

# VIRGIL

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"He's learning, and he's worked so hard," Smith said. "But I remember one time last year when he came in and had three straight against Virginia. Then Jeff Lamp scored three straight for them on John. We can't have that."

It's the difference between starting and not starting for Virgil. He'll play a lot, regardless. He's got to; he can do almost anything once he gets the ball near the hoop with that wide-eyed look.

N.C. State's Tiny Pinder will vouch for that. "When he goes up for a shot he jumps forward and his nose up like a plane taking off. Finally he lets go and it seems like he hits every time — at least against us."

"He can glide, can't he?" Rich Yonakor marveled after the Blue-White game. "I'm really sorry I missed him in

high school; he must've been somethin'."

Virgil was impressive in the annual intra-squad scrimmage, scoring 19 points. One time he came from half court to challenge Jeff Wolf on a dunk, stuffed him clean and knocked the ball loose, saved it in bounds and hurried down to score at the end of a fast-break.

He averaged 5½ points a game and shot 58 percent from the floor last season, playing eight to 10 minutes a game. Smith says he's got to concentrate on his ball-handling and playing an aggressive defensive game in the absence of Phil Ford and Tom Zalzigiris.

**B**ut most of all, Virgil is one of those guys who gets a gleam in his eye whenever he's within firing distance.

"I don't find myself passing up

anything," he says. "I know the type of shot I can hit and the ones I can't. It's even more important this year that we take good shots and stress the teamwork philosophy."

Letting Virgil loose, as some have suggested, is not Smith's way of making up for the loss of Ford. "Obviously we'll miss Phil" Virgil says, "but we've tried to be more enthusiastic in practice, stressing intensity, to make for some of what he did. I'm more confident and at ease at almost anything I do so I guess I'm more optimistic about this year."

The first two were rather frustrating; an education from the bench usually is. Virgil remained quiet when some wondered why he wasn't playing more. Admittedly, Virgil hasn't attempted to be an emotional leader on or off the court, but that's usually saved for the juniors and seniors.

"I'm gonna try to get the guys fired up

with my play," he said. "Mike (O'Koren) Dudley (Bradley) and Ged (Doughton) — they're the ones emerging as the team's leaders."

But the big thing is defense for Virgil and he knows everyone is keeping an eye on his progress.

"I've had enough trouble keeping track of myself," Dave Colescott said, "so it's hard to say. But I think he's improved a lot on defense. We're all concentrating hardest on it."

"Defense and ballhandling most of all," Virgil said. "And also the little things, like boxing out and foul-shooting."

Deep down, though, he's got his mind on other things, like length of the court one-handed dunks and flying tip-ins and eighteen-footers from left of the key. He's got that special look in his eye, a wide-eyed gleam everytime he faces the basket.

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