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## Henry adds muscle, confidence

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South Carolina head coach Frank Martin always told Demetrius Henry that his first college season wasn't going to be easy.

Hearing that from his head coach was one thing for the four-star forward from Miami, Florida. Experiencing it was another.

Henry played in all 34 games as a freshman last season, making 29 starts. But he averaged just 4.0 points, 3.4 rebounds and 0.6 blocks per game and was regularly pushed around by thicker bodies in the paint.

Months later, Henry would call it a "humbling experience."

"It was rough. It was definitely different," Henry said. "Coming from high school and prep school, I was much bigger than everyone. You come to school and you've got to play Patric Young and then the next night Jarnell Stokes and then Johnny O'Brien."

At 6-foot-9 and 205 pounds, Henry was too small and too weak to hold his own near the basket. His teammates in the frontcourt, Mindaugas Kacinas and Laimonas Chatkevicius, weren't much better, their rebounding struggles often drawing Martin's ire in postgame press conferences.

"He wasn't physically ready to deal with the rigors or the physicality of the college practice, let alone a game," Martin said. "And he wanted to. He just couldn't do it. That's why I kept playing him. He wanted to. If he would have thrown in the towel, then I wouldn't have played him."

Henry didn't lack for confidence entering college, as he turned down a bevy of other Division 1 offers to attend USC. But his freshman season was his first time ever being "punched in the mouth," Martin said.

Martin said Henry's struggles seemed to take a toll on his confidence; the pressure that comes with being part of a freshman class many hope will turn around the program didn't help.

"It's a little different when you're 18 and your moment of failure is in front of 12,000 people and the world to watch on television if they choose to than in a room with just 10 guys," Martin said. "That negative moment is impactful when you care."

Martin, who has long held he's more concerned with his players' personal growth than wins and losses, kept the freshman forward on the floor and had plenty of one-on-one talks with him throughout the season.

Some of them were about basketball. But many weren't, venturing to broader and perhaps more important topics.

"I think he just believed in me," said

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"I think he just believed in me," said Henry. "I think he probably saw bright spots where he knew I could do something, and he was just waiting for that moment for me to do what I actually can do."

Henry's dilemma was a simple, if not pleasant, fix. He needed to be bigger to be better. So he stayed in Columbia this May, a month when most of his teammates went home to be with their families, to work out with Scott Greenawalt, the team's strength and conditioning coach.

Henry gained about 15 pounds of muscle and says he's now around the 230-pound range. Henry said he's noticed a significant difference in his conditioning this preseason.



Paul Collins  
**Demetrius Henry averaged four points, 3.4 rebounds and 0.6 blocks per game last season.**

His confidence is coming around as well.

"I don't get pushed around like I did last year," Henry said. "I'm rebounding better. I'm catching balls better. It's a noticeable difference this year."

Henry scored 15 points and hauled in seven rebounds in USC's 92-47 preseason exhibition victory over Benedict, manhandling the Tigers' smaller forwards in the process.

"I know he's in a much better place now, mentally and physically," Martin said.

One preseason practice recently, Martin chided Henry for having not yet recorded a rebound.

Moments later, Henry corralled on offensive rebound and flushed a put-back dunk, much to his coach's excitement.

"I haven't jumped in about 10 years," Martin said. "I left the ground when I saw him dunk that ball. It was fun to watch."

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