

Inside Stuff

Can N.C. State's Gannon be content on the bench?

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Syndicated Columnist

The answers to the questions are obvious, so I didn't need to call or meet with Terry Gannon to write this column. Besides, I didn't want to put him on the spot.

Had I called, I would have had to ask Terry Gannon, the N.C. State guard with the long-range jump shot, some questions like these:

How do you feel about getting sporadic playing time in your senior year? Does it bother you not playing more? How do you keep sitting there watching games and manage to keep acting like an enthusiastic team member? How do you feel when you hear people like Al McGuire and Dick Emery say that N.C. State's big weakness is not having any good perimeter shooters?

It has to bother Gannon a lot -- it even bothered me a lot when I heard Enberg say that before the Louisville game. Who did Enberg ever beat? That's not an intelligent comeback, but it's the kind of question a player feels like asking when he has to hear these things.

Reporters ask these kinds of questions: "Terry, how does it feel to be shooting 37 percent this year? How did it feel to get in

just six minutes against Duke and Carolina? How did it feel in the Maryland game to get just four minutes when freshman guard Vinnie Del Negro got twice that?

"Do you still remember when you were the talk of the ACC, Terry? When everyone was talking about how to stop Gannon?"

I remember those things, Terry. And I didn't put an ounce of stock in expert Al McGuire's comment that all you have to do against Gannon is play man-to-man and you take him right out of the game.

There are offenses in which you would throw the ball to Lorenzo Charles inside and, when the defense sagged to stop him, he would pitch it out to Gannon for the easy jumper. But State isn't that patient. The Wolfpack doesn't use that offense and Gannon mostly sits the bench.

If you talk to Terry, he will be forced to tell you he just wants what's best for the team. He wouldn't tell you how a coach's unexplained (and often unexplainable) actions break down a player's confidence. He wouldn't tell you how frustrating it is and how impotent a player can feel as he sits the bench waiting for a chance while trying to be a good team member.

Terry Gannon is an education major at State and an outstanding student. His father was a good basketball coach. So you don't

have to be wizard to guess that Terry wants to be a coach himself. With that goal, it wouldn't make much sense to get a reputation as a disgruntled player -- or to alienate a man with the stature and connections Valvano has. With an eye to the future -- perhaps Gannon would like to be a grad assistant at State next year -- Gannon will be a team man and keep his mouth shut, as most players do.

But we will know the ache nevertheless, especially when we watch a game like the one against Louisville and see Gannon, once the ACC's best shooter, throw the unmentionable: an "airball."

It isn't fun to watch a player's response to line-up juggling. In Gannon's case, it makes me think of Valvano's own words in the N.C. State 1984-85 press guide:

"...Terry is the last of those great outside shooters we have had He's our outside shot right now Whether he starts is insignificant. He will be in there when the game is on the line"

But Terry often is *not* in there when the game is on the line. It's his senior year. And it would be nice if coaches were simply able to do what they say they are going to do when they recruit people out of high school and when they talk about them.

In press guides.

Earl 'the Pearl'

From Page B2

Monroe also produced a musical, "Bones," which he said was moderately successful off-Broadway, during his years with the Knicks.

Shortly after forming his record company, Monroe began looking for talented singers to sign to his record label. Coincidentally, Hairston, who also attended WSSU before signing with Pretty Pearl Records, was the first performer to sign with him and has proven to be the company's brightest star.

"I was in town for a couple days and Curtis just called me up," said Monroe. "He came over and played some of his tapes for me and I really liked him. I came back later and signed him to a contract."

Since their union began, the two have worked well together, with Hairston's second record, "I Want You Tonight," reaching the nation's Top 20 and vaulting as high as No. 2 on the European charts.

Recently, the two signed a new pact with an album planned for release in two months.

"I think we have a good working relationship," said Monroe. "We have two tunes, 'I Want You Loving' and 'Never Going To Get Away,' coming out in the next month."

Monroe has added other acts to his company, but he said Hairston remains the company's main attraction.

"Curtis is by far the top priority," he said. "We are expecting even bigger things from him."

Monroe also said he expects bigger things from his company.

"I want to make the company a multi-media business," said Monroe. "We want to get into film and stage projects also. We already have a stage project ready to get off the ground. I expect that to be happening pretty soon."

Monroe said he feels he has put in a lot of hard work to get his business going and now it's time for him to reap the benefits.

"I think that I've paid my dues," he said. "The type of suc-

cess we've had and the potential that we've shown should help."

In the coming months, Monroe said, he'll also be involved with another project, the budding United States Basketball League, which has awarded franchises to two of his former Knick teammates, Walt Frazier and Dick Barnett.

"I've been involved with it for the past year," said Monroe. "I have accepted the position, but it won't be official until Feb. 15. Initially, I was going to be a franchise owner, but I don't have the time to devote to that and my company."

"The league's draft is scheduled for March, so things will begin to happen soon," he said.

"We're not going to compete with the NBA; we're strictly a farm-type of system."

Although Monroe said it won't be easy, he feels the league can be a viable business entity.

"I'm hooked into it because it affords other guys a chance to play professionally," he said. "It's not going to be like the CBA (Continental Basketball Association). As opposed to the the CBA, the USBL will let the guys make some dollars."

The CBA has a salary cap of only \$50,000 and the new USBL's salary cap will be \$200,000.

"We're going into 10 cities," Monroe said. "It's going to be a regional thing from the start. The first year we will have teams only in the eastern part of the country and the next year we hope to add some teams on the West Coast."

"The reason I feel so good about it is that it's an excellent opportunity for various communities to see players that have played their college ball in a particular area," he said. "Only a very select few are fortunate enough to play in the NBA and there are a lot of quality ball players throughout the country."

Monroe said each team will be responsible for marketing itself. And while he said it's unlikely that the league will land a net-

work television deal, there are other options.

"We're looking at some television and radio," he said. "Maybe a game of the week on Saturday or Sunday. Cable TV is the most likely way to get exposure."

The league's games will be played between the months of May and September, before the start of the NBA season, Monroe said.

"People can come out and enjoy good basketball at a nominal price," he said. "Who know's what'll happen?"

Though Monroe said most of his time these days is devoted to his business interests, he said it's always nice to come back to Winston-Salem, his "home-

away-from-home."

"I usually come back here two or three times a year," said Monroe, who led the Rams to the NAIA national championship in 1966. "I had a heck of an opportunity in playing for Winston-Salem State and it's always a thrill to come back. The good thing about it is that I get to renew a lot of acquaintances that I have made here."

Monroe said his experiences at WSSU and with Coach Gaines will remain with him forever.

"Coach Gaines has been a big influence on my life," said Monroe. "He taught me to love Winston-Salem and Winston-Salem State. Since then, it's been an on-going thing with me."

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