

New strength boosts Amonett's confidence

By David McGlinchey
Old Gold and Black Reporter

Joseph Amonett, a junior guard on the men's basketball team, is an oddity on this campus, and it's not just because he stands 6-5. No, Amonett is unusual because he does not seem overly concerned about his team's chances without last year's All-American center Tim Duncan.

"Obviously, anytime you lose one of the greatest players to play college basketball it's going to hurt you, but we're using it as a positive, not a negative," said Amonett, a product of Byrdstown, Tenn.

Amonett, who led the Volunteer State in scoring at 33.5 points per game his senior year, had only positive words to say about this year's team, one that returns only two starters and features six true freshmen.

"We're very young and anytime you move from high school to the ACC there has to be some adjustment, but the freshmen are a great group, one of the most talented and most athletic ever at Wake Forest," Amonett said.

While Amonett is quick to praise others, the fact still remains that he will be an integral piece of this year's team.

Last year, Amonett came out of nowhere

to be one of the biggest surprises on the Deacon team. When then-juniors Tony Rutland and Jerry Braswell struggled early on in the backcourt, Amonett stepped his game up, becoming a consistent ball handler and shooter for the Deacs.

This year, Amonett looks to further these skills and become even more of an important part to this team as the Deacs change to a more up-tempo style of play.

While the Deacs have 7-1 center sophomore Loren Woods filling the lane, there is a dearth of big men to back him up. Head Coach Dave Odom may be forced to go with a smaller lineup, of which Amonett would be a major part, in order to compete in the talent-rich ACC.

"Coach changes lineups a lot, but we're capable of beating the other ACC teams with any lineup," Amonett said.

Amonett's statistics soared from his freshman year to his sophomore campaign as his playing time increased. His field goal percentage jumped 21.7 percent to 36 percent, his three point field goal percentage rose 23.9 percent to 32.2 percent, and his free throw percentage climbed to 76.5 percent from 57.1 percent.

If he can come close this year to matching last year's improvement, then the Deacons

will have a star on their hands.

Amonett is working as hard as possible to make that happen.

"The day after Stanford last year we hit the weight room" said Amonett, referring to the Deacs' second-round loss in last year's NCAA tournament. "We worked hard to get in better shape and worked on shooting."

Focusing on improving himself as a player, Amonett worked on his strength all summer, which should help him deal with physical players on the defensive end. The hard work paid off as he put on 15 pounds of muscle to complement his deadly jumper. His bench press jumped from 220 pounds last season to an impressive 270 pounds this year.

All this preparation is paying off as the Deacs convincingly beat their two preseason opponents this year.

"In the first game we played well as a team and we executed well," said Amonett. "But (the game against Bulgaria) was a step back, we didn't play defense like we could."

"We were ranked between fourth and sixth in the ACC and I think that the conference has three teams in the top five. We have less experience but we are capable of winning in the ACC this year," he said.



Junior guard Joseph Amonett spots up from the top of the key for a jump shot with a defender in his face. Last season Amonett shot 32.2 percent from behind the arch, hitting 19 of 59.

Carlton Ward/
Old Gold and Black

Rutland is more than ready to assume leadership role

By Greg Wilson
Sports Copy Editor

As the second leading scorer and starting point guard last season, senior Tony Rutland was responsible for directing traffic on the court. However, he left the off-court leadership to All-American Tim Duncan. This year though, Rutland is looking to shoulder more of the load, both on and off the court.

"I think this year I need to be a leader and talk more," Rutland said. "I need to use my experience to help lead the younger guys."

His task will not be an easy one. Expectations are down for the Deacons and most publications have them finishing in the lower half of the ACC, certainly an unfamiliar position after the success of past years. Much of the reason for the lowered expectations is the slew of freshmen who will play significant roles on the team. Two of the newcomers are guards freshmen James Griffin and Robert O'Kelley. Rutland sees his role as instructor of

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Tony Rutland
Senior guard

the freshmen as a crucial one.

"They're young and they're going to make mistakes but hopefully they can grow from them," Rutland said.

"I hope I can teach them something about game situations and how to stay calm during a game."

Rutland, second in assists last season, will be dishing out passes on the break much more often this season.

With the addition of athletic freshmen to the team as well as the lack of experienced depth in the frontcourt, the Deacs are looking to run more this year.

"We're going to try to use our talents to our advantage this year,"



Carlton Ward/Old Gold and Black

Senior Tony Rutland will be looking to pass the ball much more this season as he steps in as the team's floor leader.

Rutland said. "We're going to try to push the ball up the court and play more of an up-tempo game."

However, the effectiveness of a fast-paced team is dependent on strong guard play.

Much of the criticism of last year's team was focused on the guards.

However, Rutland said he feels that his play will be improved over last season.

"I think that I'll be able to handle a lot of the pressure defenses teams show us," Rutland said.

"I need to take my time and make the correct decisions and try to calm our team down during game situations."

One advantage Rutland will have this season is his improved strength and mobility.

Last season, Rutland played with a cumbersome knee brace that limited his effectiveness.

However, this season Rutland is playing without the knee brace and in two preseason games looked to be quicker.

"My knee feels a lot better and

I'm much more confident with it," Rutland said. "It feels stronger, all I can do is go out and play hard and try to do well. My confidence is high for the season."

Rutland said he thinks that the team will grow as it plays games this season.

"As a team we're looking forward to the games," Rutland said. "We're anxious to get out on the court and get some playing time that will help our team grow and get better."

In addition, he feels that the lack of publicity the team has received from national publications will work to the advantage of the Deacons.

Without a marquee player like Duncan, and without a national ranking, he hopes many teams will perhaps overlook the Deacs.

"Some of the ACC teams will probably look over us with the rest of the strong teams in the conference," Rutland said. "We're going to be a sleeper team this year and try to surprise some teams and the media."

Jackets look for improvement

By David Williams
Contributing Reporter

Following one of the team's worst seasons in recent history, Georgia Tech Head Coach Bobby Cremins hopes that the combination of new players and a new system will be enough to return the Jackets to the top of the ACC.

Last season, the Jackets went 9-18 only one year after capturing the ACC regular season title. Their record was at least partly a result of a schedule rated as the toughest in the nation. Even so, the Jackets are making no excuses for their poor performance.

"The chemistry of the team was not very good last year, which I ultimately blame on myself and partially on (then-juniors) Matt Harpring and Mike Maddox," Cremins said.

Team chemistry will likely be one of the key elements if the Jackets are able to turn things around this season. Controversy centered on the backcourt for most of last season as two guards, freshman Kevin Morris and sophomore Gary Saunders, struggled both on and off the court. Both native New Yorkers have since departed and Cremins is starting with a clean slate in the backcourt.

While the team struggled to find chemistry, the offense sputtered. Besides forward Matt Harpring, the Jackets had little offensive fire power. Overall, the team hit less than 40 percent of their shots from the field.

So Cremins found himself with a myriad of problems after his squad was ousted in the play-in game of the ACC Tournament by N.C. State. Consequently, Cremins realized that both the team and himself needed radical makeovers.

"Last year's season dictates change and I hope to do it with a new system and for the players to do it with their personalities and attitudes," Cremins said.

There have been plenty of changes, but the Jackets will rely on seniors Harpring and Maddox to lead the team. Harpring returns for his final season after deciding that the NBA could wait one more year. Maddox, a 6-8 forward, has been Mr. In-



Photo courtesy of Georgia Tech Sports Info.

Senior Matt Harpring will be the leader of the Yellow Jackets this season.

consistency for the past three years. If Maddox can shed his tendency to disappear on the court, the Jackets should have a solid tandem down low in the front court.

"Chemistry comes from strong leadership so Matt and I really have to help the young guys," Maddox said. "We're really trying to be here for the freshmen when they have questions, lead by example, and do the right things at all times."

Joining Maddox and Harpring in the front court will be 6-10 sophomore center Pablo Machado. While the native Venezuelan was named Mr. Basketball in Georgia two years ago, Machado has been unable to live up to the promise of his prep years.

However, Machado should get plenty of playing time to prove himself. His backup will be freshman Alvin Jones (6-11, 220 pounds), a raw, athletic center who gives the Jackets a shot-blocking threat.

The frontcourt will likely be the strength of the team but the backcourt will determine the success of the team. With the departure of Morris and Saunders, Cremins brought in two of the top guards in high

school last season in the country.

Freshman shooting guard Dion Glover (6-5, 220) was rated as one of the top players in the nation as a high school senior last spring. Likely one of the biggest guards in Tech history, Glover provides a second option for the offense but he will have to develop a consistent outside shot.

Glover's backcourt mate will be freshman Travis Spivey (6-3, 190), whose size will eliminate some of the problems Morris experienced last season. Cremins is relying on Spivey to be a steady ball-handler and a tough defender. The reserves will be the guards, sophomore Jason Floyd and freshman T.J. Vines.

The odd man out this year may be sophomore forward/guard Jon Babul, who saw significant playing time last season. Currently, he is healing from a foot injury suffered over the summer, and Cremins has hinted that Babul may be redshirted.

The roster has been overhauled, and Cremins plans to do the same with the style of play. Last season, the offense was stagnant and centered on giving the ball to Harpring, who regularly fought double and triple teams.

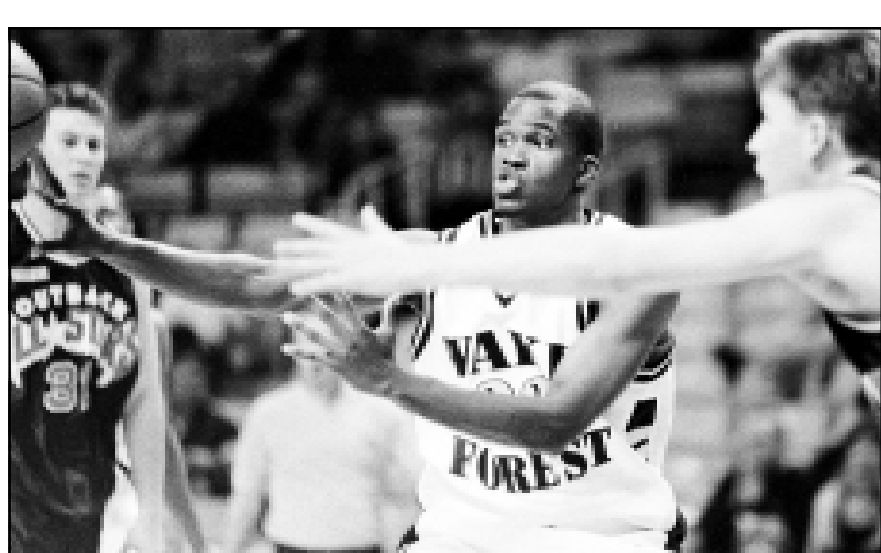
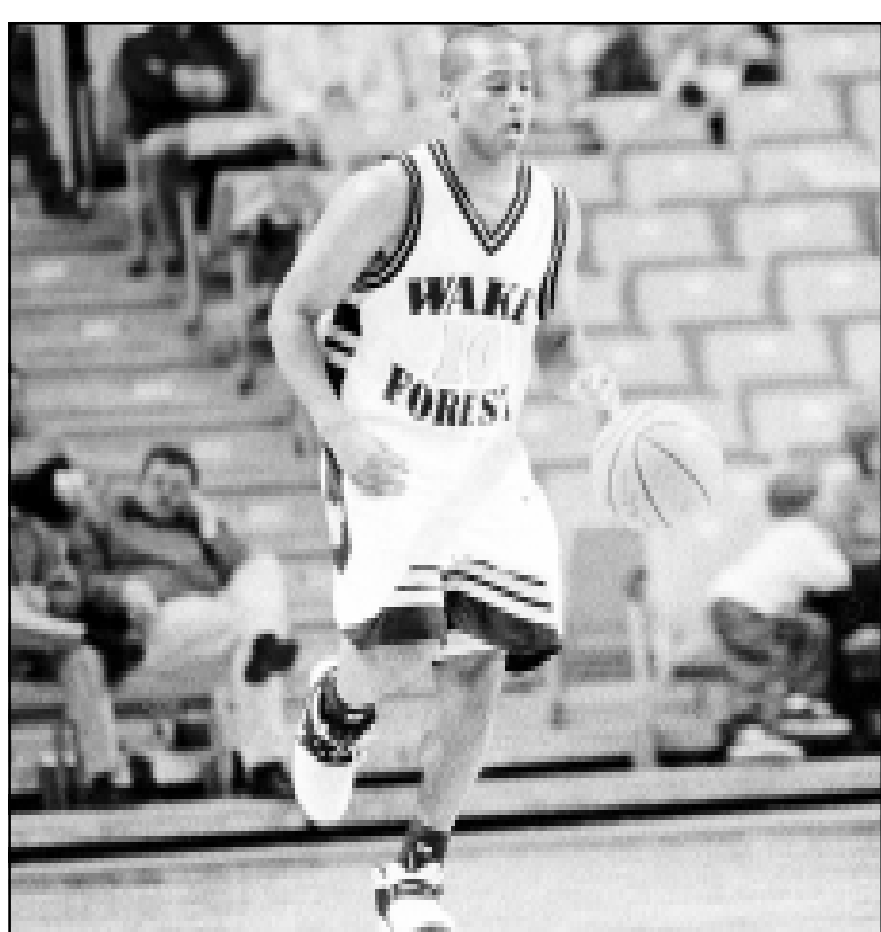
Cremins' new system means getting back to the traditional guard-oriented teams he has had in the past. Cremins looks to "gamble on defense," something he can afford to do, since "this is one of the deepest teams I've had in years."

This sentiment is echoed by Harpring. "We expect to do a lot more pressing this year and play up-tempo, meaning we could use eight or nine players," Harpring said.

Cremins' squad will not be tackling too many tough opponents early in the season. However, heavyweights like Kentucky (Dec. 13) and Louisville (Dec. 20) will provide early season tests.

This year's success will depend on how quickly the returning players gel with the new players and find that chemistry the team is concentrating on this year. While the team is unsure of what awaits them this season, they are sure they will not finish last in the ACC as many have predicted.

David Williams is a reporter for the Technician, the student newspaper of Georgia Tech.



Photos by Carlton Ward/Old Gold and Black

Put me in coach, I'm ready to play

Freshman Chuck Goodman (top) and sophomore Tim Fuller, both walk-ons to the Deacon basketball team, will fight for playing time all season and make contributions in practice every day that will go unnoticed by the fans at Joel Coliseum.