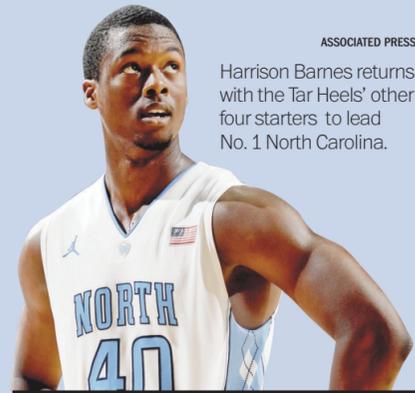


COLLEGE BASKETBALL PREVIEW

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2011

The Washington Times

SECTION C



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Harrison Barnes returns with the Tar Heels' other four starters to lead No. 1 North Carolina.

PRESEASON TOP 40

*— projected league champ

- 1. North Carolina*** (29-8 last season): The Tar Heels bring back their entire starting five, including preseason ACC player of the year Harrison Barnes.
- 2. Kentucky*** (29-9): Last year, went to the Final Four for the first time since 1998. John Calipari and his revolving door of recruits can deliver even more.
- 3. Ohio State*** (34-3): Jared Sullinger's back, and so are the Buckeyes' title hopes. And don't forget about Aaron Craft, the savvy sophomore point guard.
- 4. Connecticut*** (32-9): Kemba Walker is gone, but the Huskies return Jeremy Lamb and three other starters from their national title team.
- 5. Vanderbilt** (23-11): The Commodores bring all five starters back and boast three potential NBA first-rounders.
- 6. Duke** (32-5): Between Seth Curry and coveted freshman Austin Rivers in the backcourt and Ryan Kelly plus 21 feet of Plumlees (Miles, Mason and Marshall), there's no lack of talent in Durham.
- 7. Pittsburgh** (28-6): Yes, three starters are gone, but the Panthers always overachieve. Ashton Gibbs averaged 16.8 points last season.
- 8. Syracuse** (27-8): Double-double machine Rick Jackson is gone, but Kris Joseph led the Orange in scoring and is the top returning rebounder.
- 9. Florida** (29-8): After three tough seasons after consecutive national titles, the Gators were back in the regional final last year.
- 10. Louisville** (25-10): Rick Pitino has made it out of the first weekend of the NCAAs three times in 10 years with the Cardinals. There's enough in place for another extended stay this March.
- 11. Memphis*** (25-10): Josh Pastner's collected the talent; now it's time for the Tigers to return to the top 15.
- 12. Wisconsin** (25-9): Don't put anything past the crafty Bo Ryan or talented guard Jordan Taylor.
- 13. Xavier*** (24-8): Guards Tu Holloway and Mark Lyons lead the Atlantic 10-favorite Musketeers.
- 14. Baylor*** (18-13): The Bears got an extra year of Perry Jones and must take advantage of it.
- 15. Alabama** (25-12): Anthony Grant has the Tide cooking after finishing second in the NIT.
- 16. California*** (18-15): The Bears' top three scorers are back for a rugged run at a Pac-12 title.
- 17. Michigan** (21-14): Losing Darius Morris hurts, but the Wolverines still have Tim Hardaway Jr.
- 18. UCLA** (23-11): Few take as many NBA draft hits as the Bruins, who still will be plenty competitive.
- 19. Michigan State** (19-15): Draymond Green will guide the Spartans to their 15th straight NCAA bid.
- 20. Florida State** (23-11): Rarely pretty, but Leonard Hamilton gets it done in Tallahassee.
- 21. Texas A&M** (24-9): Khris Middleton and the Aggies seek their sixth straight 24-win season.
- 22. New Mexico*** (22-13): Experienced Lobos should return to NCAA tournament this season.
- 23. Gonzaga*** (25-10): Life in the WCC gets tougher with addition of Brigham Young.
- 24. Kansas** (35-3): Jayhawks wiped out by early entries, freshmen declared ineligible by the NCAA.
- 25. Cincinnati** (26-9): Home-grown forward Yancy Gates will keep the Bearcats in postseason chase.
- 26. Arizona** (30-8): Where do the Wildcats go post-Derrick Williams? Sean Miller will lead the way.
- 27. Texas** (28-8): Former Maryland signee Sterling Gibbs should be an asset for Longhorns.
- 28. Creighton*** (23-16): Doug McDermott averaged 14.9 points and 7.2 rebounds last year.
- 29. Washington** (24-11): Freshman guard Tony Wroten is latest Seattle star to choose U-Dub.
- 30. UNLV** (24-9): New coach Dave Rice inherits veteran team from Oklahoma-bound Lon Kruger.
- 31. Missouri** (23-11): After summer Yahoo report, Frank Haith will be glad when season starts.
- 32. Temple** (26-8): Ramone Moore and Juan Fernandez anchor a stout backcourt for the Owls.
- 33. Marquette** (22-15): It's lefty Darius Odom-Johnson's turn to lead the Golden Eagles.
- 34. Butler*** (28-10): Top two scorers are gone for the Bulldogs after back-to-back title game trips.
- 35. Saint Mary's** (25-9): Seven of the Gaels' top eight scorers return, but not Mickey McConnell.
- 36. Drexel*** (21-10): They start as CAA favorites, but can Bruiser's boys win three in Richmond?
- 37. Mississippi State** (17-14): So much depends on mercurial Renardo Sidney. Tick, tick, tick ...
- 38. George Mason** (27-7): A year after winning CAA regular season, Patriots seek return NCAA trip.
- 39. Purdue** (26-8): Robbie Hummel returns to the Boilermakers after suffering two ACL tears.
- 40. Oregon** (21-18): CBI champion Ducks could emerge as a Pac-12 sleeper under Dana Altman.

The rest of the NCAA field
Alabama State*, Austin Peay*, Belmont*, Boston University*, Brigham Young, Coastal Carolina*, Davidson*, Fairfield*, Florida Atlantic*, Harvard*, Illinois, Kent State*, Lehigh*, Long Beach State*, Marshall, Miami, Montana*, Morgan State*, Notre Dame, Oral Roberts*, Robert Morris*, Saint Louis, Stephen F. Austin*, Utah State*, Villanova, Virginia, West Virginia, Wichita State

—Compiled by Patrick Stevens

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

GEORGE WASHINGTON

STILL COURTING



ROD LAMKEY JR./THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Mike and Maggie Lonergan were coaching at Division III Catholic University when Mike took over at Vermont in 2005. He was hired to replace Karl Hobbs at George Washington shortly after Peter Nero became athletic director.

New GW coach Mike Lonergan has an invaluable fan in the stands: his wife

"During the game, I can hear her. She'll say 'Hey, they've got five team fouls, get the ball inside.' She's very good with things like that because when you're on the bench everybody's going crazy, but she sees a lot of stuff. My hope is she can unofficially help [at George Washington] in a lot of ways. She definitely knows basketball. She's probably better a coach than I am."

BY PATRICK STEVENS
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Mike Lonergan left Vermont's Patrick Gymnasium with a memento of a championship season earlier this year.

It just happened to be earned by his wife, Maggie, an assistant coach for the Rice Memorial High School girls team.

"In our gym, she cut the net down and threw me a piece," Mike Lonergan said. "Everybody was watching it because we didn't cut the nets down this year."

Two months later, Lonergan agreed to take over George Washington's program. In the process, the Colonials got two coaches for the price of one.

Lonergan's D.C. roots are well-established. He played at Archbishop Carroll and Catholic University, later coached Catholic to the 2001 Division III national title and spent a year as an assistant at Maryland. Yet his partnership with his wife is an especially strong facet in his success.

Maggie Lonergan was a college coach herself and piloted the Catholic women's program while her husband was still at the Division III school. The two had a deal: If one received a Division I head coaching job, the other would pause their own career. In 2005, Mike took over at

» see **LONERGAN** | C2

INSIDE



● On the eve of his first season in College Park, Mark Turgeon is excited about the opportunity to build a legacy with the Terps.

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● Georgetown's new point guard, Markel Starks, embraces his role as the Hoyas' floor leader amid uncertainty.

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● George Mason's Ryan Pearson doesn't keep his feelings to himself, preferring to play with a New York state of mouth.

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● Senior guard Jordan Sugars will be expected to lead the Mids in Navy's first season under Ed DeChellis

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● Capsules: ACC, Big East, A-10, Colonial, Patriot

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ONLINE

● Expanded coverage includes preview stories on American, Howard

Don't raise bar too high for local expectations



DERON SNYDER

The area's major men's basketball programs are embarking on a season that's unlike any in several years. And that's mostly a bad thing.

Sure, an air of excitement and anticipation is normal when new regimes are installed. Mark Turgeon brings a breath of fresh air to Maryland. Paul Hewitt brings Final Four experience to George Mason. Mike Lonergan brings homegrown roots to George Washington.

Elsewhere, there hasn't been much

to celebrate but change wasn't in order.

American missed the past two NCAA tournaments after back-to-back appearances in 2008 and 2009 but opted for stability by giving coach Jeff Jones a contract extension. Howard won just six games overall and none on the road last season under Kevin Nickelberry, but the second-year coach has an acclaimed recruiting class to anchor his rebuilding program.

But the expectations around our

men's college hoops programs haven't been this low in six years.

For the first time since the 2005-06 season, Georgetown isn't ranked in either of the two major preseason polls. Maryland's disturbing trend merely continues, as 2005-06 marked its last appearance in the preseason Top 25. GW sneaked in at No. 21 that year in the Associated Press poll, and proved its worth by advancing to the NCAA tournament's second round.

» see **SNYDER** | C2

COLLEGE PREVIEW

MORE PREVIEWS ONLINE: A closer look at American, Howard at www.washingtontimes.com/sports/NCAA

NAVY

Floor-leader Sugars adapts to new system

By **PATRICK STEVENS**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Navy guard Jordan Sugars' final season of basketball at the academy will look plenty different than his first three.

The Midshipmen's 20-man roster is green, strewn with freshmen and sophomores. The green light Sugars was given the past two years is gone.

But the senior is anything but blue about the situation as he and the Mids enter their first season under coach Ed DeChellis.

"I'm still learning," Sugars said. "It's going to take some time. I have to break habits I've had for three years now. Obviously, I'm still learning every practice. I'm doing the best I can and just trying to jump on board with coach and kind of be another coach out there."

Navy (11-20 last year) can use all the on-court savvy it can get.

Sugars is the only junior or senior with any significant time to his credit. And the Mids are undergoing a substantial stylistic overhaul as they transition from former coach Billy Lange, who left in May to become Jay Wright's top assistant at Villanova.

Lange preached a wide-open style with a reliance on the outside shot. Little wonder Sugars has attempted a whopping 388 shots beyond the 3-point line over the past two seasons. It's hardly an outlier; eight of Navy's nine largest single-season 3-point attempt totals were logged in the last five seasons.

Enter DeChellis, who left Penn State in one of the offseason's more intriguing coaching changes. He is basic in his principles: defense, rebounding and taking care of the ball. He also is willing to win ugly, as evidenced by the 36-33 defeat of Wisconsin in last March's Big Ten tournament that helped book the Nittany Lions' passage to the NCAA tournament.

All of it begs the question: How will a volume shooter who is easily his team's most experienced asset and most capable scorer handle the literal change of

pace?

"I think he's going to see the advantages of where he can get the ball and where he can score," DeChellis said. "It doesn't always have to be jumpers. It can be an offensive rebound. We're going to give him the ball in the post some, and we're going to come up with some things where he can catch the ball in the post."

Not that every adjustment is instantaneous.

Sugars said DeChellis, who makes his debut with the Mids on Friday at Longwood, will stop practice on occasion to emphasize what players must correct.

For Sugars, it's a matter of repeating what DeChellis wants, even if it isn't what he's used to.

"In my case, I'll make a move that last year was OK and this year coach is like 'Slow down, let's run the offense through,'" Sugars said. "It's totally different. Coach Lange was more of a free-style coach where the guards just kind of go. Coach [DeChellis] is bringing more structure this year. You kind of learn on the fly."

With a young roster in place, Sugars welcomes the changes.

"It's a good thing," Sugars said. "It's what these young guys need. We can't have these young guys running out here like they have their heads chopped off."

Sugars knows with such inexperience surrounding him, maintaining his composure is crucial to the direction of Navy's season. Sugars hasn't made it out of the Patriot League quarterfinals in his three seasons and, like any Division I player, harbors hopes of an NCAA tournament appearance to cap his career.

Step one is adapting his game to a vastly different tempo, a step he hopes will help lead to a new postseason result as well as a changed look for the Mids on the court.

"I think he's done a good job of picking his spots offensively, whether it's transition or halfcourt," DeChellis said. "I think he's really providing great leadership."



ROD LAMKEY JR./THE WASHINGTON TIMES

For George Washington coach Mike Lonergan and his wife, Maggie, "courtship" means sharing their views on basketball. Lonergan is beginning his first season at GW after six seasons at Vermont.

LONERGAN

From page C1

Vermont.

Maggie Lonergan left Catholic, but she never stepped away from basketball. She was the director of Mike's basketball camp at Vermont and coached their son's AAU team. On game days, she was a presence in the stands.

"During the game, I can hear her," Lonergan said. "She'll say 'Hey, they've got five team fouls, get the ball inside.' She's very good with things like that because when you're on the bench everybody's going crazy, but she sees a lot of stuff. My hope is she can unofficially help [at George Washington] in a lot of ways. She definitely knows basketball. She's probably better a coach than I am."

Any arguments?

"Absolutely not," Maggie Lonergan said. "He's correct."

Mike Lonergan, though, is an accomplished hire for the Colonials, who have not won an Atlantic 10 tournament game since 2007. George Washington was 17-14 a season ago but defeated only three teams that finished with winning records.

Lonergan, meanwhile, has 377 wins in 18 seasons as a college coach and averaged 21 wins in six years at Vermont. It wasn't the easiest job. Lonergan took over after graduation wiped out much of the roster of a team that made three straight NCAA tournament appearances. Plus, Vermont wasn't especially close to a large collection of talent.

There were frustrations. But there also was another coach at home to keep Lonergan grounded.

"When we didn't play up to expectations and we didn't win, I think he was always very good," said GW assistant Hajj Turner, who also worked with Lonergan at Vermont. "She lets him vent and then calms him down and reminds him that we're coaching great kids and they're playing hard and it's not the end of the world."

There's more than simply maintaining perspective at work. When Lonergan came home while at Vermont, he'd often start analyzing film. Maggie would join him, ensuring two sets of eyes were scouring practice and game tape in a shared experience that

GEORGE WASHINGTON COLONIALS



Coach: Mike Lonergan. First season; 377-156 overall

Key player: G Lasan Kromah. While Tony Taylor is a preseason all-Atlantic 10 pick, Kromah will be a vital cog for the Colonials. He averaged 11.8 points as a freshman in 2009-10 but missed all of last season with a foot injury.

Biggest loss: C Joseph Katuka. The only player who started at least one game who did not return this season, Katuka averaged 8.1 points and 5.0 rebounds. His size will be missed since the Colonials have only one player taller than 6-foot-8 available.

Top newcomer: F Jonathan Davis. The lone holdover from former coach Karl Hobbs' last recruiting haul, Davis is a 6-foot-7, 215-pounder who averaged 17.8 points and 10 rebounds as a senior.

Best case: Taylor and Kromah team to give GW one of the A-10's most productive backcourts as the Colonials win 20 games and emerge as a top-four team in the conference.

Worst case: The Colonials struggle with an upgraded schedule early and their size limitations throughout the season while Lonergan endures a step backward from last year's 17-14 record.

Key games:

George Washington vs. VCU, Dec. 4. The Colonials' annual BB&T Classic game comes against a Final Four team from a year ago. It also will be GW's first game in the District since Nov. 11.

Richmond at George Washington, Jan. 18. The Spiders, a round-of-16 bunch a year ago, lost a bunch off back-to-back NCAA tournament teams. This will be an early conference barometer for the Colonials.

Xavier at George Washington, Feb. 1. The conference favorite comes to the Smith Center for the first time in two years; the Colonials see contenders St. Bonaventure, Saint Louis and Temple only on the road.

— Compiled by Patrick Stevens

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NAVY MIDSHIPMEN



Coach: Ed DeChellis. First season, 219-231 overall

Key player: G Jordan Sugars. The senior already has 1,015 career points and has a chance to crack the top 10 in school history. Considering the roster's other juniors and seniors have a combined 27 points in their career, he'll be by far the Midshipmen's most experienced player.

Biggest loss: G O.J. Aworo. He ranks ninth in school history in assists. Without him, the team that spent much of the preseason trying to identify its point guard.

Top newcomer: F Worth Smith. With plenty of playing time to be had in the frontcourt, the 6-foot-6 Mooresville, N.C., native has a chance to be of immediate help at both ends of the floor.

Best case: The youthful Mids defend like crazy from beginning to end in DeChellis' first year and mature just in time to earn a surprise home game in the Patriot League tournament.

Worst case: Navy struggles to transition from a fast-paced team reliant on 3-pointers to a methodical, defense-first bunch and fails to win 10 games for the first time since 2004-05.

Key games:

Navy at Longwood, Nov. 11. A new era begins as DeChellis debuts a 20-man team with 11 newcomers. The Mids won last year's meeting in Annapolis by 17.

Army at Navy, Jan. 14. The Mids' first meeting of the season with Army is at Alumni Hall. Navy was only 6-8 in the Patriot League last year but swept its two meetings with the Black Knights.

Lehigh at Navy, Feb. 22. While Navy isn't expected to contend for a Patriot title this season, it could still be a late spoiler for the Mountain Hawks. Same goes for Bucknell, which Navy visits Feb. 25.

— Compiled by Patrick Stevens

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

SNYDER

From page C1

Mason was nowhere to be found in the early rankings, but the Patriots advanced all the way to the 2006 Final Four. Take preseason polls for what they're worth.

There probably isn't much to look forward to locally in terms of postseason play (although Mason was ranked No. 7 and received a first-place vote in CollegeInsider.com's preseason Top 25 mid-major poll). However, there's probably a bigger appetite for college hoops overall this year. The NBA lockout has deprived hardwood aficionados of pro action, yielding the entire spotlight to campus ballers. Broadening our scope beyond the metropolitan area, a number of high-impact players have returned to lead elite-level programs, and we're anxious to watch.

A swarm of super sophomores on super teams — Jared Sullinger at Ohio State, Harrison Barnes at North Carolina, Terrence Jones at Kentucky, Jeremy Lamb at UConn — reminds us of a bygone era, when the best freshmen would actually return for at least another season. Each aforementioned soph was named to the Associated Press preseason All-America team, joined by a virtual relic in senior guard Jordan Taylor (Wisconsin).

It's difficult to look at the young talent on top teams elsewhere without feeling a twinge of envy.

Yes, the local standard-bearers have spoiled us a bit with their overall success. Georgetown has reached the NCAA tournament in four of six seasons under John Thompson III, earning a couple of No. 2 seeds and a No. 3. Maryland advanced to the NCAA tournament in 14 of the last 18 seasons under Gary Williams, a run that included seven Sweet 16s, two Final

Fours and one national championship.

But both programs have experienced erosion or, at minimum, stagnation as of late. The Hoyas have suffered first-game exits in three consecutive postseason tournaments — two NCAA and one NIT — and haven't advanced past the NCAA's second round since 2007. The Terps missed the postseason four times in Williams' final seven seasons and failed to advance past the NCAA's second round since 2003.

So it hurts a bit to see the Carolinas and Kentucky stocked with blue-chip youngsters and primed to contend, while the Hoyas and Terps are ... not.

We know that Carolina and Kentucky are supernova programs, among the nation's truly elite. Georgetown and Maryland have been reduced to faux elite. In the Terps' case, as evidenced by the coaching search to replace Williams, some observers question whether Maryland ever qualified

as creme de la creme. It's hard to argue against that stance this season, as Turgeon will have just nine scholarship players at his disposal.

But Turgeon believes Maryland is a top-echelon program and he's going to recruit top-echelon talent, the potential one-and-done players that Williams didn't care for. The Terps are in for a long season this year, but it won't be long before Turgeon and his "Dream Team" staff lure some major difference-makers to College Park.

Yes, the local standard-bearers have spoiled us a bit with their overall success. Georgetown has reached the NCAA tournament in five of the seven seasons under John Thompson III, with a couple of No. 2 seeds and a No. 3. Maryland advanced to the NCAA tournament in 14 of the last 18 seasons under Williams, a run that included seven Sweet 16s, two Final Fours and one national championship. Mid-major programs will always

get second billing until they pull off some upsets in the NCAA tournament. Butler and Virginia Commonwealth have surpassed Mason as flavors-of-the-month, but it's nice to know that the original giant-slayer plays in our backyard. It will be interesting to see what Hewitt does with Jim Larranga's handiwork.

Even GW and American have been good for an NCAA tournament bid or two in recent years, so keeping an eye on them can be fun, too, especially in the conference tournament that usually determines their fate. Nickelberry has the longest climb in making Howard respectable — the Bison haven't had a winning season since 2001-02 and haven't been to the NCAA tournament since 1992 — but his freshmen look promising.

All in all, it's still good to be a college hoops fan in this area. And it's good to see another season get underway.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL PREVIEW

ATLANTIC 10

Predicted order of finish

1. Xavier	6. Duquesne	11. Rhode Island
2. Temple	7. George Washington	12. Massachusetts
3. Saint Louis	8. Dayton	13. La Salle
4. St. Bonaventure	9. Saint Joseph's	14. Fordham
5. Richmond	10. Charlotte	

Surprise team: Charlotte. The 49ers bring back their top four scorers from a team that was 2-14 in conference play but lost six A-10 games by six points or less. Coach Alan Major is more settled in as he enters his second season, which could also help Charlotte start a climb up the standings.

Hot seat: John Giannini, La Salle. The Explorers have endured two straight losing seasons and four out of five, and they have yet to play in an NCAA tournament or an NIT in Giannini's seven seasons. Things don't look great this year, either: La Salle lost its top three scorers from last season.

Three key games:

Richmond at Virginia Commonwealth, Dec. 10. Already a vibrant rivalry, this should be even more fun now that the Spiders are coming off a Sweet 16 appearance and VCU can boast a trip to the Final Four. Expect the Black and Blue game to live up to its name.

Temple at Saint Louis, Jan. 11. The Billikens were absurdly young last year and suffered their first losing season since 2005 as a result. This isn't the conference opener, but it's certainly a chance for Saint Louis to declare it belongs in the A-10 title hunt.

Xavier at Temple, Feb. 11. Over the past four seasons, neither the Owls nor the Musketeers have finished worse than tied for second in the A-10 during the regular season. The teams' lone meeting should be the highlight of the conference season.

Three key players:

G Tu Holloway, Xavier. Last year's conference player of the year is the early favorite to repeat. He averaged 19.7 points, 5.0 rebounds and 5.4 assists for the Musketeers and has the best supporting cast of any of the league's biggest stars.

G Kwamain Mitchell, Saint Louis. Mitchell was suspended for the first half of last season and ultimately took a redshirt. But the junior averaged 15.9 points in 2009-10 and is the biggest reason to believe the Billikens can contend for their first NCAA bid since 2000.

F Andrew Nicholson, St. Bonaventure. One of the best players many fans have never heard of, the Canadian averaged 20.8 points and 7.3 rebounds as a junior and is unquestionably the most dynamic frontcourt force in the A-10. How good is he? Perhaps the Bonnies' best player since Bob Lanier.

— Compiled by Patrick Stevens

ACC

Predicted order of finish:

1. North Carolina	5. Virginia	9. Boston College
2. Duke	6. Clemson	10. Maryland
3. Florida State	7. Virginia Tech	11. Wake Forest
4. Miami	8. N.C. State	12. Georgia Tech

Surprise team: Clemson. The Tigers have a pair of capable senior guards (Tanner Smith and Andre Young), an explosive frontcourt option (Devin Booker) and a massively underrated coach (Brad Brownell). No one should be stunned if Clemson finishes in the top half of the league.

Hot seat: Jeff Bzdelik, Wake Forest. Eight of the league's 12 coaching jobs have turned over in the past three years, so no change should be expected this season. But Bzdelik would be wise to show some progress after last year's disastrous 8-24 debut in the Dash.

Three key games:

Duke vs. Michigan State, Nov. 15. Assuming the Blue Devils handle Belmont and Presbyterian this week, coach Mike Krzyzewski will have his first chance to overtake Bob Knight as the career Division I wins leader in this game at Madison Square Garden. Chance two, if necessary: Nov. 18 against Davidson.

North Carolina at Florida State, Jan. 14. It's a serious chance for North Carolina to stumble. The defense-oriented Seminoles knocked off then-No. 1 Duke at home and suffered a two-point loss to North Carolina in Tallahassee last year.

North Carolina at Duke, March 3. If the ACC title race is in any doubt on the final weekend of the regular season, this game at Cameron Indoor Stadium will almost surely have a say in determining the conference tournament's top seed. It usually does.

Three key players:

F Harrison Barnes, North Carolina. Barnes opted to remain in school despite an impressive second half of his freshman season — a run that included a 40-point effort against Clemson in the ACC tournament. He's the favorite for conference player of the year.

G Kendall Marshall, North Carolina. He won't score the most points, grab the most rebounds, swat the most shots or lead the Tar Heels in field goal percentage. The point guard will, however, be Carolina's most valuable player as he orchestrates coach Roy Williams' potent offense.

F Travis McKie, Wake Forest. Lost in the muck of the Demon Deacons' dreadful season was McKie's stout freshman season. No, Wake won't be any good this season. Yes, McKie should be better — and worth watching for his steady and versatile game.

— Compiled by Patrick Stevens

BIG EAST

Predicted order of finish

1. Connecticut	7. Villanova	13. Seton Hall
2. Syracuse	8. West Virginia	14. Providence
3. Pittsburgh	9. Georgetown	15. South Florida
4. Louisville	10. Notre Dame	16. DePaul
5. Cincinnati	11. St. Johns	
6. Marquette	12. Rutgers	

Surprise team: Cincinnati. Mick Cronin's Bearcats return talented big man Yancy Gates and two quick guards among eight lettermen back from last year's squad that earned a No. 6 seed in the NCAA tournament. If another player or two emerges in the frontcourt, the team could play with conference's elite.

Hot seat: Stan Heath, USF. The Bulls haven't been able to emerge from the Big East's lower tier in four years under Heath, going 19-53 in conference. The rest of the coaches of the conference's struggling programs — DePaul, Seton Hall, Providence — are in their first or second years.

Three key games:

Pittsburgh at Syracuse, Jan. 16. Want storylines? The two schools sparked the Big East's turmoil by announcing plans in September to exit for the ACC, plus there's Ashton Gibbs vs. Scoop Jardine and, by the way, a pivotal early-season game.

Cincinnati at UConn, Jan. 18. Early challenge for the Bearcats to show if they're contenders in the conference. Sure, winning in Storrs, Conn., is a brutal order. But a victory against the defending national champions would change the dynamic of Cincinnati's season.

Syracuse at UConn, Feb. 25. The conference's top two teams by virtue of almost every preseason poll meet in the second-to-last game of the regular season. A taste of March Madness in February? Yes, please. Squads also meet Feb. 11 in Syracuse, N.Y.

Three key players:

G Ashton Gibbs, Pittsburgh. Voted the conference's preseason player of the year by coaches, Gibbs led Pittsburgh in scoring the past two seasons. Gibbs might be the conference's best shooter, including hitting 49 percent of his 3-pointers last season.

C Andrew Drummond, UConn. One draft website lists the 6-foot-11 freshman as the possible No. 1 overall pick in next year's NBA draft. Surprise August decision to attend UConn could swing conference race.

F Kris Joseph, Syracuse. Passed up the NBA draft to return for his senior season, as part of a deep and experienced Syracuse squad. If his troublesome knee stays healthy, Joseph, who averaged 14.3 points per game last season, can score inside and out.

— Compiled by Nathan Fenno

“Every now and then you run into a dummy who's like, ‘Hey, I'd hate to be you.’ And I go, ‘Really? I love being me. What a great opportunity I have.’”

— Mark Turgeon

TERPS

From page C14

had head coaching stops at Jacksonville State and Wichita State, it is his candor.

His team is playing poor defense? He'll say it. Things go poorly if it's clear nothing good comes from a player taking eight dribbles before trying to take a shot? He points it out. And if he's that way in public settings with the media, there's no question he's especially blunt with players.

“He's a straight shooter, but if you mess up two times in a row with the same thing, he'll have a spicy side,” center Berend Weijis said. “He will tell you, and then he's very direct with you. He'll

say ‘If you don't do it, you're not going to play.’”

Williams, who rolled up 461 victories at Maryland, has attempted to maintain a distance from the day-to-day happenings of the program since his retirement.

Turgeon has described a positive relationship with Williams, who did attend the school's midnight madness festivities last month.

Nonetheless, there are random reminders Turgeon is taking over for a man whose name will soon adorn the Comcast Center court.

“Every now and then you run into a dummy who's like, ‘Hey, I'd hate to be you.’ And I go, ‘Really? I love being me. What a great opportunity I have,’” Tur-

geon said. “Except for the media, I don't really talk about it.”

The subject will fade soon enough. Turgeon has games to coach with a depleted team, and plenty of job security with an eight-year contract. That's enough time for him to make just as indelible an impression among Terps fans as his predecessor.

“I've said many times I don't think about Gary,” Turgeon said. “I think about doing the best job I can. . . . All due respect to Gary, I want to be a legend. I want to be the next Gary at Maryland. That's why I chose Maryland.”

So the Terps have a new coach who wants to craft a lasting legacy in College Park? Maybe things aren't so different after all.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

George Mason forward Ryan Pearson (grabbing rebound) averaged 14.2 points and 6.7 rebounds for a team coming off a 27-7 season and an appearance in the NCAA tournament.

MASON

From page C14

surging “fear the beard” will be a mainstay in Fairfax in the months to come).

“At the same time, he's another one of the clowns,” Morrison said.

And Pearson knows exactly where he got it from.

“I think it definitely helped me become the player that I am and trying to be that leader on and off the court,” Pearson said. “That New York personality is just so strong. You just can't deny it. When somebody from New York steps in the room, you just say ‘OK, that guy's from New York.’ Guys know. They understand.”

Pearson, a Far Rockaway, N.Y., product, made a steady rise from rotational piece as a freshman to a starter as a sophomore. He grew significantly more consistent last season, and his scoring and rebounding totals have improved annually.

It's a trend that can't sit well with the rest of the CAA, which must contend with both Pearson's boisterous personality and his versatile skill set for another season.

“I think he provides a lot of what I saw in Jamie Skeen for VCU last year,” Hofstra coach Mo Cassara said. “I think he's that guy who's tough to guard inside but can play outside. He's a dynamic scorer, he's a rebounder, he's a veteran. I think he provides that real tough matchup for so many schools. I think if he's not the player of the year, he's certainly going to be a candidate.”

That would be welcome for

Hewitt, the former coach at Georgia Tech who landed at Mason in April after longtime Patriots coach Jim Larranaga departed for Miami.

The Mason roster doesn't look quite like Hewitt envisioned it would when he took the job. Luke Hancock, who hit the winning shot in the Patriots' NCAA tournament defeat of Villanova, transferred to Louisville. Guard Andre Cornelius is suspended for the first 10 regular-season games after he was charged in September with credit card fraud.

Pearson, though, provides a mainstay likely to keep the Patriots in the hunt for the first back-to-back NCAA bids in school history.

“He takes away from your sleep because you sit up at night thinking about how you can put him in different positions and situations where he can create a matchup problem,” said Hewitt, who likened Pearson to a couple of his old players, ex-Siena star Jim Cantamessa and former Georgia Tech forward Anthony McHenry. “He's a major matchup problem. On top of being talented, he's a very smart basketball player.”

There's another influence of the Big Apple, where crafty play is always a way to maximize opportunities. The residue of his upbringing remains strong, and certain to help Mason as it starts a new era under Hewitt.

“I think I have a lot of New York in me,” Pearson said. “Born and raised there, didn't leave until I came to college. I think it just carried over, even here. I think new York will always be in me, no matter where I'm at.”

HOYAS

From page C14

the court, can lurk with Starks. Sure, he can pass the ball. Shooting, however, takes encouragement.

Yes, shooting. Wright was the Hoyas' second-leading scorer last season, averaging 12.9 points per game. With Vee Sanford's offseason transfer to Dayton evaporating any backcourt depth, Georgetown needs Starks to be able to do a bit of everything. That includes scoring.

“You don't see many guys yell at someone about shooting the

ball,” Clark said. “There have been plenty of times I've had to yell at him, ‘Yo, ‘Kel, shoot the ball.’ He's getting better every single day, I'm starting to see a great point guard.”

Starks wonders if Big East coaches picking the Hoyas to finish 10th in the conference is a slap in the face. We'll find out, he says. His voice isn't much different than normal: confident.

Sure, Starks is a question mark. So is the rest of the team. No one knows what the youth will bring, if a question mark can be changed to an exclamation point.

“We're going to go,” Lubick said, “as he goes.”

COLONIAL

Predicted order of finish

1. Drexel	7. Delaware
2. George Mason	8. Northeastern
3. Old Dominion	9. Hofstra
4. Virginia Commonwealth	10. UNC Wilmington
5. William & Mary	11. Georgia State
6. James Madison	12. Towson

Surprise team: William & Mary. Picked sixth in the conference preseason poll, the Tribe could contend for a top-four spot in the conference. Quinn McDowell is the only one of the CAA's top 10 scorers from a year ago who returns, and coach Tony Shaver has a history of maximizing the talent at his disposal.

Hot seat: Monte Ross, Delaware. The Blue Hens doubled their win total in 2010-11 but still wound up with their fifth losing season in as many years under Ross. Delaware probably isn't in position to contend for a conference title yet, but Ross might need to show further progress this season.

Three key games:

VCU at Alabama, Nov. 27. It's a clash of VCU coaches past and present as Shaka Smart takes his team to Tuscaloosa to face Anthony Grant and the Crimson Tide. It's also an early barometer for the Rams as they come off the first Final Four appearance in program history.

George Mason at Drexel, Jan. 12. The preseason favorites meet for the only time this season in one of the schedule's rare Thursday conference games. It's the fifth league game for both teams, but it could still prove a crucial tiebreaker once late February arrives.

Drexel at Old Dominion, Feb. 25. Another important one-shot deal comes on the final day of the regular season. It could be a first-to-50-wins sort of day when Bruiser Flint's Dragons visit Blaine Taylor (now sans mustache) and the always rugged Monarchs in Norfolk.

Three key players:

G Kent Bazemore, Old Dominion. The conference's preseason player of the year is a defensive ace who has led the CAA in steals the past two seasons. He'll be asked to carry the Monarchs, who were significantly depleted by graduation, at the offensive end as well.

G/F Bradford Burgess, VCU. The top returning player from the Rams' Final Four team, Burgess ranked in the top 15 in the CAA in scoring (14.3), rebounding (6.3) and steals (1.1) last season. He's VCU's lone senior.

F Samme Givens, Drexel. Even at 6-foot-5, the double-double machine is a perfect match for the grind-it-out style the Dragons prefer. Count on the tenacious Givens to lead the CAA in rebounding, perhaps by a healthy margin.

— Compiled by Patrick Stevens

PATRIOT

Predicted order of finish:

1. Lehigh	5. Lafayette
2. Bucknell	6. Navy
3. Holy Cross	7. Colgate
4. American	8. Army

Surprise team: American. The Eagles have never finished outside the top half of the league since joining in 2001-02. Even with just one starter back, American possesses the talent to at least earn a home game for the first day of the conference tournament.

Hot seat: None. Colgate and Navy have new coaches, Army's Zach Spiker is only in his third season and Lafayette's Fran O'Hanlon has long been one of the Patriot League's top sideline tacticians. Don't look for any firings in this league after the season.

Three key games:

Lehigh at Holy Cross, Jan. 7. The conference opener will be a fine opportunity for the Crusaders, who haven't produced a winning Patriot League record in the two years since Ralph Willard departed, to assert themselves as contenders. Playing at home doesn't hurt.

Bucknell at Lehigh, Jan. 18. The in-state showdown could provide an early edge in the race for homecourt advantage throughout the league tournament. The return game is Feb. 16 in Lewisburg.

Navy at Army, Feb. 11. Regardless of the sport, it's a rivalry worth watching. This is the annual Star Game, so additional bragging rights are at stake. The teams also meet Jan. 14 at Alumni Hall in Annapolis.

Three key players:

G Tony Johnson, Lafayette. The junior led the conference in assists last season as the Leopards reached the league title game. If they're to get there again — or perhaps even earn their first NCAA bid in more than a decade — Johnson will be a pivotal figure.

G C.J. McCollum, Lehigh. The Patriot player of the year in 2009-10 is the preseason pick for the honor this year. He averaged a conference-best 21.8 points and was also the Patriot leader in free throw percentage (.845) and steals (2.5).

F Mike Muscala, Bucknell. Last year's Patriot player of the year and conference tournament MVP is back for his junior season. Muscala averaged 14.9 points and 7.3 rebounds in 2010-11 and easily led the conference in blocked shots with 67.

— Compiled by Patrick Stevens

COLLEGE PREVIEW

“A lot of people don’t really know what I can do. They don’t know if I’m apt for the position, which is fine. There should be question marks.”

— Markel Starks

GEORGETOWN

‘X’ factor at the point

Starks aware that questions abound about his ability

By NATHAN FENNO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Markel Starks is a question mark. The Georgetown sophomore admits the doubt. Embraces the uncertainty. All but appropriates the question mark as part of his identity.

“Pretty much all the point guards that come here, they have a big question mark,” Starks said. “A lot of people don’t really know what I can do. They don’t know if I’m apt for the position, which is fine. There should be question marks.”

Sure, he played in 30 games last season. But 9.7 minutes per game as a wide-eyed freshman can’t reveal what comprises a point guard.

Now comes Starks’ test.

Chris Wright is gone. He was Georgetown’s glue. A backcourt institution. The one who filled the stat sheet at point guard. Made coach John Thompson III’s Princeton offense hum. Subtract him, and the Hoyas looked like a car trying to run without gasoline.

That’s what happened after Wright broke a bone in his left hand Feb. 23. He missed three games after surgery — all losses by a combined 41 points — before returning at less than full strength for Georgetown’s 18-point loss to Virginia Commonwealth in the NCAA tournament’s second round.

Replacing Wright isn’t exactly what the 6-foot-2, 175-pound Starks has planned.

“I’m just taking the torch and running with it,” Starks said. “It’s a new step. A new beginning.”

One of 10 freshmen and sophomores on Georgetown’s roster, Starks is similar to the rest of the youth-filled squad. Talented, after a standout career at Georgetown Prep playing for former Hoyas guard Dwayne Bryant. A relative unknown, after averaging only 1.5 points and handing out 20 assists in spurts of court time last season. Competitive, insisting the old Georgetown toughness is back.

“His attitude has been different,” senior center Henry Sims said. “We haven’t gotten where we want to get. We haven’t gotten to the Sweet 16s and Elite Eights and won the Big East tournament. You never want to leave a place without your name being remembered.”

Starks fights nerves about taking over at point guard. Inspiration comes from Boston Celtics point guard Rajon Rondo. Starks sees the same quickness. Same height. Same build. Same physical features.

And Rondo’s teammates want to play with him. That matters more to Starks than assists or steals. It’s what he aspires to, perhaps not surprising from someone who hopes to be a congressman.

“Honestly, I want that to be me,” Starks said. “I want the guys to want to play with me, not for me.”

Starks is easy with his smile and bold with his words. He’s vocal (or, more accurately, “very, very vocal,” as emphasized by sophomore forward Nate Lubick). But a freshman’s timidity, at least on



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Georgetown guard Markel Starks averaged 9.7 minutes a game last season as a freshman. He has huge shoes to fill with Chris Wright no longer in the backcourt.

GEORGETOWN HOYAS



Coach: John Thompson III. Eighth year, 160-73; 228-115 overall

Key player: G Jason Clark. Leading returning scorer (12 points per game) worked over the summer to improve his ballhandling. Team will lean on his shooting, which dipped from 42.4 percent from beyond the 3-point line as a sophomore to 34.7 percent last season.

Biggest loss: G Chris Wright. The point guard made Georgetown’s offense hum. After he broke a bone in his left hand in February, the Hoyas didn’t win another game. Wasn’t spectacular, but distributed the basketball, scored and provided leadership on and off the court.

Best addition: F Otto Porter. Late addition to Hoyas’ recruiting class ranked among the country’s top 30 recruits. The small forward is a magnet for the basketball and such an accurate midrange shooter that senior center Henry Sims believes he’s “horrible to play against because he makes everything.”

Best case: The talk of a different attitude than last season and return to Georgetown toughness of years past is for real. Team is able to overcome youthful mistakes, sophomore Markel Starks can handle everyday point guard duties and depth emerges in frontcourt.

Worst case: Ups and downs are a given for a roster with 10 freshmen and sophomores. But if they don’t adapt quickly to the rigors of Big East play — or injuries expose depth issues with ballhandlers and in the frontcourt — the season could quickly become an ordeal.

Three key games:

Georgetown vs. Kansas, Nov. 21. Early test at the Maui Invitational will provide a window into the Hoyas’ development. Most of Washington will be asleep for the 11:50 p.m. ET tip, but those still up will get to see how Georgetown defends talented Kansas big man (and D.C. native) Thomas Robinson.

Georgetown at Louisville, Dec. 28. The Hoyas’ Big East opener caps a difficult six-day stretch that also includes a home game against Memphis. Georgetown edged Louisville in the only meeting last season and forced guard Peyton Siva into a career-worst eight turnovers. Siva is back, and this won’t be an easy way to start conference play.

Georgetown at Syracuse, Feb. 8. Syracuse is off to the ACC. When, exactly, is something lawyers likely will figure out. The departure and uncertainty over the series’ continuation adds weight to the already-intense rivalry. Syracuse, N.Y., in February isn’t welcoming on the court or on its frigid streets.

— Compiled by Nathan Fenno

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

MARYLAND

Turgeon is prepared to lay the foundation for legacy with Terps

By PATRICK STEVENS
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

New Maryland basketball coach Mark Turgeon didn’t walk into Comcast Center for the Terrapins’ exhibition game last week with a music flourish or a fist pump.

He didn’t leave with a drenched dress shirt or a postgame chat with the school’s broadcast crew while standing near the sideline he just prowled for two hours.

Turgeon, who has remarked on several occasions since his hire in May about his lack of ego, is undoubtedly comfortable in his own skin.

He almost has to be following Terps legend Gary Williams, who retired after 22 seasons, 14 NCAA tournament trips, two Final Fours and the Maryland athletic department’s forever moment, the 2002 national title.

So things aren’t the same. Ultimately, they probably don’t need to be, even if it is striking that the program’s pilot who pulled the Terps out of their darkest days is no longer around.

“Not having that face around the office or his presence in the gym itself during practice and not running the flex offense is different for us,” guard Sean Mosley said. “It’s different for guys who come and watch Maryland basketball. I think it was for the better, and I think coach Turgeon is doing a great job of selling himself to the University of Maryland.”

The first results on Turgeon’s tenure will trickle in Sunday, when Maryland plays host to UNC Wilmington in its season opener. The reality of his first year is if the bar isn’t so low Turgeon can step over it, a modest hop will suffice.

The Terps were picked ninth in the ACC, and that was when it was assumed Pe’Shon Howard would play point guard. He’s out until at least January with a broken foot. Freshman center Alex Len won’t be eligible until after Christmas. For the first 10 games, Maryland will play with seven scholarship players.

Williams at one point took the Terps to the second weekend of the NCAA tournament seven times in 10 years, a consistency that was probably underappreciated at the time. Eight years have come and gone without that feat, though the Terps did win an ACC tournament (2004) and shared an ACC regular-season title (2010) in that span.

Turgeon’s long-term task is re-establishing Maryland as a nationally elite program, and he’s encouraged by the support he’s received since arriving from Texas A&M.

“It’s been great, probably better,” Turgeon said. “Maryland fans want to win, so they accepted me from day one. They don’t want to go through a losing coach and then have to hire somebody else and then go through that transition. They want me to be the guy. They want me to win. The whole area’s been that way — the high school coaches, the AAU coaches, the fans.”

There’s little reason to doubt him. If there’s one striking quality about the former Kansas point guard who also

MARYLAND TERRAPINS



Coach: Mark Turgeon. First season; 250-159 overall

Key player: G Terrell Stoglin. The sophomore will run the point out of necessity for the season’s first two months, and he’ll also likely need to provide a significant scoring boost and stay out of foul trouble for the depleted Terrapins. No pressure.

Biggest loss: F Jordan Williams. The walking double-double slowed down a bit late in his sophomore season, turned pro and was an early second-round pick. If he’d stayed, Maryland would be picked much higher in the ACC.

Top newcomer: G Nick Faust. The only one of three signees who remained in the fold after Gary Williams’ retirement, Faust will play plenty out of necessity. That will include some work as a backup point guard.

Best case: Guard Pe’Shon Howard (foot) and center **Alex Len** (NCAA-mandated suspension) return in time for the conference schedule and help the Terps finish around .500 in ACC play.

Worst case: Howard ultimately redshirts and no consistency emerges among untested frontcourt options, leaving Maryland with its first losing season in 19 years and a date with the ACC cellar.

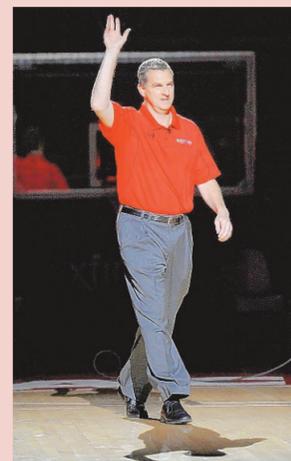
Key games:

UNC Wilmington at Maryland, Nov. 13. No fist pump. No maniacal sweating. No Garyland. This is going to take some getting used to, starting with the Terps’ season opener in College Park.

Albany at Maryland, Dec. 28. Len, a 7-foot-1 freshman, will sit out the first 10 games of the season. This is the Terps’ 11th game. Maryland’s Christmas gets extended a couple of days this year.

Duke at Maryland, Jan. 25. Gary Williams’ court-naming ceremony will take place this night, as if it wasn’t already guaranteed of being the most raucous atmosphere of the season.

— Compiled by Patrick Stevens



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mark Turgeon advanced to the NCAA tournament in each of his last four years at Texas A&M.

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

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GEORGE MASON PATRIOTS



Coach: Paul Hewitt. First season; 256-189 overall

Key player: F Mike Morrison. The Patriots will be especially dangerous if Morrison emerges as a consistent interior threat after averaging 6.8 points and 5.5 rebounds.

Biggest loss: G Cam Long. While Luke Hancock’s transfer to Louisville hurt, the Patriots surely will miss a senior who averaged 15.1 points and is the only player in school history with 1,400 points, 500 rebounds and 300 assists.

Top newcomer: F Erik Copes. While Mason’s backcourt is in greater flux than its frontcourt, Copes is still a top-100 recruit who figures to play a prominent role for the Patriots over the next four years.

Best case: G Andre Cornelius returns from his suspension quickly, the backcourt stabilizes and Hewitt leads the Patriots to their first CAA tournament title since 2008 and a second straight NCAA bid.

Worst case: The backcourt situation never entirely sorts itself out. Mason’s push for a faster pace is negated by several defense-first CAA teams, and the Patriots fall to fourth or fifth in the conference.

Key games:

George Mason at Virginia, Dec. 6. Between the resumption of an in-state series (the teams haven’t met since 1997) and the chance to secure a resume-boosting win, this one is significant for both.

George Mason at Drexel, Jan. 12. The teams’ only regular-season meeting is at the DAC, a small but rowdy environment for an early conference game with major long-term implications.

VCU at George Mason, Feb. 14. The first end of a home-and-home (the Patriots visit Broad Street on Feb. 25) should be just the latest in a long line of feisty games between the two CAA titans.

— Compiled by Patrick Stevens

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

GEORGE MASON

Pearson stays in New York groove Mouth is in overdrive, but Patriots forward backs it up

By PATRICK STEVENS
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Paul Hewitt could pick up only so much on tape about his new players at George Mason.

It took one practice to figure out Ryan Pearson was more athletic than he looked on film. And he required even less time to determine exactly where the senior forward grew up.

“He can get on people pretty good,” Hewitt said. “There’s no mistaking he’s from New York. He can talk trash with the best of them. I told him at practice, when he was giving one of my young guys a hard time and giving him the blues, I said ‘Keep it up, don’t worry about it.’”

Pearson, of course, plans on causing problems

for the rest of the CAA in the months to come.

The senior, a second-team all-conference pick last year when he averaged 14.2 points and 6.7 rebounds, is the top returning player from a team coming off a 27-7 season and an appearance in the NCAA tournament round of 32. Any encore, to be certain, won’t be done quietly.

Teammate Mike Morrison offers a description in short bursts: Tough-nosed. Aggressive.

Yet there’s another part of that personality, the one that would pose a question on his Twitter page in late October about whether he should shed his increasingly bountiful beard. (Pearson offered assurances the beard is safe for the the season, as-

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