



Senior guard Dimitri Thompson returns for the Phoenix. Thompson averaged 8.9 points and 5.0 rebounds per game last year.



Junior guard Steven Santa Ana practices before the 2017-18 season. Santa Ana led the Phoenix in blocks last year with 37.



Head coach Matt Matheny talks to his huddled team during pre-season practice on Oct. 27. Matheny enters his ninth season at the helm for the Phoenix.

Familiar names lead Elon men's basketball

Elon returns all of its top-five scorers from last year

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The Phoenix finished last season with a 18-14 record, 10-8 in the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA). Head coach Matt Matheny says his team is in form for the new season.

"Preseason is an interesting time because you're not judged on winning or losing a game," Matheny said. "You're evaluating constantly - did you have a good practice or a bad practice or are you getting better? That's subjective. Winning or losing is not subjective; but subjectively, I think we're doing well."

For the ninth-year head coach, this team brings something unique to the court.

"The thing that stands out the most is we're getting great upperclassmen leadership, and I think we're getting better," Matheny said. "It's good to be back out on the court. We're tweaking some things, but I love our leadership. That's the thing I'm most impressed with."

The team will look fairly similar with all five of its top scorers returning from last year. Junior Tyler Seibring led the Phoenix last year, averaging 14.4 points and 6.9 rebounds per game. The forward looks ahead to getting back on the court.

"Practice has been going re-

ally well," Seibring said. "We're bringing a lot of guys back who have a lot of experience, so things are running pretty smoothly, but we're still working hard every day to get better."

"I think there is a confidence that our team has because we have so much experience," Matheny said. "But I think there is also an understanding that this is a brand new year. And as much as we have a lot of guys back, it's still a brand new team."

When it comes to returners, Seibring agrees with his coach; but while it makes a difference to have experience, building off of last year will be the key to success.

"It definitely helps," Seibring said. "We have a foundation set from the years previous. We're looking to build on that. We have new guys who are going to be able to contribute, and with the experience we've had, it's been easier to build on that and have them integrate pretty easily."

After falling in the first round of the CAA tournament last year 71-66 to the College of William & Mary, the Phoenix begins this season picked to finish third in the conference. For Matheny, there is one thing that matters most.

"I'm looking forward to today's practice because the season is long," Matheny said. "I've begun, in the past several years, to really appreciate the process. If we can get better today, then that puts us in a position to be better when the games start. I love today's opportunity for improvement."

Coming into his third year,

MEN'S BASKETBALL 2016-17 RECORD

	OVERALL	HOME	AWAY	NEUTRAL
ALL GAMES	18-14	10-4	6-8	2-2
CONFERENCE	10-8	7-2	3-6	0-0
NON-CONFERENCE	8-6	3-2	3-2	2-2

2016-17 STATS

1,332 PEOPLE
Average attendance per game

18 WINS
Most wins in the CAA era

2403 POINTS
Second-most points in CAA era

75.1 PPG
Second-highest points per game in CAA era

Seibring understands his role on the court, and will do what he can to help with the improvement Matheny mentioned.

"Just kind of doing what I have to do to help out," Seibring said. "It might not be scoring that much this year, who knows. It could be what's required on a game-to-game basis, and it could be what's in the flow of our team and our offense."

"We focus on the process of getting better and being the best that we can be," Matheny said. "That's why we talk a lot about this year's team and building this year's team. We want to be as good as we can be. One thing that I personally am focused on and I think our team has always had a goal on is enjoying it."

As the season starts, there is something that is in the back of the minds of the players and coaches. This season will be the last basketball season in Alumni Gym before the program moves to the new Schar Center across the street.

Dedicated in 1950, Alumni Gym has hosted Elon basketball for decades. After renovations to upgrade the facility in 2010, the current facility has a capacity of

more than 1,600. Elon has sold out Alumni Gym 15 times under Matheny, including a record crowd of 1,876 on Feb. 28, 2015 versus University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

"I think it's going to be emotional, particularly at the end, because Alumni Gym for years has gotten some positive comments and feelings, but for years has been viewed as less than because of how small it is. It's become an

incredibly intimate place for our team, our program and playing here. Before the renovations and since the renovations, the relationship this facility allows us to have with our fans is something really special."

For the men, that last, emotional season will begin tonight, Nov. 3, in Alumni Gym when the Phoenix plays its only preseason exhibition game against Randolph College. Tip off is scheduled for 7 p.m.