

Talented 'Import' Important To A&T

By DREXEL B. BALL
Sports Information Director

GREENSBORO, N.C. — It was two weeks before the start of the season when junior college transfer Juan Lanauze drew tremendous praise from veteran North Carolina A&T basketball Coach Don Corbett.

"He has a lot of ability, both offensively and defensively," Corbett said of the 6-9, 222-pounder from Ponce, Puerto Rico. "I think he'll be looked up as A&T's best center when he graduates."

For Corbett to make such a gaudy assessment of a player who had never played in a regular season game for the Aggies was strictly out of character for the veteran Aggie mentor.

But Lanauze is the type of player who elicits that kind of praise. The season is very young, but already Lanauze has played a major role in the team's 4-1 start and successful defense of the title in the Miller/Aggie Classic.

Lanauze is averaging 13.3 points and 7.7 rebounds a game, his highest scoring production of 21 points coming against Jackson State Dec. 12. In a game against North Carolina State, he was matched up against pre-season All-ACC candidate Thurl Bailey. He scored 18 points.

In the Miller/Aggie Classic, Lanauze put together back-to-back double-figure scoring efforts. He had 11 points and 12 rebounds in a 63-60 win over Elizabeth City on opening night. He came back with 16 points and 12 rebounds in the championship game in which the Aggies overwhelmed Livingstone 89-70.

"I have been playing okay, but I know I can play better," said Lanauze, who came to A&T via Carl Albert Junior College of Poteau, Okla. "I'm looking forward to having two good years here at A&T."

A basketball critic might consider Corbett and A&T lucky in the recruitment of Lanauze. The Aggie coach had never heard of the towering Puerto Rican until he was contacted by an A&T alumnus.

"I went to a friend's house to watch the NCAA finals and he told me about A&T's program," explained Lanauze. "I was already looking for a Division I school to attend. After talking with Coach Corbett, I decided A&T was the place for me."

"Coach Corbett didn't come on with unrealistic promises. He was sincere and I was immediately sold on A&T," Lanauze added.

After completing his high school career, Lanauze attended Dowling College in Oakdale, Long Island, for one year, then moved on to Carl Albert. During one season at Carl Albert, he

averaged 11 points and 12 rebounds a game.

Lanauze is a well-traveled collegian, having played four years in a Puerto Rican summer league which took him to China, Mexico and the Dominican Republic to demonstrate his athletic talent.

"I have had lots of experience playing international basketball," said Lanauze, who is the hub of the Aggies' veteran frontcourt which also features 6-8 junior Joe Binion and 6-7 senior Antoine Collins. "I enjoy playing in the United States, especially here at A&T."

"I feel as though I'm home. We play in front of nice crowds and I'm used to that. I am real pleased with the fan support we have received this season. The students and alumni are real basketball fans and they are very knowledgeable about the game."

This will be Lanauze's first trip through the rugged MEAC wars, but he feels the Aggies will successfully repeat as conference champions and earn a berth in the NCAA Tournament.

"There is a lot of talent on the team," said Lanauze. "Everyone plays hard and we should repeat as champions. I just hope we start looking inside more because I think we can take advantage of things to come. Lanauze appears well on his way to collecting a passel of awards before his eligibility expires.

"Awards and individual honors are not important to me," Lanauze said. "I just want to help the team achieve its goal and contribute to a successful program. If I make a contribution, I'm certain I will get recognized."

Perhaps no one is more pleased with the presence of Lanauze than Binion. Binion led the Aggies in both major categories last season, averaging 19 points and nine rebounds a game. But the availability of Lanauze has taken much pressure off Binion.

No longer can opponents double-team Binion because they can't survive with Lanauze roaming free under the basket.

"Juan has added another dimension to our team," said Binion. "I think I will profit by his presence. I think we complement each other well. When teams try to concentrate on stopping me, they also must contend with Juan."

Lanauze has also blocked 13 shots in four games.

"He is definitely going to get better," said Corbett. "He has given every sign of becoming among the top players A&T has ever had."



Lanauze in action against N.C. State in December. The 6-8 center sees a banner season ahead for the Aggies (photo by Joe Daniels).

YES! WE GIVE DISCOUNTS

TO STUDENTS & TEACHERS
IN FACT... "We see to everyone
every day at low PRICES."

AD MART

Office supplies & furniture

810 Winston St.

POST OFFICE BOX 21983
GREENSBORO, N.C. 27420

919 • 273-5524

