

VIRGINIA

Stith-less Wahoos search for new scoring threat

By Brian Gould
Staff Writer

The Virginia Cavaliers will learn how tough basketball is without Bryant Stith this season.

Stith, the school's all-time leading scorer, led Virginia the past four years with his scoring and his ability to come through in the clutch. Despite Stith's outstanding play, Virginia, 20-13 overall and 8-8 in the ACC last year, did not qualify for the NCAA tournament.

It marked the first time that the NCAA Tournament selection committee had passed over an ACC club with a winning record since the tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1985.

Virginia did find some postseason satisfaction by taking the National Invitational Tournament title, clinching the crown with an 81-76 overtime victory against Notre Dame.

The five tourney wins allowed Cavalier coach Jeff Jones to win 20 games for the second year in a row. He is the first coach in ACC history to win at least 20 games in each of his first two seasons.

"I think the fact that we won the five games in the NIT allowed us to gain a considerable amount of additional national exposure," Jones said. "The additional experience against quality competition should certainly help us."

With Stith's departure to the professional ranks, Jones must look to several players to fill the forward's void.

"I don't think any one guy is going to turn it on and become the Bryant Stith of this year's team," Jones said. "It's just a matter of whether those players are going to step up and really make themselves a factor."

Jones is hoping his two talented sophomores can rise to the challenge. After scoring 13.2 points a game as freshman last year, forward Junior Burrough must find more consistency in his game this season. He averaged 5.8 rebounds a contest while shooting 44.6

UNC

as the team's starting shooting guard. After scoring a record-breaking 35.6 ppg in his senior year at Garner High School, Williams scored just 2.2 ppg last year in limited playing time. But last season, Williams shot worse from the field (38 percent) than he had shot from 3-point land as a high school senior (43 percent).

Phelps: Before last season started, Phelps said that he would shoot, and shoot he did. Unfortunately, many of his shots didn't find the bottom of the hole. He hit 40 percent from the field, 28 percent from 3-point land.

Lynch: Perhaps the only good thing about Lynch being a senior is that this is the last time Smith has to decide whether to play the 6-8 rebounder and defenseman extraordinaire at power forward or small forward. Lynch has always expressed an interest in shooting more from the perimeter, yet his rebounding skills have been too important to move him outside. But considering Lynch took just eight 3-pointers last season — and hit one of them — it's reasonable to think that he will stay inside.

Rödl: Now a senior, the 6-7 guard is hungry for playing time. Rödl has never been a disappointment from the field, and his extensive playing time with the German National Team in this year's Summer Olympics only helped. But Rödl served as a point guard in international play, and he may help the team most by serving as Phelps' backup.

Virginia Cavaliers

Head Coach: Jeff Jones (Virginia, 1982).
Jones' Record: 41-25 in two years.
Jones at Virginia: Same.



PLAYER ROSTER

| No. | Player | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Cl. |
|-----|-----------------|------|------|-----|-----|
| 30 | Chris Alexander | F | 6-8 | 214 | Fr. |
| 12 | Cory Alexander | G | 6-1 | 176 | So. |
| 24 | Yuri Barnes | F | 6-8 | 225 | So. |
| 4 | Junior Burrough | F | 6-8 | 235 | So. |
| 31 | Bobby Graves | G | 6-4 | 196 | So. |
| 15 | Chris Havlicek | G | 6-5 | 204 | Jr. |
| 42 | Ted Jeffries | C | 6-9 | 247 | Sr. |
| 23 | R. Mitchell | C | 5-11 | 177 | Sr. |
| 5 | Cornel Parker | G/F | 6-7 | 185 | Jr. |
| 11 | Doug Smith | G | 6-1 | 183 | Sr. |
| 22 | Jason Williford | F/G | 6-5 | 205 | So. |
| 52 | Shawn Wilson | C | 6-11 | 241 | Jr. |

percent from the field in the '91-'92 campaign.

"Junior will definitely be more improved," said Virginia center Ted Jeffries. "I don't think he ever had a lack of confidence in his shot. I think he just needed some more consistency."

Added Jones, "As I look at our team, if we're going to have a go-to guy, Junior Burrough will be that person."

The team's other sophomore is point guard Cory Alexander. Alexander averaged 11.2 points and 4.4 assists per contest a season ago. But Alexander connected on just 37.6 percent of his shots, including a dismal 29.5 percent from behind the 3-point arc.

"We need Cory to continue to play well and to improve," Jones said. "The one big area of improvement for him needs to be his shooting percentages."

Junior Cornel Parker (5.3 ppg last year) will replace the departed Anthony

Oliver and join Alexander in the backcourt. Parker's trademark is his defense, but he must develop his offensive game to support Alexander and Burrough.

In the middle, senior Ted Jeffries will begin his fourth straight year in the starting lineup. While averaging just 5.6 points a game, the center provided strong interior defense and led the Cavs in rebounding last year with 7.1 boards a game.

Jeffries must continue his tenacious defensive, but he must also give the Cavs another inside scorer to help alleviate the pressure on Burrough.

"He does an excellent job of playing good position defense," Jones said of Jeffries. "He improved his rebounding last year and he's a very intelligent player."

Another senior, guard Doug Smith, returns to provide stability in the backcourt. Smith, who scored 3.2 ppg last year, is a steady ball-handler.

Other key reserves, such as sophomore forward Yuri Barnes, junior center Shawn Wilson and junior guard Chris Havlicek, must contribute off the bench for Virginia. Jones must find another starter out of the returning players.

Jones realizes defense is the key to his team's success. Last year, Virginia held its opponents to a 42.4 percent field-goal percentage and led the conference by yielding 65.2 points a game. The Cavs kept the opposition to an ACC-best 30 percent from 3-point range.

The concern for Virginia's coaching staff is the team's offense. Even with Stith, UVA. shot an ACC-low 43.3 percent from the field last year — the worst percentage in the ACC in 20 years.

Of the Cavs' 26 games, 15 will be at home. In December, they travel to Philadelphia to play Pennsylvania and then host seven straight games. These games will allow Jones to find a formidable lineup and a rotation for the bench.

The abundance of home games will also allow the young Cavalier team to



Sophomore point guard Cory Alexander led Virginia with 4.4 assists per game last year

gain confidence before entering the ACC season. January finds Virginia visiting Duke and UNC in a four-day stretch. The Cavs have lost nine straight in Durham and 11 straight in Chapel Hill.

The soft early schedule could give the team enough confidence to make it through the ACC season with a .500 record. But regardless, Jones has a difficult task ahead of him. It will be a

tough go-round without Stith.

For Virginia to reach the NCAA Tournament, Alexander and Burrough must play to their vast potentials. One of the returning reserves must also step into the starting lineup and be effective.

Jeff Jones will find this year to be the most difficult of his young career. He will be hard-pressed to reach a third consecutive 20-win season.

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Pat Sullivan: Smith always talks about how Sullivan shoots so well in practice, burying 3-pointers to no end. But when it comes game time, the junior forward has hesitated ... and hesitated ... and hesitated to shoot.

Larry Davis, Dante Calabria: These two freshman guards have a lot to offer UNC right away. Davis, the 1990-91 South Carolina Player of the Year, scored nearly 45 ppg as a senior at Denmark-Olar High School and played shooting guard at Fork Union Military Academy last year. Calabria scored 28 ppg at Blackhawk High School in Bea-

ver Falls, Pa., last season. Both seem more comfortable at shooting guard, however, creating a jam if Williams moves over from the point.

One result of this heavy mix of talent and inexperience is that UNC's outside shooting will be either blistering or frigid. But one can also argue that with this many shooters, it's just a matter of Smith finding the hot hand each game.

Throughout it all, this team will revolve around three players: Lynch, Montross and Phelps. As a senior, Lynch must step up as North Carolina seniors always do, becoming the go-to guy on

the court and off it. He averaged 13.9 points and 8.8 rebounds per game last season. He wants more, and he'll get it.

"I think this year, I've got to speak out more," he said. "I think that helps me get more focused."

At times last year, Montross became downright mean on the court, giving UNC a fire that it has lacked at times. It wasn't always with words — blood and guts did the trick, as in the Tar Heels' victory against Duke Feb. 5.

"The vocal aspect I don't like as much as the physical wanting to win, the hard-nosed play," he said. "And I

know I'm a hard-nosed player."

Phelps leads not just by being the man who brings the ball downcourt, but also by leading UNC in what matters most in Blue Heaven — defense.

"Phelps is unbelievable defensively," Smith said. "This summer, in going over tapes, I even appreciated him more and more. And I did last year."

So as this blue and white bundle of talent takes to the court for the Dec. 1 opener against Old Dominion, the Monarchs will be the first to experience the reality of Henrik Rödl's prophecy.

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