

# Three's a charm: freshmen aim to contribute

## Friends and teammates, Levy, Danelius and Downey help each other adjust to college

By Matt Gallagher  
Old Gold and Black Reporter

Different backgrounds. Different personalities. Different styles of game. And good friends.

The Demon Deacons' three true freshmen on the men's basketball team, Vytas Danelius, Taron Downey, and Jamaal Levy, all took different routes to Winston-Salem, but came here for the same dream: to play college basketball. And in the midst of their short collegiate careers, they have become "very good friends," said all three, echoing one another's words.

Danelius, originally from Kaunas, Lithuania, is a 6-foot-8, 228-pounder playing power forward with loads of untapped potential. He transferred for his senior year of high school to Park Tudor High School in Indianapolis, Ind. to adapt to the American game – and adapt he did. Danelius simply dominated, averaging 21.5 points, 13 rebounds, and 4.1 blocks per game.

One of the reasons Danelius chose to further his academic and athletic careers as a Demon Deacon was the presence of Darius Songalia, a fellow Lithuanian. Danelius, who speaks four languages, is still learning the more detailed facets of the English language, and at times, needs Songalia to translate the basketball terminology.

"I have to understand what I'm doing on the court ... If I don't, I'll be sitting on the bench," said Danelius. "College ball is physically and mentally harder than anything I've played before."

If first impressions mean anything, Danelius seems to be adapting and understanding everything he needs to know. In the Deacs' first exhibition game against the Nike Elite, Danelius spelled senior Antwan Scott at power forward throughout the game, and inspired the Deacon fans with his constant hustling.

Downey, a 6-foot-2, 171-pound point guard, hails from Oxford and averaged 17

points and five assists per game for Fork Union Military Academy in Chatham, Va., last year. Before transferring to the hyper-competitive Fork

Union, he scored 30.7 points per game for Oxford Webb High School in 1999-2000. Downey is an explosive scorer whose quickness allows for some truly amazing ball handling and passing displays.

Often the final player to come off of the practice court, Downey said that, in college basketball, "You have to work hard every day. There are no breaks." All that hard work seems to be paying off. Downey burst onto the college basketball scene with his performance at the Deacons' intrasquad scrimmage, held Oct. 27 in Reynolds Gymnasium. Downey erupted for 17 points, and was the only underclassmen among the leading scorers. Downey also showed flashes of brilliance during the game on the defensive end of the court. "I'm just looking forward to a fun year...there are going to be a lot of surprises," said Downey.

Levy is a 6-foot-9, 170-pound rail of athleticism. Originally hailing from Panama City, Panama, Levy moved to the United States before his junior year of high school. Levy starred for two years at Berkshire Academy in Homestead, Fla., averaging 15 points, 10 boards, and 2.5 blocked shots for a star-studded Berkshire squad. Levy will eventually develop into a power forward, but his playing time this year will come more at the small forward position, due to his agility and leanness.

During the exhibition game against Nike Elite, Levy was everywhere, using his long, slender arms to his advantage by playing smothering defense.

"College ball is way different (than high school). You have to train hard and run to get focused on your goals." Levy also makes it very clear on what he wants to accomplish during his time with the Demon Deacons. "In four years, I want to be recognized as one of the best teams in the country. I also want to get my degree ... that's very important to me."

Originally recruited by former Head Coach Dave Odom, Danelius, Downey, and Levy all decided to stay and help usher in the Skip Prosser era. Danelius originally withdrew his verbal commitment when Odom left to coach the University of South Carolina, but eventually signed a letter of intent.

Downey waited to see whom the new coach would be before any decision would be made. "If I liked the new coach, I would stay," said Downey. The

switchover from Odom to Prosser didn't impact Levy at all. "I was sure I wanted to play at Wake Forest," he said.

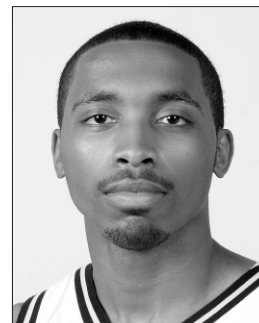
In addition to being teammates, the three freshmen have also become great friends off the court. Levy and Downey are roommates, and Levy and Danelius share the characteristic of coming from a foreign country.

"It's nice to have a friend from another country like me," said Levy. "Sometimes, Taron has to help us with the culture." Downey admits to occasionally playing jokes on Danelius and Levy, but said, "It's real fun just knowing them."

Danelius seems to speak for all the members of the talented trio when he said, "I'm looking forward to new opportunities, new experiences, and a new life." Demon Deacon fans are looking forward to the new opportunities, and hopefully, new peaks, this gifted group will reach as well.

## Deacon Freshmen

### TARON DOWNEY

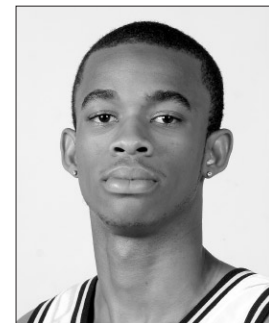


Hometown:  
Oxford,  
North Carolina  
Year: Freshman  
Height: 6'2"  
Weight: 171 lbs.

Position: Guard  
2000-01 PPG (Prep): 17.0

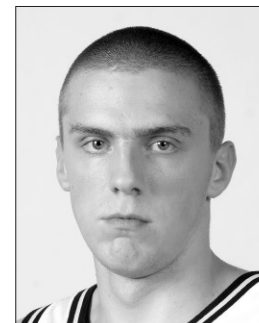
### JAMAAL LEVY

Hometown:  
Panama City,  
Panama  
Year: Freshman  
Height: 6'9"  
Weight: 177 lbs.



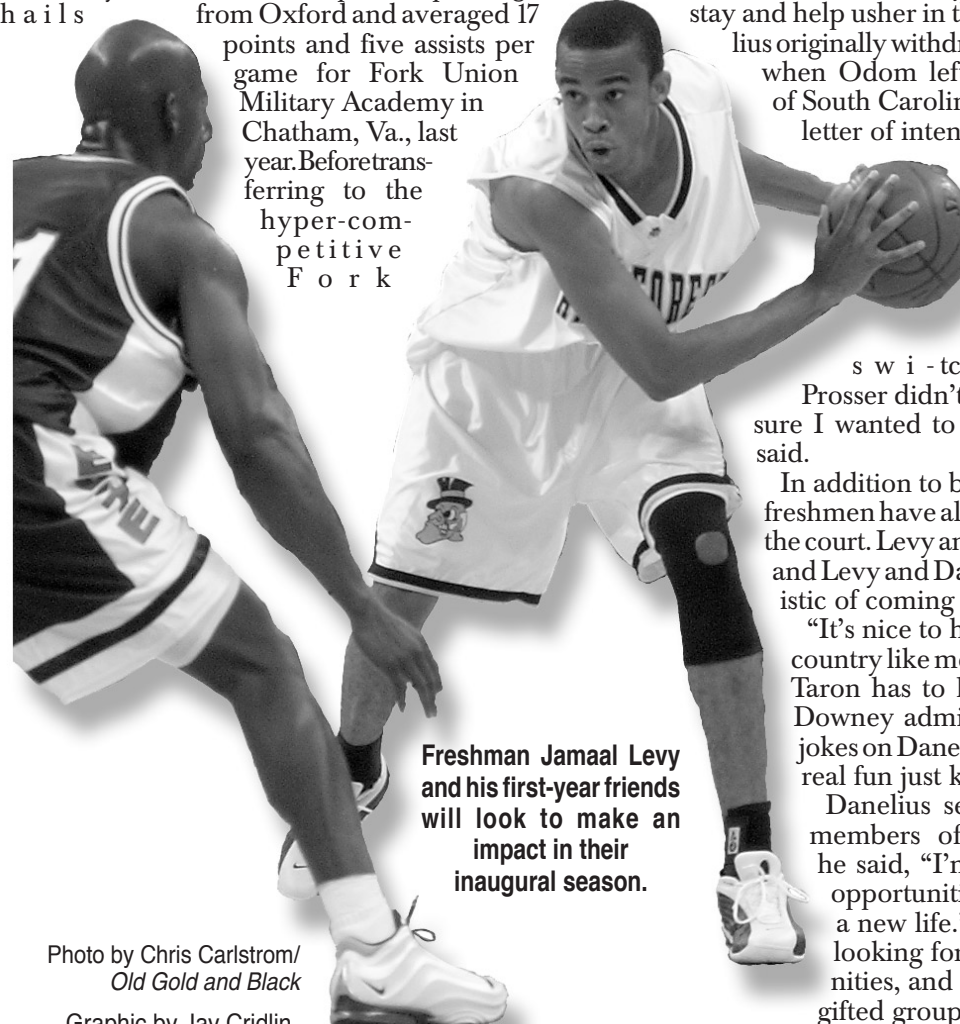
Position: Forward  
2000-01 PPG (HS): 15.0

### VYTAS DANELIUS



Hometown:  
Kauras,  
Lithuania  
Year: Freshman  
Height: 6'8"  
Weight: 228 lbs.

Position: Forward  
2000-01 PPG (HS): 21.5



Freshman Jamaal Levy and his first-year friends will look to make an impact in their inaugural season.