

Cavalier swingman Bryant Stith averaged 20.5 points a game last season

Can Cavaliers bury Terry?

Youthful Jones leads experienced UVa. squad

By JAY EXUM
Staff Writer

For the past few years, the University of Virginia's basketball team has been the Rodney Dangerfield of the ACC. Terry Holland's teams have overachieved their way to several successful seasons in a row, but for whatever reason, the Cavaliers have rarely garnered the press they have deserved.

Even off the court, UVa. has been overlooked. While the coaching change at N.C. State attracted more than its share of media attention, the changing of the guard at Virginia has been largely ignored. For those who don't know, 16-year coach Holland has become the athletic director at Davidson. His replacement is 29-year-old former assistant Jeff Jones, the youngest head coach in ACC history.

This year, the Cavs are out to get their respect. And, as the conference's most experienced team, they should do just that.

Most preseason polls are predicting Jones' first team to finish third in the ACC, and Virginia is ranked in the top 20 in most national ratings. But the pressure of those high expectations doesn't seem to faze Jones.

"I don't feel any pressure," Jones said. "I think I know the school, I know the basketball program, and I think I know what it takes to be successful — not only athletically, but socially and academically as well."

The veteran Virginia players seem to have had no trouble adjusting to their former assistant coach's promotion.

"I think the transition will be very smooth," Cavalier forward Bryant Stith said, "because Coach Jones has been a part of our program for several years now. We can almost just go back and pick up where we left off last year."

"It's strange. Coach Jones was like one of the guys last year, and he's in a position where we have to respect him now."

Virginia finished off 1989-90 strongly, with late-season wins over Duke, Georgia Tech and UNC, as well as an appearance in the ACC Tournament final and a trouncing of Notre Dame in the NCAA tourney's first round. A narrow 63-61 loss to powerhouse Syracuse in the second round finished the Cavs' season at 20-12 and

Virginia

No.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
4	T. Kirby	G	6-3	212	So.
5	B. Floriani	G	5-10	156	Sr.
10	A. Oliver	G	6-4	185	Jr.
11	D. Smith	G	6-1	170	So.
12	K. Turner	F	6-6	227	Sr.
15	C. Havlicek	G	6-5	183	Fr.
20	B. Stith	F/G	6-5	202	Jr.
21	D. Johnson	G	6-2	170	Fr.
22	J. Crotty	G	6-1	179	Sr.
23	B. Ford	G	6-2	170	So.
24	D. Katstra	G/F	6-6	210	Sr.
30	M. Blundin	F	6-7	226	Sr.
31	B. Graves	G	6-4	180	Fr.
33	C. Parker	G/F	6-7	200	Fr.
42	T. Jeffries	F/C	6-9	248	So.
44	C. Stewart	F	6-7	210	Fr.
52	S. Wilson	F/C	6-11	225	Fr.

Head Coach: Jeff Jopones (Virginia, 1982). Overall Coaching Record: 1st year as a head coach

6-8 in the ACC.

Virginia's hopes for this season rest in the return of all five starters from last year's lineup. In the high-powered ACC, there is no substitute for experience.

At the top of the list is the 6-foot-5 Stith, last season's top scorer (20.8 points per game) and No. 2 rebounder (6.9 rpg) and a member of this summer's U.S. National team. The summer experience under Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski helped make Stith a better player, especially defensively, but the non-stop play has taken its toll.

"I think that playing all summer is beginning to catch up with me," Stith said. "Already I have had a back sprain, an ankle sprain, and my knee is beginning to bother me. Last week, my back was hurting so bad I could hardly bend my head to look down at my shoes."

Virginia's next biggest weapon is point guard John Crotty. Crotty's 16 points and 6.7 assists per game last year make him a threat to every UVa. opponent. An honorable mention All-America last year by The Sporting News and the Associated Press, Crotty's outside shot is the most highly regarded part of his game. His 7-of-13 performance from 3-point territory led to an

81-80 upset of North Carolina in Charlottesville last season.

At the other guard position will be junior Anthony Oliver. While no slouch offensively (10.1 ppg), Oliver is best known as Virginia's "eraser." He usually has the unenviable task of shutting down the opposition's most prolific scorer, but he has risen to the occasion. In what was probably his best performance of last season, Oliver held Georgia Tech's Dennis Scott to 3-of-16 shooting and 11 points in a 73-71 upset of the Yellow Jackets in Atlanta.

Returning on his ever-so-gimpy knees at forward for Virginia is senior Kenny Turner. Despite leading the league with five lifetime knee operations, Turner started every game last season. His seven rebounds per game led the team and his 12.2 scoring average ranked third. Rest assured that Jones is pulling hard for Turner's knees in '90-91.

More than any other player, Virginia's transition from a good team to an elite one depends on the improvement of 6-9 center Ted Jeffries (that's right, 6-9 center). For the Cavaliers to fulfill their promise, his 3.9 rebounds and 3.5 points a game must jump dramatically. His teammates seem to think that's no problem.

"If there is anyone in the ACC who is a leading candidate for most improved player in the league, I think that would be Ted," Stith said. "He's really improved; he's looking to score more; he's lost weight; he's gotten stronger. I think he's improved in every area. We're expecting bigger and better things from him."

The first man off the bench is banger Matt Blundin, who is also, appropriately, a football player. Just hearing Blundin's name is enough to shake up some ACC post players. Year after year, Blundin has made up for what he lacks in raw talent with his bruising inside play.

The rest of the bench's biggest stars include Terry Kirby, also a football player, and freshman Cornell Parker. The Cavaliers must wait for Kirby to complete his football pursuits, but the upperclassmen are expecting immediate contributions from Parker.

"Cornell is playing very well," Stith said. "With his being a very versatile player, he can relieve both Anthony and myself."

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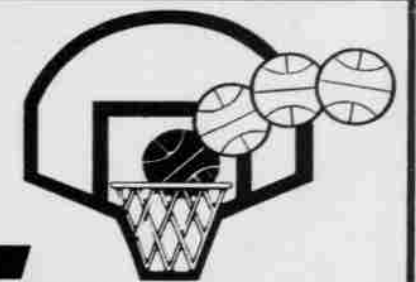
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