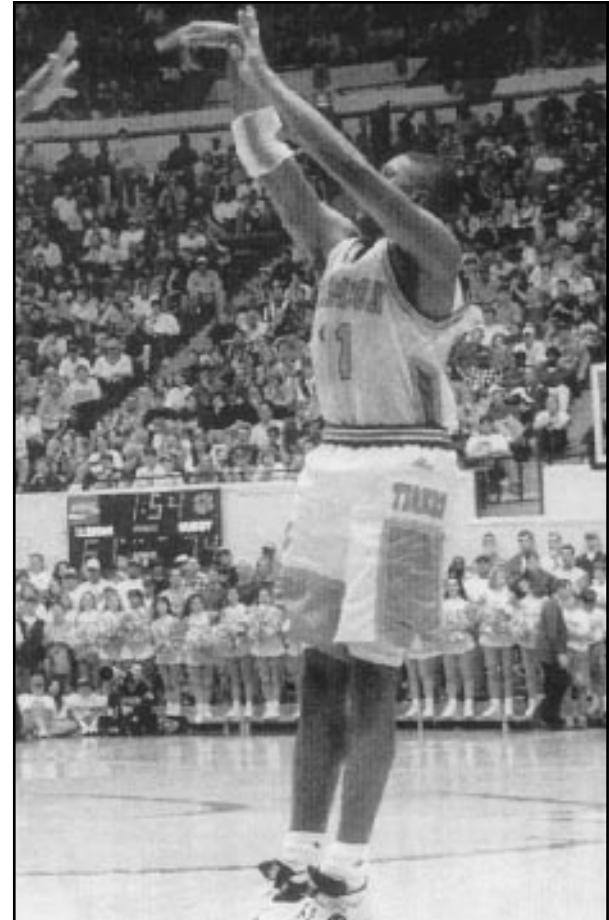
"He will be a marked man in opponent scouting reports," Barnes said.

Iturbe, a 6-7 native of Minnesota, is a defensive force.

Anyone who under-estimated the Tigers program in the past had best watch out this season. The players from last year have returned, the chemistry is good, and the squad, as a whole, is hungry to earn some respect in the ACC.



Head Coach: Rick Barnes
Record at Clemson: 33-24
Overall Record: 161-110
1995-96 Record: 18-11 (7-9, 6th ACC)



Senior Merl Code was Clemson's MVP last season.