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University of Miami
Men's Basketball Clips
2012-13

Alabama DB remembers Larkin as football phenom

Sun Sentinel
Michael Casagrande
Jan. 5, 2013

MIAMI GARDENS — Miami sophomore basketball player Shane Larkin is having a breakout season, but one of his former high school teammates remembers him for his versatility.

Alabama safety HaHa Clinton-Dix still keeps up with his Dr. Phillips High teammate and they talk from time to time.

"I think he's better at football, though," Clinton-Dix said at Saturday's BCS National Championship Game media day. "He's a great athlete."

Clinton-Dix, who was one of the nation's top defensive back recruits in the 2011 signing class, recalls Larkin gashing defenses as a quarterback, running back and defensive back.

"He was the man," Clinton-Dix said.

Larkin averages 13.5 points and 3.6 assists per game for the 10-3 Hurricane team that opened ACC play with a 62-49 win over Georgia Tech.

Injuries continue to beset Miami Hurricanes

Examiner
Paul Borden
Jan. 3, 2013

If University of Miami men's basketball coach Jim Larranaga had one wish for the season as his Hurricanes go into their Atlantic Coast Conference opener at Georgia Tech, it likely would be for good health for his team.

It's something he hasn't had yet in his brief time in Coral Gables.

Center Reggie Johnson has missed the last four games with a broken thumb, and guard Garrius Adams is likely done for the season with a knee injury.

Johnson at least has been able to play in seven games and was averaging a double-double (12.5 points, 10.1 rebounds) when he was hurt in practice the day before the Hurricanes played in the pre-Christmas Diamond Head Classic in Honolulu.

Adams, who has 37 career starts in 87 games, hasn't played at all in 2012-13.

The day after his team's 76-59 Wednesday night win over La Salle, Larranaga took a moment to count up all the players who have missed time either because of injuries (Adams and Johnson), a suspension (Durand Scott), or a change of heart (guard Melvin Johnson, who asked out of his letter-of-intent last summer, and Bishop Daniels, who left after the semester break).

"This is a projection of where we are now," Larranaga said. "Garrius Adams is going to miss the season, so that's probably 32 games. Reggie Johnson, he's already missed four, I'm guessing he probably will miss 13 games."

Actually, it is five Johnson has already missed -- he sat out one earlier because of a back injury.

"Bishop Daniels, we had him for four games," Larranaga continued. "I have him missing 28 games. Melvin Johnson, who is a kid we signed, he's not here, I have him missing 32 games. Durand Scott missed three games.

"That's 108 games where we are undermanned, where we don't have a full complement. That's unusual, very unusual. And last year it was the same thing."

That total of games missed by players for Larranaga's first season at Miami -- 106.

"It's challenging enough when your team is healthy to figure out your starters, your substitution pattern, how you're going to play offense, how you're going to play defense," the coach said. "But when you have constant moving pieces -- this guy's in, this guy's out ..."

He let the sentence hang for its obvious conclusion: It ain't easy.

It's not that Miami is alone with this.

In fact, injuries that sidelined players like guard Kendall Marshall, forward John Henson, guard Leslie McDonald, and guard Dexter Strickland for various stretches, including the postseason, cost North Carolina a legitimate shot at a national championship in 2012.

For Miami, the stakes don't aren't quite as high, but the casualty list could cost the Hurricanes a shot at their first NCAA Tournament berth since 2008, depending on how they fare without Johnson in the early going.

The Hurricanes are 9-3 overall, which includes a signature win over Michigan State, and have played one of the five most difficult schedules in the country, according to RPI rankings.

With both Johnson and Scott (missed the first three games) available, they are 7-0. Without

one of those two, they are 2-3.

And they have nothing but ACC games remaining in the regular season, starting with the trip to Atlanta for Saturday's game against Georgia Tech.

The Yellow Jackets are off to a surprising 10-2 start, have won their last six and are 8-0 at home. They are one of the top teams in the country statistically in scoring defense, yielding only 53.5 points a game. That's No. 2 in the conference behind Virginia (50.7).

"They are a very, very, very good, tough, hard-nosed man-to-man team," Larranaga said of coach Brian Kellogg's Jackets. "The term in basketball now is 'pack.' They 'pack' in it around the basket and make it very hard for you to get layups and post feeds."

Men's Hoops Under the Radar

CaneSport
Jim Martz
Dec. 22, 2012

What will it take for Jim Larranaga's talented basketball team to receive the attention and respect it deserves? Defeat top-ranked Duke?

The Hurricanes will have a couple of opportunities to do that - Jan. 23 at the BankUnited Center and March 2 at Durham, N.C.

It shouldn't have to come to that because the Canes already have knocked off then-13th ranked and traditional power Michigan State 67-59. And they have clearly shown they can with poise against quality opponents on the road such as UMass and Central Florida.

Larranaga is fielding what is arguably the best UM men's basketball team since Leonard Hamilton took the Hurricanes to the NCAA Sweet 16 in 2000. Yet the Canes can't make page one of the home town paper, the Miami Herald, except when they whipped the Spartans.

When they trounced undefeated UNC-Charlotte 77-46, the story was back on page seven. After they thumped a 6-2 UCF team in Orlando 72-50, they moved up to page two but there were just four paragraphs, no quotes.

Page one, meanwhile, had a story on what NHL players are doing during the lockout and a feature on the Petino father-son meeting between Louisville and FIU, plus the Heat and Dolphins.

And on the glut of five sports talk stations in South Florida you seldom hear mention of UM basketball except on the UM flagship station WQAM's once a week show.

Moreover, the two major rankings, the AP (writers/broadcasters) and USA Today (coaches) have barely noticed. The Hurri-

canes are unranked by the coaches and they received only three votes in the AP poll, putting them 35th.

They are getting some attention nationally, however. The CBSSports.com RPI rankings have Miami 11th, ahead of such teams as Indiana, Louisville, Florida and Ohio State, who are in the top 10 of the AP and coaches' polls.

Someone else has noticed, and his perspective should be respected. Pete Gillen, basketball analyst for CBS College Sports Network and former coach at Virginia, Xavier and Providence, gushed about Larranaga and the Hurricanes during Tuesday night's national telecast of the UCF game.

"They could be an Elite Eight team," Gillen said more than once. "They could be one of the top two in the ACC, right behind Duke ... They're better than North Carolina State (ranked 25th) ... I love their back court."

Gillen lauded the Canes' tenacious defense and noted that defense would be a crucial factor in carrying a team deep into the NCAA tournament. Miami is holding opponents to an average of just 59.7 points per game.

Teams that go deep in the Big Dance usually feature a strong defense and quality guards. Hamilton's team that advanced to the Sweet 16 had those qualities as the veteran-laden team was led by guard-forwards Johnny Hemsley and Vernon Jennings and forward Mario Bland.

This year the Hurricanes boast an experienced team and much more size than the Sweet 16 squad, with 6-10, 292-pound center Reggie Johnson; 6-11, 242-pound forward Kenny Kadji; 6-5, 220-pound guard Trey McKinney Jones; and 6-5, 203-pound guard Durand Scott, all of them seniors.

Then there's the sparkplug point guard in 5-11, 176-pound sophomore Shane Larkin, who

was just named to the 2013 Bob Cousy Award watch list. The award recognizes the top point guard.

Gillen said the Hurricanes lack depth, though they have received quality minutes from 6-10 senior forward-center Julian Gamble. But they need more from 6-6 junior forward Erik Swoope and hot-cold 6-6 junior guard Rion Brown. They miss 6-6 guard Garrius Adams, who is injured and may have to be redshirted.

Tonye Jekiri, a 7-0 freshman center, is showing improvement and, obviously, is a shot blocker.

Larranaga likes the balance on the team and the way players share the ball.

Perhaps the 63-51 loss at Florida Gulf Coast in the second game of the season skewed the perception of this team. But FGC is a decent team at 8-4 and the Hurricanes didn't have Scott in the early season due to NCAA sanctions carried over from last season.

Miami takes a six-game winning streak into the Diamond Head Classic in Honolulu, Hawaii, beginning today against the host Hawaii Rainbows. The tournament provides an opportunity for the Canes to build their resume and RPI.

It may not get them on page one of the home-town paper, and it may take a defeat of Duke to get mention on radio talk shows. But you've got to like what Larranaga and his staff and players are putting together this season.

Elite Eight? That would get everyone's attention.

Long Hawaii trip has long-term impact for Miami

Miami Herald
Michelle Kaufman
Dec. 22, 2012

The University of Miami men's basketball team, which has quietly racked up a 7-1 record and a No. 10 RPI rating, crammed its long legs into an airplane and traveled 4,800 miles to Hawaii for the Diamond Head Classic, an eight-team holiday tournament that includes fourth-ranked Arizona and 18th-ranked San Diego State.

The Hurricanes arrived on Thursday night, took the obligatory leis-around-the-neck photo at the Honolulu airport, and spent Friday practicing and getting acclimated to the time difference. Their first game is Saturday at 7:30 p.m. local time (12:30 a.m. Sunday, Miami time) against the host University of Hawaii. Talk about a home-court advantage for the Warriors. The one team that didn't have to travel will play the team that traveled the longest distance.

If UM wins, its Sunday opponent would be the winner of the game between Arizona and East Tennessee State. Other first-round games are Indiana State vs. Ole Miss and San Francisco vs. San Diego State. The final is Christmas Day.

Aside from the rare opportunity to play in Hawaii and visit Pearl Harbor, which the Canes plan to do Monday, UM coach Jim Larranaga views this tournament as an excellent chance for his team to maintain its high RPI before heading into the Atlantic Coast Conference schedule in January. The Canes received votes in the AP Top 25 poll last week, and a win over Arizona would surely vault them to the list.

"Your nonconference schedule is built with one thing in mind, and that is to have a quality RPI ranking at the end of your nonconference games," Larranaga said. "The teams in this tournament, a number of them are in the top

20 to 40, and that's the kind of competition you want to face if you want to earn an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament.

"So, it's going to be vitally important for us to play well and advance to improve our status for the selection committee to look at us as a quality team deserving of a bid."

The Warriors are playing well of late and eager for the challenge.

"Obviously, we have a huge game against an outstanding team in Miami," coach Gib Arnold said. "They're getting top-20 votes and they're big and strong and athletic like an ACC team. ... We have a lot to prove. We have a chance to play those guys at home, and we really want to play our best."

The Warriors are 5-3 and back in Honolulu after playing last week on the island of Moloka'i, where they beat NCAA Division II neighbor Chaminade 104-93.

The Warriors hit season highs for points, field-goal percentage (.600), three-pointers made (11) and three-point percentage (.524).

"If we come out on top out there, I think we'd definitely be nationally ranked," UM guard Rion Brown said. "We're all excited to see Hawaii, but our main goal out there is to come home with the title."

Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/12/22/3153153/long-hawaii-trip-has-long-term.html#storylink=cpy>

Hawaii trip not a Christmas vacation for 'Canes

FOX Sports Florida
Charlie McCarthy
Dec. 21, 2012

Nobody needs to tell Miami coach Jim Larranaga that a trip to Hawaii does not guarantee fun and games.

Games? Yes. Three to be exact.

Fun? Not necessarily.

"We went out there my first year (as an assistant) at Virginia and we almost lost to Chaminade in a very, very close game," Larranaga said Wednesday. "Two years later, we went out there as the No. 1 in the country and did lose to Chaminade.

"We kind of put them on the map back then, and people thought, well, we didn't play very well. The fact of the matter is, those teams on the islands are good. They have talent."

Larranaga and the Hurricanes now are on Oahu, where they will play in the Diamond Head Classic. Miami will face Hawaii — "the home team, they don't have to travel at all," as Larranaga put it — on Saturday night (or Sunday morning, 12:30 a.m. ET). The Canes then will meet fourth-ranked Arizona or East Tennessee State on Sunday before playing a final game on Christmas Day.

Other teams competing in the tournament include No. 18 San Diego State, Indiana State, Mississippi and San Francisco.

"We're excited to go there because we heard it's like a paradise," 7-foot freshman center Tonye Jekiri said. "But our major goal is to win the tournament. The way we're playing now, we really see ourselves winning the whole thing. That would be the biggest fun we have there -- winning the tournament."

Miami, fourth behind N.C. State, Duke and North Carolina in a preseason poll of the ACC

coaches, stumbled badly when it lost at Florida Gulf Coast in the season's second game. Guard Durand Scott, who leads the Canes in scoring with 15.6 ppg., missed that game while sitting out the second half of a six-game NCAA suspension for receiving impermissible benefits that began last season.

Scott and the 'Canes, however, have rebounded nicely; victories against then-No. 13 Michigan State at home and at Massachusetts have been the highlights of the non-conference slate so far. Miami won its sixth straight game by beating the University of Central Florida 72-50 at Orlando on Tuesday night.

The Hurricanes then left Miami on Thursday morning for a nearly 5,000-mile commercial flight trek to Dallas and then Honolulu. The team planned to enjoy a luau Friday night and a trip to Pearl Harbor on Christmas Eve — other than that, the focus will be basketball.

"This kind of trip is very much like a business trip in that you're so busy preparing ... there's not a lot of down time," Larranaga said. "There's a lot of travel because we're traveling so far. I would say it's a good time to bond but there's not a lot of free time."

With Arizona a potential second-round opponent at the Classic and a possible game against San Diego State, the Hurricanes (7-1) know they can crack the Top 25 with a good showing.

The Diamond Head Classic also represents a chance to impress the NCAA Tournament selection committee.

"Your non-conference schedule is really built with one thing in mind, and that's to have a quality RPI ranking at the end of your non-conference play," Larranaga said.

"The teams in this tournament, a number of them are in the Top 20, 40, 50 ... and that's the kind of competition you want to face if you

want to earn an at-large bid. So it's going to be vitally important for us to play well and advance to improve our status for the Selection Committee to look at us as a quality team deserving of an at-large bid."

After returning from Hawaii, the Hurricanes will enjoy a few days of rest before playing host to La Salle on Jan. 2. The ACC slate will begin Jan. 5 at Georgia Tech.

Scott and fellow senior Reggie Johnson (12.6 ppg., 10.1 rpg.) have led the way for a balanced Miami attack. Sophomore Shane Larkin (14.8) and seniors Kenny Kadji (11.3) and Trey McKinney Jones (11.0) round out the double-figure scorers.

Besides his players' knack for sharing the ball offensively, Larranaga has been pleased with defensive improvements.

"What we've been working in is 'help the helper,'" Larranaga said. "We've been OK with the first help — a guy gets beat and the first help is there, but then often ... let's say it's Reggie or Kenny, they help but then their man scores. So we need someone to help the helper.

"You need first help, second help and third help. We did that (Tuesday night) probably the best we've done."

With ACC opponents waiting soon after the Diamond Classic, the Hurricanes realize there's no time to relax.

"We're still striving to get better," Scott said. "We just want to go out there and work hard and get better at every key aspect of the game."

Chris Caputo Is Living His Hoop Dream

Westfield State Communications Office
Mickey Curtis
Dec. 20, 2012

It is a full court shot from Parenzo Hall Gym to the big time world of college basketball, but Westfield State alumnus Chris Caputo is living his dream as an assistant coach at the University of Miami.

Caputo, a 2002 Westfield State graduate and a four-year letterwinner as a reserve point guard for the Owls, has been in sunny south Florida for the past two years. Prior to that, he was a member of the George Mason University coaching staff in Fairfax, Va., for nine years. The 32-year-old Caputo already has many memorable moments in his short basketball odyssey: Miami's upset victory at Duke last season, George Mason's remarkable run to the NCAA Division I Final Four in 2006, and his four years at Westfield State.

"I've seen a lot of great places like Duke and North Carolina and I have been to the Final Four, but I wouldn't trade those for my time at Westfield; it was special and worthwhile," said Caputo the day before the Miami Hurricanes departed for a Christmas Tournament in Hawaii.

Caputo's passion for coaching began at an early age and continued at Westfield State. As a seldom-used point guard for the Owls, Caputo was a keen observer on the bench as a member of Westfield State head coach Rich Sutter's first recruiting class in 1998. In between classes he was a regular visitor to Sutter's office, peppering him with questions on coaching strategies. Caputo also watched a lot of game tape on Westfield opponents and gave Sutter detailed scouting reports. "I don't know if he used them," said Caputo with a chuckle.

Interestingly, Caputo stresses his academics at Westfield State also played a pivotal role in preparing him for the 24/7 world of big-time college basketball.

"My time at Westfield was really valuable," said Caputo. "It's a place where you cannot get lost because it is a smaller school and a lot of demands are put on you academically. I

was a finance and economics major where I had to grind it out and fight through it studying, especially near the end of the semester. That's helped me today."

Caputo's connections (he and Miami head coach Jim Larranaga both graduated from Archbishop Malloy High School in New York City where they played for the legendary coach Jack Curran), coaching passion and work ethic landed him a job straight out of Westfield State as a volunteer assistant coach for Larranaga at George Mason. The Elmhurst, N.Y. native toiled as an unpaid assistant for three years before becoming a full-time staff member at George Mason in 2005. He even turned down several full-time paid positions at other colleges to remain at George Mason because it was such a price-less training ground.

"Ten years ago there were not as many NCAA restrictions and I was able to do more things," said Caputo in explaining why he didn't take the money and run. "In addition to breaking down film, I could make calls to recruits, work camps and recruit off campus within 30 miles of the school. Plus coach Larranaga is a great mentor and a veteran in the business."

Caputo's main duties at the University of Miami are recruiting and scouting opponents. He admits the pay and perks are good; his per diem is a lot more than the \$7.00 meal money he received at Westfield State. But the lifestyle isn't always glamorous and the pressure to win is enormous as Miami is a member of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"It's more than just two hours in suits coaching basketball," said Caputo. "There are late nights watching film, countless trips to see high school recruits that you are not going to get, and hours of sacrifice and family time missed. It is a tough profession and a very workmanlike job. But being at Miami has been great and the school has such a name brand - five football national titles and four baseball national titles. And the ACC is the best basketball conference in the country. Every night is a moment in this league. It's a great city with great weather and an exciting place to be."

Caputo's first "coaching moment" came when he was a sophomore in high school. In March of 1996, he and a friend went to the Hilton in midtown Manhattan, the headquarters for the

NCAA Final Four. Caputo watched in awe as a who's who of coaches roamed the lobby.

"I saw coaches like Mike Krzyzewski and Jerry Tarkanian and I said this is what I want to do, this is cool," said Caputo. "Then 10 years to the date I was living out my dream of walking around the lobby at the Final Four as a coach."

One day Caputo dreams of strolling the lobby and the sidelines as a Division I head coach. He is realistic that may not happen for some time, if at all, because head coaching positions are scarce and highly sought. But he does point out that that four of Larranaga's former assistants during the past decade are currently head coaches. A content Caputo just bides his time, works hard, and continues to network and make new friends in the coaching profession. He frequently sends text messages to Erik Spoelstrag, the head coach of the 2012 NBA champion Miami Heat.

"Anyone who is in this business does it to become a head coach," said Caputo. "But if I become a head coach it has to be the right fit for me; I am big on that. I am also big on knowing what the commitment is from a school. But if nothing comes along I will also be happy to work with Coach Larranaga."

Commitment and loyalty are constants for Caputo. He remains good friends with his

Westfield State teammates, in particular Phil Connors (Class of 2002). And two other Owl teammates - Kris Kachelmeyer (2001) and Jon Mazzone (2001) - visited with Caputo when Miami played at UMass Amherst in early December. Wherever Caputo's coaching odyssey takes him, Westfield State will be of big part of it.

"A lot of nice things happened to me at Westfield State and playing there was a great experience," said Caputo.

Miami No. 2 in ACC? So says Pete Gillen

Examiner
Paul Borden
Dec. 19, 2012

As he watched the University of Miami dismantle Central Florida 77-46 Wednesday night, CBS Sports Network announcer Pete Gillen, who coached Xavier, Providence, and Virginia, said he thought the Hurricanes were the second-best team in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Told of the comment the next day, Miami coach Jim Larranaga found it amusing.

"It's funny he would say that because he probably hasn't seen any of the other teams in the league," Larranaga said with a wry smile. "When listening to commentators, I often am amused by some of their comments.

"Their job is to enhance the viewers' experience. So they'll say things in the extreme to get the audience thinking, 'Wow! That guy is great! He is unstoppable!'

"A comment like that is good for our recruiting, but other than that it doesn't mean anything."

Well, not to argue for the erudite Larranaga, one of the more studious coaches of the game, but to be considered just behind Duke and ahead of such traditional powers as North Carolina, North Carolina State, and Maryland does mean something else. It is evidence of the respect his program has gained in just over a year.

Last season's team, Larranaga's first at Coral Gables, won 20 games overall and was 9-7 in the ACC but was left out when it came time to pick teams for the NCAA tourney. The Hurricanes settled for the NIT.

This season, though there was an inexplicable stumble at Florida Gulf Coast when Miami was

without senior guard Durand Scott, the Hurricanes have won seven of eight games, beaten a ranked foe in Michigan State, and have won six in a row since Scott returned.

They are now headed for Hawaii and the Diamond Head Classic with an opportunity to make an even bigger impression.

If the Hurricanes are able to handle tourney host Hawaii in their opener on Saturday, a matchup with fourth-ranked Arizona likely will await in the second round the next day. The Wildcats open the event against East Tennessee State.

"I've been pleased with the progress we've been making defensively," Larranaga said, noting the wins over Massachusetts, Charlotte, and UCF that followed the Michigan State game. "I think it's shown up in games.

"I've been pleased with how we've shared the ball on offense. We have five guys averaging in double figures. There's a lot of balance in the inside and outside attack.

"And we've matched up pretty well with these teams. So it's been a good test, and we've responded very well."

The Diamond Head tourney is an eight-team affair that winds up on Christmas Day. In addition to Arizona, San Diego State also is nationally ranked at No. 18 in the Associated Press poll.

Ole Miss, San Francisco, and Indiana State round out the field.

After returning to the mainland on Dec. 26, the Hurricanes will have the opportunity to adjust to the time zone differences with their next game not until Jan. 2 when La Salle visits.

The Hurricanes open their 18-game ACC schedule at Georgia Tech on Jan. 5.

"As I've mentioned before, your non-conference schedule is really built with one thing in mind," Larranaga said. "And that is to have a quality RPI ranking at the end of your non-conference.

"And the teams in this tournament, a number of them are in the top 20, top 40, top 50, and that's the kind of competition you want to face if you want to earn an at-large bid.

"So it's going to be vitally important to play well and advance to improve our status for the selection committee to look at us as a quality team deserving of an at-large bid."

Underrated Miami looks like one of ACC's best

FOX Sports
Andrew Jones
Dec. 19, 2012

Forget the loss at Florida Gulf Coast, as just about every team gets a mulligan in college basketball. The Miami Hurricanes are developing into one of the best teams in the ACC.

And if you are one of the ACC's top clubs, you are among the best in the nation, too. Putting Miami in such company isn't much of a reach if you have seen the Hurricanes play in recent weeks.

The Hurricanes have some issues, for sure. They can be a bit reckless with the ball, can take some questionable shots and don't have a great deal of proven depth right now. They could also use a more classic midsize slasher to complement their backcourt and front line.

Otherwise, the 'Canes are good. Really good.

While the national pundits have ignored them, the 'Canes have put together quite a run, including Tuesday night's 72-50 romp at Central Florida.

Miami streaked to a 17-4 early lead that included three 3-pointers, one by Reggie Johnson, a beautiful backdoor layup, slam-dunk follow of a miss, a nifty layup by Shane Larkin on a feed from power forward Kenny Kadji, and a minute later a dunk by Kadji off a dish from Larkin.

And this was against a UCF club that played in the CBI a year ago, entered the game 6-2 and started transfers from Oklahoma and Virginia. It also was on the road.

Most impressive about Miami (7-1) in the past few weeks is how it has managed to move from one important game to the next without mental drop-offs. The 'Canes didn't even hit a speed bump going through the investment in

the win over Michigan State, which included the school handing out shirts to students to wear.

After beating the Spartans in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge, the 'Canes followed up with an impressive road win over a UMass team that has a good shot to play in the NCAA tournament. And after 12 days without a game for the final-exam period, Jim Larranaga's club routed then-unbeaten Charlotte by 31 points. Four days later, Miami clobbered UCF.

The Hurricanes, who have five starters averaging double figures in scoring, play with a confident swagger, but their dreams are no longer just fantasies, and the players know it. Johnson said in October that the only difference between Miami, Duke and North Carolina are the names on the front of the jerseys.

Of course, when the 'Canes lost to Florida Gulf Coast on Nov. 13, such a comment was swatted away like a gnat on a humid southern evening. In fairness to the 'Canes, senior guard Durand Scott didn't play that night, and not having him out there left a void that wasn't filled.

"Durand is our leader vocally on the court," Larkin said. "He's the loudest person on the team. He's always talking, getting everybody in the right position, and I think that's something we were missing when he was out. Nobody took that leadership role."

So Miami's foundation was rattled a little, and overlooking an opponent was an obvious lesson. But it has handled that loss well and may be better in the long term for the experience. Watching the 'Canes tear apart UCF on Tuesday, nobody ever could guess this club already had suffered such an indignity.

The 6-foot-10, 292-pound Johnson is smart and much more well-rounded a player than his body type might suggest. Scott is athletic and gives the team the kind of toughness usually associated with players from the Bronx.

Kadji is a long athlete from Cameroon whose game continues to grow. Trey McKinney Jones is a long-bomb shooter, and Larkin may be the most underrated point guard in the nation. He needs to distribute a bit more, but he's cat-quick and super-fast. Larkin sees the floor well and comes from great bloodlines. His father, Barry Larkin, was recently inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

The 'Canes can run, they can bully you in a half-court game, they can adapt on the fly and they play defense. Opponents are converting just 38 percent of their shots from the field, including just 29.5 percent from behind the 3-point line.

Four seniors start and two key reserves are also in their final years of eligibility. Plus, no other ACC team whose coach isn't named Williams or Krzyzewski has a coach who already has guided a team to the Final Four. Larranaga took George Mason there in 2006.

Miami has more than enough to contend for the ACC regular-season title and make a run for something special in March. All Larranaga must do is keep this bunch on the same page and thinking about this season and not their futures.

ACC Hoops Power Rankings

FOX Sports South

Andrew Jones

Dec. 17, 2012

Miami headlined a light week in ACC hoops by taking apart a previously unbeaten Charlotte team last Friday night.

The Hurricanes hadn't played in 13 days, but they looked well-drilled and ready to rock from the opening tip. Miami coach Jim Larrañaga's team, which throttled the 49ers 77-46, has five players averaging scoring in double figures. Here are this week's rankings:

1. Duke (9-0)

The Blue Devils didn't play last week but should move up to No. 1 in the national rankings after Indiana lost to Butler on Saturday and Florida fell at the buzzer at Arizona.

2. Miami (6-1)

The Hurricanes pummeled previously unbeaten Charlotte by 31 points last Friday. The victory came after a 13-day layoff for Miami, which was led by Kenny Kadji's 17 points and 16 from Durand Scott. This is a very good basketball team that appears to be improving each time it plays.

3. Maryland (9-1)

A 71-38 rout of Monmouth marked the Terrapins' week. They have now won nine straight games after losing to Kentucky in the opener, though their best wins are at Northwestern and over George Mason in D.C. Maryland is the No. 4 rebounding team in the nation.

4. N.C. State (7-2)

As Lorenzo Brown improves learning how to manage a team and game, the Wolfpack will also move forward. Brown is playing well of late, and along with Richard Howell is giving State the gravitas and grit it needs.

5. North Carolina (8-2)

While the Tar Heels have point guard issues, they still lead the nation in assists, and while they have rebounding issues, Roy Williams' team is still 7th in the nation on the boards. Carolina can shoot, but it doesn't defend well as it should and doesn't get enough meaningful rebounds. Its only game was a 83-87 win over East Carolina, though UNC was more than six points better on the afternoon.

6. Virginia Tech (8-2)

Losing at home to Georgia Southern on Saturday is no way to maintain your spot in any ranking, and it also basically cancels out at least the Iowa win. So the Hokies can't afford to slip up anymore or once again VPI will plant itself on the fence and hope for a miracle.

7. Virginia (8-2)

The Wahoos didn't play so they remain in this position. Interesting game versus Old Dominion in Richmond coming up this weekend for Tony Bennett's squad.

8. Clemson (6-3)

A week after blowing a late lead to Arizona, the Tigers jumped all over Florida A&M in freshman Jordan Roper's first career start. Roper led Clemson with 16 points, as the Tigers owned the glass 47-31.

9. Georgia Tech (6-2)

No game this past week for the Yellow Jackets, though they have two this week and four more before ACC play begins. All four contests are at home in the new McCamish Pavilion and versus patsies.

10. Florida State (5-4)

FSU better get its act in gear before the Seminoles still have a few potentially tough nonconference games left before ACC play begins. Senior Michael Snaer needs to lead by example more than he has.

11. Wake Forest (4-5)

Wake didn't play last week but BC did, and the Eagles offered no reasons why they should jump the Demon Deacons.

12. Boston College (5-5)

A 61-59 overtime victory over New Hampshire isn't exactly the kind of win people notice in a good way.

Charlotte coach sold on Hurricanes

Examiner.com
Paul Borden
Dec. 16, 2012

University of Miami basketball coach Jim Larranaga says it's too soon to start looking at things such as RPI rankings -- a formula that figures into the selection process when the NCAA issues at-large bids to the national tournament -- for his Hurricanes at this early point of the season.

With their win over Charlotte Friday, the Hurricanes have won five in a row since senior guard Durand Scott completed serving the last three games of the six-game suspension the NCAA levied against him late last season.

They will take a 6-1 record to Orlando Tuesday for their last outing before heading to Hawaii and the Diamond Head Classic for the Christmas holidays. They open against tourney host Hawaii.

After that comes their final non-conference outing, a home game against La Salle on Jan. 2.

Then, Larranaga says, will be the time to start looking at Miami's RPI status.

Charlotte coach Alan Major doesn't have to wait, however, to see good things in Miami's future. He witnessed firsthand just what the Hurricanes can do after they dismantled his previously unbeaten 49ers 77-46.

Offensively, he said, the Hurricanes' scoring balance makes them difficult to defend. All five starters are averaging in double figures with Scott and sophomore guard Shane Larkin both averaging 15.3 points per game to lead the way.

Senior center Reggie Johnson is averaging a near double-double -- 12 points and 9.7 rebounds -- followed by wingman Trey McKinney

Jones at 11.7 and forward Kenny Kadji at 11.4.

"You can't really go into a game and say, 'All right. Let's chop these two guys out and let the other three get theirs.' ... Any time a guy is averaging in double figures that means he has a chance to get 16 or 20," Major said. "So it's tough to try to pick one guy to just shut down.

"That's probably their biggest strength, just their balance across their starting five."

Defensively, Miami's size up front in the 6-10 Johnson, 6-11 Kadji, 6-10 Julian Gamble, and 7-0 Tonye Jekiri presents a formidable wall.

"They're a very long team," Major said. "I think they were 37, 38 field goal percentage defense coming in. And because of their rotation, playing eight guys, they're not a team that overly extends themselves.

"They tend to let you come to them, whether it's penetration or driving the ball. When you drive to the rim, there tends to be three guys standing right across the front of the rim, so they don't want to give you a direct layup.

"They force you to play in the mid-range a little bit and force you to make some perimeter shots. They force you to finish against their contact around the rim.

"I think because of their size and length they have a chance to go very far with that type of length across the front line."

How far?

Major called them a potential "Sweet 16" team for the NCAA tourney.

But, as Larranaga would say, it's still early. Very early.

UM's Shane Larkin finds comfort zone, doubles output

Sun Sentinel

Michael Casagrande

Dec. 18, 2012

Sometimes, Shane Larkin just likes to get away.

The Miami guard will grab teammate Julian Gamble and "go wherever the world takes us," he said. It's about team-building, and the products of such escapes are paying off.

There's a unity the Hurricanes' leading scorer and assist distributor found with teammates in his second season in Coral Gables. The son of Hall of Fame baseball player Barry Larkin is now comfortable in his role as a sophomore after taking the occasional lumps as a freshman.

He's averaging 15.3 points a game as Miami (6-1) won its fifth straight with a 77-46 pounding of previously unbeaten Charlotte on Friday night.

"Knowing what they expect of you just makes it easier to go out there and play your game instead of trying to please everybody, which I think I was really trying to do last year," said Larkin, a product of Orlando's Dr. Phillips High School. "I was just trying to please everybody and make sure they were feeling good about themselves. But this year, they know what they want out of me. So I can just play my game."

Part of the problem last year was a late arrival. He didn't enroll until August, so he missed out on the crucial bonding period most players enjoy while taking summer classes.

And it's not like Year 1 was a di-

saster. Larkin made the ACC All-Freshman Team while averaging 7.4 points and 2.5 assists per game. By early December, he was as starter, but he wasn't quite sure how his veteran teammates reacted to that.

Coach Jim Larranaga saw Larkin "trying to fit in," last year on a veteran team with established bonds.

"As a freshman, there's a natural tendency to defer to the upper-classmen," Larranaga said. "But after a year, especially after being a starter . . . I was on him from Day 1 at practice to think of himself as a 15-point-a-game scorer."

And he has with a few tenths to spare. Larkin also tries to speak up on a team Larranaga said is among the quietest he's coached.

"I'm a lot more vocal. I'm just more comfortable with everybody off of the court. So on the court, I feel like I can tell them what I see and they just accept it more," Larkin said. "Last year, they were like 'Ah, he's a freshman. He doesn't know what he's talking about.' Now everybody is just more comfortable with each other so I think it makes it a lot easier to communicate on the floor."

Center Reggie Johnson sees a more confident Larkin out there this year. He sometimes needed a boost in practice back then, but now he's one of those leading the way.

"Shane's getting extra shots up now," Johnson said. "Last year, he did it. But he did it because it was the right thing to do. This year I feel like he does it because he wants to be a better player."

PG Larkin Emerging as a Sophomore

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Dec. 13, 2012

Miami point guard Shane Larkin has emerged in his sophomore season leading the team in scoring. He'll look to help lead the Hurricanes to their fifth straight win Friday against Charlotte.

The once reserved point guard who was a late arrival at Miami last season whose primary concern was pleasing his teammates, is having a breakout season as a sophomore and accepting his role as a leader on the floor.

"It makes it easier just go out there and play your game instead of trying to please everybody, which I think I was really trying to do last year, just trying to please everybody and make sure they were feeling good about themselves," Larkin said. "This year they know what they want out of me so I need to play my game and everybody just plays well together."

After averaging 7.4 points and 2.5 assists on 36 percent shooting last season as a freshman earning All-ACC rookie team honors, Larkin has exploded as a sophomore averaging a team-high 16.3 points and 3.7 assists while shooting 56.5 percent in six games for the 5-1 Hurricanes.

"All of the work I've done this summer and extra work I've been coming in late getting shots up is just really showing on the court this year," Larkin said.

Larkin has scored at least 13 points and played at least 34 minutes in all six games this season, which includes a career-high 27-point night against Jacksonville.

His shooting percentages are drastically improved as he's also hitting 52 percent (13 for 25) from behind the 3-point line and is an 83 percent free-throw shooter.

Teammates have seen Larkin take necessary steps to be a better player this year.

"He's been more of a complete basketball player I'd say," senior center Reggie Johnson said. "Shane is coming in getting extra shots up. Last year he did it but he did it just cause it was the right thing to do. This year I feel Shane does it because he wants to be a better player. Shane is coming to practice every day with the mindset of getting better. Last year

coach had to stay on Shane for practicing hard, but this year he's practicing hard."

Shane Larkin scored a career-high 27 points against Jacksonville on Nov. 16.

While Larkin ranks third in the ACC in scoring, he would like to see his assists improve as he currently is eighth in the conference.

"I always take what the defense is giving me, this year I'm averaging 16 points and 4 assists or something like that," he said. "Those are OK numbers, but I would like to see my assist numbers go up. I'm averaging four, but the top point guards are averaging seven or eight so I would like to see my assists go up even if that means the points drop, I would take that assist to point ratio."

Larkin attributes his connection with his teammates, which includes five seniors in the regular rotation, as another reason for his growth. He believes his teammates are more responsive to his opinions.

"I have a good relationship with everybody off the court so I think on the court I can tell them what I see and they accept it more whereas last year they would be like, 'oh he's a freshman, he doesn't know what he's talking about,'" Larkin said. "But now everybody is just more comfortable with each other and that makes it easier to communicate on the court."

Senior backcourt mate Durand Scott says Larkin has been good for team chemistry.

"A great kid, always laughing, always smiling, just goofing around trying to make everybody around him happy," Scott said. "He creates a happy environment for everybody, he's not so serious, but he works hard and when things go wrong, trust me he turns the switch on real quick and you know when he's upset and when he wants to turn it up and start playing good."

The Hurricanes take a 5-1 record into Friday's home game against 9-0 Charlotte.

"I know Charlotte is a great team, they're 9-0 and beat Davidson recently and they're a great team," Larkin said. "I think we have to come out there with the focus and energy and not just take that, 'we're good now, we're 5-1, we have four wins in a row and just be calm and they're just Charlotte, in the A-10, not a good team.' We can't come out and do that. We need to take everybody seriously and play like there's five McDonald's All-Americans out

there."

Miami came into the season with expectations of reaching the NCAA tournament behind an experienced group. A loss to lower-tier opponent Florida Gulf Coast in the second game affected their case for being a top 25 team, but they pulled out an upset over then No. 13-ranked Michigan State and have won four straight.

"I think we're one of the better teams in the country right now with the way we're playing, but you need those big wins," Larkin said. "I know we had one against Michigan State, but that kind of balances out with the Florida Gulf Coast loss. I wouldn't say we're under the radar, just that one loss pulled us down in the rankings."

Head coach Jim Larranaga, who took in Larkin after spending the summer at DePaul before transferring to Miami before last year, has been impressed with Larkin.

"He is a very quiet, a very nice young man who happens to be very gifted athletically and from a family who is very gifted academically," Larranaga said. "He chose basketball as a youngster, but it could have been any sport. He would have been a great baseball player, football, or basketball player, any sport he chose to play because he has all of the natural physical talents that it takes plus all of the intangible qualities it takes to be successful in whatever he tries to do. He's smart, hard-working, has developed his fundamental skills, he's fast, quick, can jump, has basketball skills—can dribble, pass, and shoot, and he's a clutch player. He likes the big moment where you have to make a big shot, a big free throw or get a big stop so he's got the whole package."

Shane is the son of baseball Hall of Famer Barry Larkin, who still would have liked to have seen his son stick with baseball although has been very supportive of his basketball career.

"I know he wanted to play baseball," Shane said with a smile. "He still to this day is telling me I could go out there and hit 30 home runs and steal 50 bases, but it's just not the game that I fell in love with."

Barry Larkin's son starring for Miami basketball team

Palm Beach Post
Jorge Milian
Dec. 13, 2012

One of the perks of being Barry Larkin's kid is that you get batting tips from the likes of Ken Griffey Jr., Pete Rose and Tony Perez.

As a youngster, University of Miami sophomore point guard Shane Larkin annually accompanied his dad to spring training with the Cincinnati Reds, shagging fly balls, fielding grounders with his father's glove and learning to hit from some of the game's greatest players.

Larkin became close to Perez, a Hall of Famer who now serves as special assistant to Marlins executive Larry Beinfest, and adopted his batting style — complete with a leg kick. But Larkin's love affair with baseball came to an unhappy end on a Little League field in Orlando when he was 7.

"I went up to hit one day and my coach is like, 'Whoever taught you how to swing like that didn't know what they were talking about,'" Larkin said. "It really killed my love for the game. After that season, I never went back." Barry Larkin, a 12-time All-Star with the Reds and a 2012 inductee into the Baseball Hall of Fame, recalls being "incredibly disappointed at the time."

"He wanted to be a baseball player like his dad when he was little," the elder Larkin said this week from his home in Orlando. "And I really wanted him to play baseball. But, hey, he turned into the starting point guard at the University of Miami, which isn't too bad, either."

Baseball's loss has certainly been the Hurricanes' gain.

Going into Friday's game against Charlotte (9-0) at the Bank United Center, Larkin leads the surging Hurricanes (5-1) in scoring (16.4 ppg) and assists (3.8 apg). UM has won four consecutive games, including an upset of No. 13 Michigan State two weeks ago, and is receiving votes in both the Associated Press and USA Today polls.

An All-ACC Freshman selection last season,

Larkin's game has taken a giant step as a sophomore. After averaging 7.4 points in 2011-12, Larkin has more than doubled that number. He's scored at least 13 points in each of UM's six games, including a career-high 27 against Jacksonville on Nov. 16.

Instead of passing up shots to feed others as he did last season, Larkin has looked to score more this year. He's been efficient, too. Larkin is shooting an impressive .565 percent from the field and .520 from three-point range.

"When you come in as a freshman, especially with a veteran team like we had last year, you're kind of just trying to fit in and you don't want to step on anybody's toes," coach Jim Larranaga said. "You have a natural tendency to defer to the upperclassmen."

Larkin is only 5-foot-11 and 176 pounds but he's one of the quickest players in the ACC, which makes him a pest both offensively and defensively. Last season, he finished fifth in the conference with 1.6 steals per game.

"He's a terrific defender, he has great hands and vision, he's good in transition and he's tough," said Seth Greenberg, the former Virginia Tech coach now working as an ESPN college basketball analyst. "I love Shane Larkin's game."

Larkin almost never played at Miami. He originally enrolled at DePaul, but asked for a waiver from his scholarship because of an undisclosed medical condition that required him to be closer to home. The NCAA accepted an appeal from Larkin, allowing him to play immediately at Miami without sitting out a season.

Among those regularly watching Larkin at UM's home games is his father, who is a baseball analyst for ESPN.

"I know he wanted me to play baseball," Shane said. "He still tells me I could hit 30 home runs and steal 50 bases. But it was not the game I fell in love with."

That game is basketball and Shane is adding to the family lore in the sport. His uncle, Byron, is one of the most decorated players in Xavier University history and remains one of

the 25 top scorers in NCAA Division I history.

"Shane has always wanted to make his own way," Barry Larkin said. "He's always been very conscious of people believing that his success was predicated on his last name. That's one of the reasons our family moved from Cincinnati to Florida. I wanted my kids to have their own blank canvas and create their own identity."

Larranaga Discusses Recruiting

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Dec. 6, 2012

Jim Larranaga is getting used to recruiting in the toughest conference in the country.

With perennial national powers North Carolina and Duke in a competitive conference and a talent base that is spread out across the state, Larranaga has had to adjust to recruiting at Miami compared to being at George Mason.

"First, it's geography," Larranaga said. "There are a few local kids that we've been recruiting that we'd love to get, but a lot of the kids even if they're in the state of Florida they are three or four hours away. And we're going to have to travel extensively up and down the eastern seaboard to get the players we're looking for. If we take a transfer we may be taking a kid even from the west coast. We've had to expand our target area for recruiting purposes including we may go to China to get a kid. That's how important getting the right kids are."

Larranaga prefers to play up-tempo on offense and a scramble man-to-man defense.

"There's two categories in the game that are very important to us--skills for the position, and speed and quickness," Larranaga said.

Getting high-caliber prospects has not been an issue says Larranaga, but making sure they are seriously interested is an issue.

"We're trying to learn the best way to market our university," Larranaga said. "We don't want kids to think they are coming here to be on vacation for four years. One of the great assets can be a liability. In terms of a quote, 'you're greatest strength is also your greatest weakness.' In recruiting one of our greatest assets is our geographical location. It's a beautiful, beautiful area to live in, but the negative side is of someone who wants to just come in and visit because it's a free weekend. We have to find the kids who are really seriously interested in us, not because the weather is nice. That's one of the reasons why it's important to recruit the state of Florida because they already know what the environment is like, it's not going to be a major change for them. They just like the idea that the Miami Heat are in town, we have a beautiful practice facility, in the ACC, and there's a lot of things that impresses a kid."

Recruiting at a program with just XXXX NCAA tournament appearances and one league title isn't easy when going up against in-conference foes with more tradition.

An ongoing NCAA investigation for infractions committed by the previous coaching staff has also been a hurdle Larranaga's staff has been trying to overcome.

UM Signee Deandre Burnett is an under-the-radar prospect the Miami staff is very high on.

"It's like this cloud that hangs over our heads," Larranaga said. "It comes up all the time and there's no answer to it. We just know that eventually that too will pass."

Larranaga feels the NCAA investigation has caused Miami to lose out on prospects.

"Yeah a bunch," he said. "Now losing may mean something different to you than it does to me. The week that the investigation was announced our five top prospects dropped us. That doesn't mean we were going to get any of them anyway because they were involved with other great schools, but those kids were planning on visiting us and it didn't go one phone call past the first one. We called one parent and he said, 'I just can't see my son going there with this cloud hanging over your heads.'"

So what does Larranaga tell recruits and their parents about the investigation?

"I just tell them we're going to build a championship-caliber team and we'd like your son to be a part of it," Larranaga said. "He's going to get a degree from a fantastic academic institution, live in a very wonderful environment, play with some other terrific players, have a great college experience, and go on and play professional basketball. Hopefully that's going to include appearances in the NCAA tournament, but we want know that until the investigation is over."

UM Signs Two in Early Period

Miami signed two guards--Davon Reed and Deandre Burnett--during November's early signing period.

Reed is a 6-foot-5 four-star prospect from Princeton, N.J. who averaged 26 points and nine rebounds as a junior.

"He's one of those guys that is great for team chemistry because he knows how to play," Larranaga said. "If there's an open man, he'll find him. If he has an open shot, he'll shoot it, he won't hesitate. If he beats his man, he knows where the next open man is. He really reads the defense well, plays well within a system, and plays well with other very good players. There's some guys that are great when they're the only show in town. He's not that way. He's actually better when he's surrounded by other really good players."

Burnett is a 6-foot-1 combo guard from Miami, who is playing a year at Massanutten, a prep school in Virginia.

"We were very impressed with him at Carol City when he averaged 36 points a game and he continues to perform very well at Massanutten," Larranaga said.

Burnett has put up big numbers this season including 39 against Oak Hill in a scrimmage, had 44 points against the Miller School, and went 16 for 19

with 40 points against South Kent.

"He's someone that really stayed under the radar scene from a lot of schools," Larranaga said. "The thing I will tell you is that he really wanted to come to the University of Miami. It was his favorite school, he wanted to come here. After watching him play the summer before his senior year the thing we wondered was if he was a point or a two-guard and as it turns out, he's really both. He can play either position, very good at finding the open man, is a very unselfish player, but he is a high octane player."

Burnett possess supreme confidence in his abilities and has a personality that Larranaga likes.

"I love talking to him because what I've told him and other recruits--what we're looking for are guys who want to be here with us, are really hard workers, and want to be in the gym all of the time because those guys find a way to win, find a way to be successful," Larranaga said. "In Deandre's case, he's worked very, very hard to prove himself and has a little bit of that chip on his shoulder that we like. He doesn't have that 'I expect everything to be given.' He has the attitude of, 'I expect to earn everything I get and I will.' We like that work ethic and attitude that he brings to the floor."

Looking to Add Four

Larranaga is looking to add four more players in the 2013 class.

"We're going to be looking at two more high school prospects, then possibly a junior college player, and possibly a transfer student," Larranaga said. "We've had great success (with transfers). Last year we had Malcolm Grant, Trey McKinney-Jones, Kenny Kadji, and Shane Larkin who were all basically transfers and all in our top eight players. So we want to keep that door open in the spring time because often times a very good player materializes."

Landing forwards is the focus.

"What we really need in this class are forwards," Larranaga said. "We need guys that are 6-7, 6-8, guys like C.J. Leslie who can play the 3 or the 4, matchup with smaller players, but also can play big. We had a great deal of success with that at George Mason finding undersized guys who played big. We're looking for that. It's not that easy at the ACC level because everyone we're interested in is also being recruited by the Big East, ACC, Big 10, and Big XII."

The aforementioned comment by Larranaga about finding a player in China wasn't an exaggeration. Last month Larranaga was in discussion with someone from China about a 7-foot-3 prospect.

"There's a lot of big kids and we need some size right now," Larranaga said.

Conference Power Rankings: ACC

ESPN.com
Robbi Pickeral
Nov. 30, 2012

With Duke's schedule and Virginia Tech's new coach, who would have guessed that the Blue Devils and Hokies would be the two remaining undefeated teams in the league right now? Here's this season's first set of ACC power rankings, based on a myriad of factors including how teams have played lately and the foes they've faced:

1. Duke. The Blue Devils aren't just tops in the ACC; they have a strong argument for being No. 1 in the nation after knocking off three top-5 teams in November (plus VCU and Minnesota). Forward Mason Plumlee has played his way into the early conversations on national player of the year.

2. Maryland. The only blemish on the schedule for the Terps so far: a three-point loss to then-third-ranked Kentucky. Transfer Dez Wells (12.0 points per game) has been a boost, while sophomore big man Alex Len has been a beast (15.2 ppg, 9.0 rebounds per game).

3. Miami. Durand Scott is back, and the Hurricanes finally seem to be getting it back together. After sitting out three games (including a perplexing loss to Florida Gulf Coast) due to suspension, the guard returned for his second contest of the season to help the Canes upset No. 13 Michigan State in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge. Shane Larkin is averaging 16.8 ppg.

4. NC State. The Wolfpack showed some life with their late rally at No. 3 Michigan earlier this week -- but they aren't exactly looking like the team everyone expected to win the league. Still, NC State gets a chance to prove that it's learned something from that loss, as well as its blowout defeat to Oklahoma State in the Puerto Rico Tip-Off, when it plays UConn on Dec. 4.

5. North Carolina. The Tar Heels have trailed

by 20-plus points on two occasions already this season -- losses to Butler in the Maui Invitational and at top-ranked Indiana. Coach Roy Williams wants them to be tougher. They are a work in progress.

6. Virginia Tech. The Hokies get a huge test when 15th-ranked Oklahoma State travels to Cassell Coliseum this weekend. But right now, Erick Green (24.3 ppg) and Jarell Eddie (17.5 ppg) have them on a 6-0 roll under new coach James Johnson.

7. Virginia. The Cavs have won four straight, including an impressive victory at Wisconsin earlier this week, after starting the season 1-2. Joe Harris leads the team with 16.0 ppg, and guard Jontel Evans played 16 minutes against the Badgers in his return from a foot injury.

8. Florida State. Coach Leonard Hamilton expected more fire out of his team against No. 21 Minnesota. He didn't get it during the loss, which was sort of surprising after the Seminoles won the Coaches Vs. Cancer tournament championship. FSU, which also lost to South Alabama in the season opener, needs to be more consistent in order to move up.

9. Georgia Tech. The Yellow Jackets have nine players contributing at least nine minutes per game as they stress a balanced rebuilding approach. Junior forward Kammeon Holsey is the leading scorer (11.2 ppg) on a 4-2 team that finished in third place at the DirecTV Classic before falling to No. 22 Illinois.

10. Clemson. It will be curious to see whether forward Milton Jennings, suspended for the third time in two seasons, gets another chance. If not, Clemson loses one of its leading scorers, and one of only two seniors on the team.

11. Wake Forest. Travis McKie is averaging 14.3 ppg for the Demon Deacons, but things don't really seem to be getting much better in Win-

ston-Salem. They are 3-3, with a 16-point loss to Nebraska in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge.

12. Boston College. The sophomores continue experiencing the ups and downs of rebuilding, with an early slate that includes a loss to Bryant followed by a win over Penn State. Ryan Anderson is averaging 14.2 ppg.

10 Under-the-Radar Teams Who Could Make It to March

Bleacher Report
William Smith
Nov. 30, 2012

The Hurricanes looked poised to make it to March this year.

There has never been a question as to whether the Miami Hurricanes have the talent to reach the NCAA Tournament. It seems this team has underachieved whenever they get a big upset win or there is buzz surrounding them.

This year, however, has a different feel to it for this group. Led by sophomore point guard Shane Larkin—the son of MLB Hall-of-Famer Barry Larkin—the Hurricanes look like a viable threat to contend in the ACC this year and have five scorers averaging 10 or more PPG in their 4-1 start.

Skeptics point to an ugly 63-51 loss at Florida Gulf Coast in their second game of the season as proof this team doesn't have what it takes.

However, Miami upset No. 13 Michigan State 67-59 in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge behind senior Trey McKinney Jones' career-high 18 points.

Second-year coach Jim Larranaga seems to have this program moving in the right direction as the Hurricanes are seeking to make their first NCAA Tournament appearance since the 07-08 season. This year, it looks like they may have the mental toughness to match their talent.

5 things we learned from the ACC/Big Ten Challenge

CBS College Sports

Sean Bielawski

Nov. 29, 2012

Somehow, the ACC found a way to come out of the ACC/Big Ten Challenge with the first tie in the history of the event. The league picked up four wins on Wednesday night, two of them on the road, and No. 2 Duke brought the conference all the way back with its marquee win over No. 4 Ohio State.

Here are five things we learned during the ACC/Big Ten Challenge:

1. The ACC might be deeper than most thought before the season. The ACC split with the Big Ten even though North Carolina State, North Carolina and Florida State all lost. All three of those teams were picked to finish in the top four of the league. Virginia Tech is off to a 6-0 start and looked good beating Iowa by double-digits. Virginia picked up an impressive win at Wisconsin. Miami beat Michigan State and is a different team, as expected, with PG Durand Scott back in the lineup.

2. Maryland looks like the second-best team in the conference. There are two reasons the Terrapins look to be right behind Duke currently in the ACC hierarchy. The first is the availability of SF Dezmine Wells, who scored 23 points on 9 of 11 shooting against Northwestern. The second is the consistency of C Alex Len. Len has scored in double figures in each of Maryland's six games this season, and if he continues to average 15.2 points and 9.0 rebounds per game, the Terrapins will be a really tough out come March.

3. Florida State and North Carolina have a lot of work to do, but they aren't finished products. Both teams were beaten handily in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge. However, the Tar Heels and Seminoles are young and still have players settling into new roles. One thing both teams need is for their best players -- Florida

State G Michael Snaer and North Carolina PF James Michael McAdoo -- to pick it up. Snaer is shooting 39.3 percent from the floor and averaging three turnovers per game. McAdoo needs to play better against quality competition. He was 4 for 15 from the field with 10 points against Indiana.

4. Joe Harris is more than ready to be Virginia's go-to player. Harris might be the most underrated player in the league. He had a game-high 22 points and also a team-high five assists in Virginia's 60-54 upset win at Wisconsin. Harris was 7 for 12 from inside the arc and has improved off the dribble, making plays for himself and teammates. There was a question as to who would step in to fill the void left by Mike Scott, but Harris has shown he will be the guy.

5. Wake Forest is in for another long season if it doesn't pick it up defensively. The Demon Deacons lost by 16 points at home to Nebraska, and the Cornhuskers shot 62 percent from the field in the second half. Wake is allowing opponents to shoot 45.6 percent so far this season, the worst mark in the ACC. F Travis McKie and G C.J. Harris, Wake's leading scorers, shot a combined 3 for 17 from the field and had 10 points between them. The Demon Deacons can't afford to have those two play poorly on the same night.

Larranaga, Miami Have Big Opportunity Against MSU

CBS.com
Jon Rothstein
Nov. 28, 2012

The buzz about the top teams in the ACC came and went this summer without Miami being mentioned.

The chatter surrounding the conference was fixated on the upside of NC State, the balance of Duke, and the potential of North Carolina.

The Hurricanes couldn't really be a contender at the top of the league, could they?

We'll have a pretty good idea if that's possible after Wednesday night when Miami hosts Michigan State as part of the ACC/Big Ten Challenge.

"Everyone here is aware of the magnitude of this game," Hurricanes coach Jim Larranaga said on Tuesday. "We had a pep rally and our student body is really excited. Our band size will quadruple for this game, making it almost like a football-related event."

Miami (3-1) played their first game of the season on Saturday with senior guard Durand Scott in the lineup. Scott missed the first three games of the season due a suspension but scored 15 points and grabbed five rebounds in a 77-62 win over a solid Detroit team.

"He makes a huge difference," Larranaga said of Scott. "He's our leading scorer, (our) best perimeter defender and (our) energy guy."

To beat the 13th-ranked Spartans, Miami will need big games out of their three frontcourt players – Julian Gamble, Kenny Kadji and Reggie Johnson, whom Larranaga said would return to the starting lineup against the Spartans after coming off the bench against Detroit.

"Michigan State is huge," Larranaga said. "They're a very big and strong team inside with (Derrick) Nix and (Adreian) Payne. They're also getting great guard play from Keith Appling."

It may be late November, but a victory over the Spartans could go a long way in the Hurricanes' at-large resume for the NCAA Tournament. Miami already has suffered a bad loss when they fell at Florida Gulf Coast. A win against Michigan State, a team that is expected to be in the Top 25 for the duration of the season, could be pivotal down the road.

"Winning the game would be a huge boost to our RPI," Larranaga said. "That's the one thing you aim to build with your non-conference schedule, and that's what we're focused on."

Hoops Buzz: 11/28

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Nov. 28, 2012

The Miami Hurricanes will host No. 13 Michigan State tonight at 7:30 in the ACC-Big Ten Challenge televised live on ESPN.

"It impacts a lot of things," head coach Jim Larranaga said. "It's on national television on ESPN so hopefully they'll be a national audience watching, hopefully the recruits watching will be impressed with the way we play. It's important for the ACC because it is a battle for bragging rights as to who is the best basketball conference in the country every year, and it is also big for future attendance if we win, I think our students and fanbase might turn out in larger numbers to watch us play."

Miami (3-1) will be facing a Michigan State (5-1) team that has had 20 turnovers in each of their last two games in wins over Oakland and Louisiana-Lafayette and could be without their second leading scorer in Gary Harris (shoulder).

"(Tom Izzo) is one of the premier coaches in the country, a Hall of Fame coach and he always has his teams very well prepared no matter who they play, no matter where they play," Larranaga said. "The areas where he believes his team needs to improve, he's going to have them improving. We're not a team that forces a lot of turnovers so it's not going to be all of a sudden that we're emphasized that we need to force a lot of turnovers. No we need to work on the areas that are most important for our success and that is defensive conversion, defense on 2 and 3-point shots, and defensive rebounding."

A win over Michigan State could be even more important because of the disappointing loss to Florida Gulf Coast.

"It would definitely help us," senior Reggie Johnson said. "But I think if we do good in the ACC even with that loss we can still get in the tournament."

Miami is coming off a 15-point win against Detroit Saturday.

Following the game against Michigan State, Miami will travel to UMass on Dec. 1. UMass went 1-2 at the Puerto Rico Tip-Off with losses to N.C. State and Tennessee.

News & Notes

- C Julian Gamble started in place of Reggie Johnson last game as Johnson returned to the lineup after missing one game due to an injured tailbone. "I like having the flexibility to be able to start either one of them," Larranaga said. "Maybe I'll start both of them at some point, I don't know. I just felt that they both played well. Reggie did a great job coming off the bench playing 27 minutes, Julian did a very good job as a starter playing 13 minutes and scoring seven points. Between the two of them they had 14 points and a bunch of rebounds (11), if we can get that every night that would be great."

- C Reggie Johnson has had a slow start out of the gate averaging 11.7 points and 10.0 rebounds while shooting 37 percent from the floor, 60 percent from the free-throw line, and averaging 3.0 turnovers a game. "It's still going to come to me," Johnson said. "I can do more. I can contribute more as far as rebounding more, it's going to come to me. I'm not worried, just teams are pretty good right now."

- C Reggie Johnson and PF Kenny Kadji have a friendly competition amongst each other as to who will get more rebounds each game. So far in the three games they've played together, Kadji has out-rebounded Johnson 2-1. "It's different, last year Kenny rebounded but this year he's making a strong emphasis to get in there," Johnson said. "The last couple of games he's been leading the team in rebounding and I'm happy with that."

- Larranaga had a talk with PF Kenny Kadji last week before the Detroit game and Larranaga was happy with the way Kadji responded scoring 14 points with 11 rebounds. "He played a lot more like we want him to play," Larranaga

said. "He caught the ball and shot it, he dribbled it a little bit, but he was very much under control and very much searching for his jump shot. I was very surprised he missed a couple of those because he's a terrific shooter and a couple of them were wide open looks that Shane Larkin hit him with."

- SG Bishop Daniels did not play last game against Detroit as the odd man out in the rotation with the return of Durand Scott. "It was basically me wanting to give Durand as many minutes as he could handle," Larranaga said. "I didn't plan on playing him 38 minutes, it just happened that way."

- When SG Durand Scott was out of the lineup the biggest thing he noticed from the sidelines was that the team lacked communication and energy, two of his strengths. He scored 15 points on 6 of 9 shooting in his season debut.

- SG Rion Brown has struggled with his shooting thus far making just 2 of 16 shots (12.5 percent) from behind the 3-point arc and 31 percent (9 of 29) overall. "He got some great looks the other day," Larranaga said. "I think shooting is a little bit like putting in golf, it becomes a little bit psychological and you start thinking too much. He shot the ball very well last week in practice, I was kind of surprised he didn't shoot better during the game."

- Against Detroit, Miami played 19 possessions of zone defense, which is the most they've played zone under Larranaga since he arrived last season. With the team struggling to execute his signature Scramble defense and being able to be completely proficient in man-to-man, Larranaga anticipates the team will go to zone more throughout the season than he's accustomed to. "Over the years I would say we've played 85-90 percent man-to-man, but we've used zone especially in certain years and this is going to be one of those years because of how big we are and we don't have DeQuan Jones, he normally gave us an opportunity to match up against an athletic forward," Larranaga said.

Durand Scott's return boosts Miami

ESPN.com

Andy Katz

Nov. 28, 2012

As part of the NCAA's six-game suspension that started in March, Durand Scott was forced to sit out Miami's first three games of this season.

Among those games: a stunning 63-51 loss at Florida Gulf Coast.

Need any more evidence as to how valuable Scott is to the Hurricanes?

"One of the things that he brings is that he's a leader," UM coach Jim Larranaga said. "And he brings a lot of energy, high energy. He's a tough competitor that plays hard. He will talk to his teammates and get them fired up. Without that personality, we have a lot of laid-back guys. We don't have those take-charge kind of people. Having him back dramatically helps our level of energy and helps our defense and rebounding."

Scott, who scored 15 points in his only appearance this season (a 15-point win over Detroit on Saturday), must show up big in tonight's home game against No. 13 Michigan State in the ACC/Big Ten Challenge, especially with Michigan State minus freshman guard Gary Harris (shoulder injury).

Miami's woes in the loss to Florida Gulf Coast weren't all due to Scott's absence. Trey McKinney Jones didn't play well, and shooting 8-for-26 from beyond the arc didn't exactly help the Canes' cause.

The Hurricanes are in the middle of a tough nonconference stretch. They play at UMass on Saturday and can't take Charlotte for granted either, as the unbeaten 49ers are coming off a title at the Great Alaska Shootout. Playing at Central Florida won't be a walk, and then go-

ing to the Diamond Head Classic and opening with host Hawaii -- San Diego State, Arizona and Ole Miss are all possibilities there as well -- means the Canes have the toughest opening draw.

"We're 3-1, and we're a much better basketball team with Durand Scott back," Larranaga said. "But this is a critical time in our schedule."

The Canes were a trendy pick to make the NCAA tournament out of the ACC. They still can with a muddled middle behind Duke and one would assume NC State and North Carolina if both Triangle schools can right themselves. Maryland seems to have moved ahead for now after a road win Tuesday at Northwestern. Florida State slid back with a home loss to Minnesota, a week after winning the CVC in Brooklyn with wins over BYU and Saint Joseph's.

But for Miami to knock off Michigan State, it'll need Scott to play his A-game and Reggie Johnson to be at full speed, knocking Derrick Nix out of the low block. Johnson fell in the Florida Gulf Coast game and didn't start against Jacksonville. He'll likely be back in the starting lineup against the Spartans.

Miami's ACC and national perception will be defined in the next few weeks, possibly as early as Wednesday. Larranaga wasn't pleased he inherited a four-game series with Florida Gulf Coast, including going on the road, but Miami needed to handle that adversity and did not. Tougher venues are to follow. Larranaga cautioned against putting too much stock in one November loss, citing that Florida State lost to Princeton and Harvard last season and went on to win the ACC tournament.

Miami is fully capable of such a run. But if Larranaga is to get the Canes into the NCAA tournament, this may be his best shot. Pitt and Syracuse are coming next season, and possibly Notre Dame as well. This doesn't mean Mi-

ami is off the board in 2014, but 2013 is ripe to grab a spot with such a middling conference.

"The year we went to the Final Four at George Mason, we lost to Creighton by 22 at home and it woke us up," Larranaga said. "We can certainly win Wednesday. We can win in Hawaii. We can certainly have a good season."

One loss to Florida Gulf Coast can be long forgotten deep into the ACC season. But it would be erased almost all together if Miami can make its mark against Michigan State tonight.

Larranaga, players talk Michigan State

CaneSport.com
Staff
Nov. 27, 2012

Coach Jim Larranaga's team faces a big test Wednesday night at the BankUnited Center against No. 13 Michigan State in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge that will be televised on ESPN.

Larranaga says something this team is focused on moving forward is "Making a dramatic improvement defensively. Last week (vs. Detroit) we played 19 possessions of zone defense for the first time since I've been here, and we're going to continue to look at that as an alternative to our man-to-man. Our man-to-man will still be our bread-and-butter, but we need a changeup. We've tried to scramble, are going to hold off on that for a while. Right now the zone will be our alternate defense."

Larranaga added that "it's on national television, so hopefully there'll be a national audience watching. Hopefully recruits watching will be impressed with the way we play. It's important for the ACC because we battle the Big Ten for bragging rights as to who the best basketball conference is in the country every year. And it's also big for future attendance - if we win Wednesday night I think our students and fan base might be excited and turn out in larger numbers to watch us play."

Michigan State (5-1) has 20 turnovers in each of its last two games. Larranaga was asked if UM can capitalize on those struggles.

"We are not a team that forces a lot of turnovers, so it's not going to be all of a sudden we're emphasizing to our team we need to force a lot of turnovers on Wednesday," Larranaga said. "No, we need to focus on defensive conversion, defense on two-point shots and three-point shots, and defensive rebounding."

The Spartans are coached by legendary coach Tom Izzo.

"I know Tom Izzo very well - he's a Hall of Fame coach, has all his teams prepared no matter who they play, where they play," Larranaga said.

Asked how this Hurricanes team might be different compared to the one that lost to Florida Gulf Coast two weeks ago, Larranaga said, "Well, it's the same team, but with a different mindset. Against Detroit (in the most recent game) we got back defensively much better, gave up four points in fast breaks as opposed to Florida Gulf Coast had 18. That's a huge difference."

* Durand Scott is happy to be back on the

court after missing the start of the season due to an NCAA suspension. He returned for the win over Detroit, scoring 15 points.

"It was great to be out there with the coaching staff, teammates, just go out there and do what I love to do," Scott said. "I think I did okay. I wanted to go out there and give effort, that was my main thing."

Looking ahead to playing Michigan State on national TV, Scott said, "It'll be a great experience. If we get the win it'd be a great win for us. We're just going to go out there and give our best effort. Hopefully the results end in our favor."

"They're very aggressive on the defensive end, pressure you offensively as well. We have to be tough, strong, mentally strong as well. We can't afford to turn the ball over against them, give them opportunities to score. Our big guys, guards have to get in there and rebound. Execute the game plan and we'll be okay."

- Scott says a role he sees for himself on this team is as a motivator. He says he thinks the team's struggles early-on were due to "a lack of communication and energy."

- How tough was his six-game suspension dating back to the end of last season?

"It was kind of hard, but those six games of suspension were a time of learning," Scott said. "I got to sit on the bench, see things from the coaches' eyes."

What types of things did he learn?

"Some people tended to be out of position - (didn't) really notice it," Scott said. "As I was sitting on the bench I knew I had to learn stuff like being in the right position, make sure I box out the rebound, talk on defense, make sure I'm running up and down. I learned a few things while I was on the bench."

- Scott says what he thinks he improved most since last season is his outside shot.

"I watched videos, saw what I need in my game - the main thing was my jump shot, perimeter from the three-point line," Scott said. "If I had to pick one thing (he worked on most) it would be my outside perimeter jump shot."

* Reggie Johnson says he thinks this team is "getting there - we're still working. Detroit (a 77-62 UM win on Saturday) was a good game for us to really show how we can play a full game."

Of facing Michigan State, Johnson said, "They can shoot the ball real well, have guards who love to crash the boards. They're a top 20 opponent. If we can beat those guy it'll help our RPI come March."

Johnson says he's healthy now coming off a lower body injury that was bothering him.

"I'm fine, feel good," Johnson said. "I can do more as far as contributing more, rebounding more."

Johnson will be dealing with 6-9, 270-pound big man in Derrick Nix (8.0 points, 7.7 rebounds per game) tomorrow.

"It's going to be a fun matchup," Johnson said.

- Johnson says he and Kenny Kadji have a contest for who can get more rebounds in games, and that he thinks that gives extra motivation to Kadji to crash the boards.

"Last year Kenny rebounded, but this year he's making a strong emphasis to get in there," Johnson said. "That's big for us."

* Kenny Kadji says of facing Michigan State that "It's a big game, a great team coming into our home. This is extra motivation because Michigan State always goes to the Final Four, always has a great team. We want to make a statement, prove we're one of the best teams in the country. To be the best you have to beat the best."

"We're going to show how together we are, how tough we are as a team. ... We know it's a Big Ten team, and (what) they do, they crash the boards. We'll be ready for the game. Detroit was a good win for us, but we know we have to bring 110 percent to prepare for Michigan State. We know if you relax even a little bit (the) team will come and embarrass you."

Kadji said the Florida Gulf Coast loss "was real embarrassing, and people don't want to feel like that. We have six seniors, it's their last year, so we don't want to have that type of season."

- Kadji joked that he's "super happy" that football is over since more fans may come to basketball games now.

"I'm just joking," Kadji said. "You know this is a football school. But now that this is over, people will have to come to the basketball games, don't have anything else. We just hope we can surprise students here and make them come to the games more and more."

- Kadji said Larranaga gave him advice to "don't think, just shoot the ball."

"That really didn't work," Kadji said with a laugh. "But he knows I can affect the games in different ways. I don't have to have a great shooting night to affect the game. Now that I know that, I have to go in the game and give 110 (percent). And I will find a way to help the team win - rebounding, blocking shots, defense."

SG Scott Glad to Be Back

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Nov. 26, 2012

Durand Scott made a successful return to the court after serving a six-game suspension by the NCAA.

Scott scored 15 points with five rebounds and three assists in 38 minutes in a 77-62 win over Detroit Saturday.

"I thought he was terrific," head coach Jim Larranaga said. "Fifteen points, handled the ball very well, rebounded, defended--Ray McCallum has been averaging 21 points a game and he held him six below his average--did a good job at both ends of the court."

Scott, who led the team in scoring last season, was happy to be back on the court after the NCAA handed out a five-game suspension in March for receiving impermissible benefits.

"It felt great to be out there with the coaching staff, teammates, just went out there and did what I loved to do," Scott said. "It was a great experience for me."

Scott was very efficient with a 19.15 player efficiency rating (he had a 14.99 last season) as he shot 6 of 9 from the floor.

"I think I did okay," Scott said. "I just wanted to go out there and give effort, play as hard as I can, not try to do too much and do exactly what the coaches expect of me. I just tried to play the best I could and it worked out for me."

Watching from the sidelines wasn't easy especially watching the team drop a disappointing game to Florida Gulf Coast.

"It was hard, but at the same time it was a time of learning," Scott said. "I got to sit on the bench, see things from the coaches' eye, and then implement to when I got back on the

court. I didn't put my head down or anything like that, I was a cheerleader and grasped some things that I never saw when I was playing."

With the win, Miami improved to 3-1 with a home game Wednesday against No. 13 Michigan State (5-1) as part of the ACC-Big Ten Challenge.

"It's a great experience definitely if we get the win it would be a great win for us, the staff, players, university. We just want to go out and give our best effort. Hopefully the results are in our favor."

Michigan State, led by Keith Appling's 16.8 points per game, comes into the game with a win over No. 10 Kansas on Nov. 13.

"We have got a lot to handle," Scott said. "They're very aggressive on the defensive end and they put pressure on you offensively as well. You have to be tough and strong, mentally strong as well, you can't afford to turn the ball over and give them many opportunities to score."

State of the U catches up with Julian Gamble

State of the U.com
Jerry Steinberg
Nov. 26, 2012

The Miami Hurricanes face a HUGE test Wednesday night against Michigan State. We asked UM big man Julian Gamble about the game, and much more.

6th year senior F/C Julian Gamble averages over 7 points and a shade under 3 rebounds a game. But those who watch him play, know his heart and leadership mean more to the team than his numbers. The 6'10 250 pound Gamble will be counted on heavily in Wednesday night's big time match-up with the Spartans, as well as through out the season as UM strives for a monumental year.

Here is our full Q&A with Julian Gamble:

SOTU: What unique challenges does the game against Michigan State on Wednesday present?

JG: It presents some great challenges and will test some things we have been working on. Especially rebounding as they are one of the top rebounding teams in the country perennially. That and playing against a well coached team with Tom Izzo. They have had a lot of recent success and we really have a good opportunity to get a big win for our team and our program.

SOTU: Coming back off of injury this year how does everything feel? You seem to be a bit more explosive this year.

JG: Everything feels good. I did not go home at all this summer. I made a total commitment to this team, and the coaching staff. I made sure I was ready and worked with our trainer Wes Brown and our strength coach Jim Krumpas.

I worked hard to get my legs right and keep them under me. Going into the season I did not know what to expect but I played real well this summer, and my teammates started showing confidence in me.

SOTU: Along with yourself who are the leaders of the team? Have you made a more conscious effort to be a leader this year?

JG: I have definitely made a conscious effort to be a leader. Having been here for my 6th year now I have seen it all and done it all, and know what to expect. All of our seniors have really show leadership. When we go to center court as captains, all of our seniors go. All of our seniors are leaders in different ways, some vocally and some by actions.

SOTU: Looking ahead, and I know you guys aren't looking past any out of conference games, but can you tell fans who the most difficult player to go against in the ACC is?

JG: That's a great question. I haven't spent a lot of time looking at our ACC opponents. Like you said we are totally focused on our current opponent. But I know NC State being the great team they are, have C.J. Leslie. I grew up with him, and know his game. He has really come along, that team in general is very experienced but they have a good number of young players as well. You also have Mason Plumlee at Duke. There are a lot of very good guys in our league. James Michael McAdoo as well.

SOTU: Interesting about CJ, Kenny Kadji said the same when I asked him.

JG: Yeah, I know CJ really well. He is really athletic and this past season he made a huge leap, which was great to see. We're competitive. We are friends off the court, but on the court we go at it.

SOTU: Who on the team so far this year has surprised you and stepped up?

JG: Bishop Daniels in the early games we didn't have Durand. He came off the bench and really helped us with his energy. Also Erik Swoope coming in and providing all the intangibles we need. He has come in and provided the dirty work since he's been here, so he's not really a surprise but he has stepped up.

SOTU: Lastly, what message would you give to the Miami Hurricanes fans out there?

JG: We need your support. We love your support. That's what we play for. We play for the fans and we play for each other. The more people that come out and support us the better we will be.

Thanks again to big # 45 for taking the time to talk to us. And good luck to JG Wednesday night and all season long. Be sure to check out JG and the 'Canes at the BUC this year.

State of the U catches up with Trey McKinney Jones

State of the U.com
Jerry Steinberg
Nov. 26, 2012

In preparation for Miami's crucial battle with Michigan State we spent a few moments with the Hurricanes versatile wing man, Trey McKinney Jones.

The 6'5 senior G/F is averaging 11.5 ppg, 4.0 rpg, 2.5 apg and 1.5 steals. His ability to do a little bit of everything has earned him the nickname "The Swiss Army Knife." Since transferring from University of Missouri-Kansas City he has been one of UM's best players.

Here is our full Q&A with Trey McKinney Jones:

SOTU: When you decided to transfer from UMKC, what made you choose Miami?

TMJ: Well I was deciding whether to go to Wisconsin in the Big Ten, or Miami in the ACC. I liked what the ACC presented. Especially the amount of success players from the ACC had at the next level. So it was what was best for me, and in the long run being more successful. More people from the ACC than the Big Ten seem to be at the next level.

SOTU: We have really noticed your floor game, specifically passing and handling have improved. Is that something you have worked on, or something that has always been there that we are now just seeing more of?

TMJ: It is something that I have worked to improve on but also always has been there. Growing up I was strictly a point guard, so I'm use to handling the ball. At UMKC I also handled the ball more. It is something that I got a little away from last year. I have made a conscious effort to have that all around game and not just be a shooter.

SOTU: Is there anybody in the NBA, or growing up who you modeled your game after?

TMJ: My uncle Mark (Jones). He had a big part in helping me grow as a basketball player. He played for the University of Minnesota and played overseas professionally, as well as in the NBA for the Magic. I grew up watching him, and he's been training me every off season. My uncle Mark more so than any current NBA player has influenced my game.

SOTU: Very cool. We are going to look him up.

SOTU: Not to look too far ahead, but among the players you went against in the ACC last year, is there anyone who sticks out as a tough match-up?

TMJ: Harrison Barnes last year at UNC. I haven't gotten to see much of the ACC yet. But amongst this year's players, Steph Curry of Duke. He is going to have a big year this year. And of course C.J. Leslie with NC State as well. We have been pretty focused mostly on our non conference schedule. Coach Larranaga is pretty big on not letting us look too far ahead.

SOTU: Can you tell us a little about the Swiss Army Knife nickname?

TMJ: I don't remember who gave it to me. I know Shane said something about it this year.

SOTU: I think actually my (former) Category 6 partner Josh came up with it? Its' an apt nickname for you being able to do a little of everything on the court.

TMJ: Yeah, I like that!

SOTU: Last question for today. What message do you have for Miami Hurricanes fans for Wednesday night and going forward?

TMJ: It is like a new season for us. We have all the pieces in place. The sky is the limit for us. It is going to be a great season. Come out and

support us.

We can't thank Trey enough for allowing us to interview him. We hope the fans follow his advice and Pack the BUC all season long as the Miami Hurricanes strive for an outstanding season.

McKinney-Jones Confident in Canes

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Nov. 23, 2012

The loss to Florida Gulf Coast still resonates with Trey McKinney-Jones who says the team is using it as motivation in moving forward.

The 12-point loss to the Atlantic Sun participants on Nov. 13 was as tough as a loss as McKinney-Jones has had while at Miami.

"Just the team that we lost to was kind of a slap in the face, not to mention the exhibition loss as well," he said. "I think we're going to turn it around, but it was definitely a very tough loss, it was kind of embarrassing. Like I said last week, we're a pretty resilient team and we're going to bounce back and have a great season."

Miami (2-1) bounced back with a win over Jacksonville will host NCAA tournament team Detroit (2-1) Saturday at 2 p.m.

"We still have a long ways to go, but I think our energy is the main difference," he said. "We have pretty much put the loss behind us, but we still have it in the back of our minds to motivate us to work hard every day in practice to keep getting better every day."

McKinney-Jones, a senior swingman from Milwaukee, is averaging a team-high 37 minutes a game and is third on the team in scoring at 11 a contest while shooting 38.5 percent.

"During the exhibition game and our scrimmage I was shooting the ball pretty well," he said. "Since the season went down my percentage has dropped so I've been in the gym shooting trying to get my percentage up to where I think it should be around 50 percent. I'm definitely feeling more comfortable and aggressive, I just need to knock down shots."

With the return of Durand Scott to the line-up, McKinney-Jones is expected to remain a starter.

"I want to be the type of player that coach can't take out of the game helping on the defensive and offensive end just playing my hardest and doing what I have to do," McKinney-Jones said.

Having Scott back should help the flow of the offense.

"It's definitely going to help and open the floor up," McKinney-Jones said of Scott's return. "It's one more person that the defense has to worry about so it's definitely going to open it up for myself and everyone."

Detroit is led by junior point guard Ray McCallum, who is averaging 21 points and 5 assists. McKinney-Jones attended a camp together with McCallum at Indiana when the two were in high school.

"I know a little bit about Ray, he's going to get a lot of shots up so you can't really do anything about that, he's going to shoot the ball either way. They're a great team. Coach mentioned that they like to play one-on-one a lot on the perimeter so we've been working on that in practice."

Miami's Shane Larkin among pleasant surprises in ACC

College Chalktalk
Joshua Parrott
Nov. 21, 2012

The focus of a CollegeChalktalk.com interview in early November with second-year Miami coach Jim Larranaga centered mostly on his potent inside-outside forward tandem of Reggie Johnson and Kenny Kadji.

Given the nature of the story, Larranaga spoke little about sophomore guard Shane Larkin, other than saying that he's a "nice point guard" who would form a quality backcourt this season with senior guard Durand Scott.

Larkin, the son of former Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame shortstop Barry Larkin, is now standing out on a veteran squad that won 20 games last season and advanced to the NIT.

Through the first three games of this season, Larkin leads the 2-1 Hurricanes in scoring (18.0 ppg) and assists (5.0 apg). His breakout performance came in a 73-57 win over Jacksonville on Nov. 16. Larkin poured in a career-high 27 points on 9-of-13 shooting and added five assists and four rebounds with Miami suiting up only eight scholarship players as Johnson (sore tailbone) and Scott (sitting out last of three-game NCAA suspension) were unavailable.

The 5-foot-11, 176-pound Larkin scored 21 of his 27 points in the second half to help the Hurricanes rebound from a Nov. 13 loss at Florida Gulf Coast. His previous high was 18 points at UNC Greensboro last January.

For the season Larkin is shooting 57.6 percent overall and 41.2 percent from 3-point range. That's a significant improvement from last season when he made the All-ACC Freshman team, ranked fifth in the league in steals (1.6 spg) and averaged 7.4 points but shot just 36 percent from the floor and 32.3 percent behind the arch.

"With a year under my belt I know what's a good shot," Larkin said after the Jacksonville game. "Last year I shot too quickly or forced a shot. This year with watching film and being more comfortable I know where my spots are and getting to my spots is helping me shoot a better percentage from the field."

Larkin, who originally signed with DePaul before citing an undisclosed medical condition to transfer closer to the family's Orlando home, admits to exhibiting better effort and leadership this season. He showed that by contacting his teammates via text message after the FGCU loss in an effort to lift the team's spirits and find out what he could do to improve.

An improved Larkin coupled with Johnson (14.0 ppg, 10.5 rpg), Kadji (10.7 ppg, 8.0 rpg, .364 3PT) and Scott (12.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 3.1 apg in 2011-12) could be enough for Miami to make it back to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2008.

Here is a team-by-team look at some of the other pleasant surprises in the ACC so far this season:

VIRGINIA TECH - Junior forward Jarell Eddie is averaging 17.8 points, 7.8 rebounds and 1.5 blocks while shooting 53.5 percent from the field - a big jump from his numbers as a sophomore (9.1 ppg, 4.8 rpg, 0.4 bpg, 42.5 FG%).

DUKE - Only a freshman, guard Rasheed Sulaimon is second on the team in 3-point shooting (44.4 percent) and assists (3.7 apg) and third in scoring (11.7 ppg) and rebounding (4.3 rpg).

CLEMSON - Sophomore guard Damarcus Harrison, a transfer from BYU, has been efficient, shooting 52.9 percent from the floor while averaging 9.0 points, 4.0 rebounds, 1.5 steals and 1.0 blocks.

GEORGIA TECH - Freshman guard/forward Marcus Georges-Hunt is second on the squad in scoring (12.0 ppg), averages 5.5 rebounds

and 1.0 steals and is shooting 52.6 percent from the field and 80 percent on free throws.

NORTH CAROLINA - Freshman forward Brice Johnson has contributed early despite his skinny frame, averaging 7.5 points and 6.3 rebounds in only 12.8 minutes per game.

FLORIDA STATE - Junior forward Terrance Shannon leads the team in rebounding (6.5 rpg) and is averaging 10.5 points while shooting 70.8 percent overall after receiving a medical hardship last season due to a shoulder injury.

MARYLAND - Sophomore center Alex Len has made a big jump this season, averaging 17.3 points, 8.7 rebounds and 3.7 blocks - up from 6.0 points, 5.4 rebounds and 2.1 blocks as a freshman.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE - Freshman forward T.J. Warren has become the top scorer on a veteran club, averaging 16.5 points on 66.7 percent shooting to go with 4.3 rebounds and 1.3 steals per game.

VIRGINIA - After averaging only 4.1 points and 4.4 rebounds per game last season, junior forward Akil Mitchell is logging a double-double so far this year at 12.4 points and 10.4 rebounds per game.

WAKE FOREST - Freshman guard Codi Miller-McIntyre, who had a career-high 21 points against UConn on Nov. 16, is the team leader in assists (3.0 apg), second in minutes played (29.5 mpg) and third in scoring (9.3 ppg).

BOSTON COLLEGE - Sophomore forward Ryan Anderson averaged 11.2 points and 7.4 rebounds and shot 43.3 percent overall last season and has upped his numbers to 22.7 points and 10.3 rebounds on 54.8 percent shooting this year.

Miami center Johnson slims down for senior year

NewsObserver
Luke DeCock
Nov. 21, 2012

This summer, as a group, Miami's basketball players decided to stay in Coral Gables and train together. For Reggie Johnson, the Hurricanes' gargantuan center, that meant missing out on the usual offseason pick-up games in his hometown of Winston-Salem, where everyone from Chris Paul to Wake Forest's players battle for Triad bragging rights.

So when Wake Forest guard C.J. Harris, another Winston-Salem native, saw Johnson over the summer during a quick visit home, he was as shocked as anyone at how little of him was left – a mere 290 pounds, down from 310 last season and 330 two years ago. (Officially, he's listed at 6-foot-10, 292 pounds.)

"He's been working hard. You can tell," Harris said. "When he's home, we play pick-up all the time. You can tell he's getting more mobile. He's just improved every year."

It hasn't been easy for Johnson, whose bulk has made him one of the ACC's best rebounders over the past three years. When he goes out with his teammates, he has learned to order grilled chicken or salads, water instead of lemonade.

"You have to be dedicated," Johnson said. "You rely on teammates a lot. Sometimes after games, we go to Friday's, and these guys are eating cheeseburgers and stuff. It's about discipline. It boils down to that. I'm a disciplined guy."

He's had a role model in his quest to slim down. Former Miami coach Frank Haith recruited 380-pound Dexter Pittman as an assistant coach at Texas, and he made the introduction between Johnson and Pittman, whose hard work to lose 100 pounds over the course

of his college career landed him in the NBA, and fortuitously enough, with the Miami Heat.

Johnson said the two have become so close since meeting during Johnson's sophomore year that he now hangs out at Pittman's house even when he's on the road with the Heat.

"He's at where I want to be at, so why not listen to him?" Johnson said.

But it didn't take his relationship with Pittman for Johnson to realize it was imperative he lose weight. Even the progress he has made won't be enough for NBA scouts, who will want to see him closer to 280, and there's no telling whether the extra baggage contributed to the knee injury that forced him to miss the first nine games of last season. (He missed another game later in the year because of an eligibility issue with the NCAA.)

Now, he can get up and down the court for all of Miami's two-hour offseason workouts, and Hurricanes coach Jim Larranaga said the leaner, swifter Johnson has met his practice standard to have a green light from 3-point range – make 50 3-pointers in five minutes on a regular basis. Johnson was regularly in the 40s last season, but he's been in the 50s in practice this year.

The question is whether the new-look Johnson will improve upon last year's 10.0 points and 7.2 rebounds per game, which were actually a decrease from his sophomore-year numbers (11.9 points, 9.6 rebounds) despite playing more minutes. In two games this season – he missed Miami's last game, a win over Jacksonville, with a bruised tailbone – he is averaging 14.0 points and 10.5 rebounds.

"We don't say anything to him, because we know he has to do what he has to do," Miami guard Durand Scott said. "This year is important to him. He's a senior, and he wants to go out the right way. You have to sacrifice. He's been doing real well with it, obviously, you

can see how he's toned down. Everything he couldn't do last year because of his injury, he's doing this year."

It's a big season for Miami (2-1), with the Hurricanes picked to finish fifth in the ACC and already upset losers at Florida Gulf Coast but loaded with returning starters and talent. About all they're missing from last season is the few extra pounds Johnson is no longer carrying.

Larkin Reviews Career Day

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Nov. 20, 2012

Shane Larkin was disappointed in his team's effort in a loss to Florida Gulf Coast so he put it on himself to help change the intensity on the floor.

Prior to Friday's game against Jacksonville, Larkin vowed to be a better vocal leader as he felt the team was "out-worked and out-toughed" against Florida Gulf Coast.

He responded in a big way scoring a career-high 27 points in a 73-57 win. Larkin also had five assists and four rebounds.

"It was good," said senior forward Julian Gamble of Larkin's performance. "The point guard is an extension of your coach out there on the floor and us seeing him take that leadership role on the floor and lead by example just kind of made us work even harder. We kind of just feed off each other and I think we had really good energy and I think that started with Shane. He had that energy all 40 minutes. Just being out there I didn't really notice all of the points until I looked up (at the scoreboard) at the end, but that's just him flowing in the offense when he shoots."

His 27 points came as a bit of a surprise for Larkin whose previous-high was 18.

"I wasn't even focused on scoring the ball," Larkin said. "I was just focused on bringing more effort. Usually the point guard brings the ball down the court so defensively I was just trying to be loud and communicate with my teammates and tell them that I got ball so they start talking because coach told me I start everything defensively and offensively. I just needed to be more of a vocal leader and I think with me doing that tonight it got the team with better intensity."

Larkin got off to a bit of a slow start scoring six points with one assist in 17 minutes in the first half with Miami leading 27-23 at the break.

He says he didn't take it upon himself to score more in the second half, but that it just happened in the flow of the game. Of his nine field goals made, four came on layups, three on 2-point jumpers, and two on 3-pointers.

"I was just going with what the defense was giving me," Larkin said. "I knew they were switching their bigs on me so I was just trying to penetrate and kick or score the layup if I had the layup. Most of the time they stayed with our bigs because I was dishing to them and they were getting dunks. When they stayed with them I was just getting easy layups so it worked out well."

Larkin turned in a memorable performance on a 9 of 13 shooting against Jacksonville, who had no answer for him in the second half. He made all seven of his free throws and finished with a player efficiency rating (PER) of 30.97. In comparison, LeBron James had a 30.74 PER last season during his MVP season with the Miami Heat.

Through three games he has improved his shooting percentage dramatically shooting 57.6 percent (19 of 33) this season compared to 36 percent last season.

"With a year under my belt I know what's a good shot," Larkin said. "Last year I shot too quickly or a forced a shot. This year with watching film and being more comfortable, I know where my shots are and getting to my shots is helping me shoot a better percentage from the field."

Larkin made it a point to contact his teammates via text after the loss to Florida Gulf Coast, which is something he wouldn't have done a year ago.

"I didn't do that last year," Larkin said. "Being older and more comfortable with your teammates—I have a real close relationship with everybody and I think just having a better relationship with them, I can tell them what I see out there and they can tell me what they see so we can just put together and see what we can do."

Larkin is currently leading the team in scoring averaging 18.0 points and 5.0 assists a game. His 41.2 percent from behind the arc also leads the team.

He'll look to continue his early-season success Saturday against Detroit.

State of the U chats with 'Canes Guard Justin Heller

State of the U.com

Jerry Steinberg

Nov. 19, 2012

Justin Heller may not be a star on the University of Miami's basketball team. But his role is helping prepare his teammates is invaluable.

Walk on athletes are integral and highly underrated. A closer look at walk ons reveals that despite not receiving major playing time, they are often some of the most passionate players on a given team. Today we caught up with UM junior walk on Justin Heller. Justin gave us some insight and how he ended up at Miami, what the team needs to do to improve, and a whole lot more.

Here is the full Q&A:

SOTU: Can you tell us a little about your background and how you ended up at UM?

JH: I'm a local kid, I'm from Boca Raton, Florida. Both of my parents graduated from the University of Miami. I have pretty much always been a fan. Being a walk on, with or without basketball, UM was definitely the number school I wanted to go to.

SOTU: Which players are the most difficult to match up with in practice?

JH: I would say, as a guard, Shane Larkin and Bishop Daniels. The two of them are just so extremely quick. It is difficult to keep up with them.

SOTU: This is a very difficult question, but we have to ask. What has the team been doing to overcome the slow start? Are there any major adjustments or changes we can expect?

JH: I think that Coach Larranaga has been around for a long time and has probably been in these situations before. We just need to listen to him, He has great experience. So not necessarily doing anything different, just re-

main the same and listening better. If we do those things, with our senior leadership, we will get back on the right track.

SOTU: For the fans who wonder what this team is like behind the scenes, can you tell us who is the funniest? The most serious? The leader of the team?

JH: The leader is Durand Scott. He's a senior now and has always been one of the best players on the team. With his passion and his competitive attitude, when you see how hard he works, you want to work just as hard. The funniest guys on the team are probably the freshman, Tonye Jekiri. He's always making people laugh, even the coaches. As far as the most serious, Steve Sorenson the new walk on. He hasn't yet opened up to the team, so that makes him the most serious.

SOTU: As a follow-up to your answer about Durand being the leader, can you talk a little bit about how his return will help the team?

JH: I think that Durand's return will impact the team dramatically. He's just an all around guy and a leader on the court. He has experience and he's one of the key players on the team. With him on the bench, we're just missing a lot.

SOTU: Any message for the fans?

JH: Although we have come out with a rocky start, I still believe this is going to be a great year. We need all the support we can get. When the team comes out to play and its quiet on its home court, it hampers the team. We need the support.

Thanks again to Justin Heller for letting us catch up with him. Let's hope 'Canes fans follow his advice and pack the BUC this year.

Could Erik Swoope be another Jimmy Graham?

State of the U.com
Jerry Steinberg
Nov. 18, 2012

We caught up with Miami's talented 6'6 junior forward Erik Swoope and asked him about the current state of the team, his incredible athleticism, his potential to play another sport down the line, and much more.

Much like Jimmy Graham, Swoope is a high energy player who can guard multiple positions, and play above the rim. Swoope had an excellent performance in Miami's win over Jacksonville Friday night providing energy with 7 points, 2 thunderous dunks, and 2 steals. Additionally he is a very good interview.

Here is our full Q&A with Erik Swoope:

SOTU: We talked with Bishop Daniels a few weeks back and asked him who was faster between Shane and him, and your name came up. So among Shane, Bishop, and yourself, who is the fastest?

ES: Oh man, its very close. If we had a footrace Bishop would win by a very small margin and Shane and I would be tied. We did actually get timed earlier in the summer in three-quarter court sprints, and actually I had the fastest time at 2.99 seconds. Shane was right at 3 flat, and Bishop was at 3.01. I wouldn't mind seeing us do a 40 yard sprint and see.

SOTU: It would be cool to see the three of you on the break and see who gets the alley-oop.

ES: Yeah, exactly (laughs)

SOTU: This is a very difficult question, but we have to ask. What has the team been doing to overcome the slow start? Are there any major adjustments or changes we can expect?

ES: I think we need to just learn what's best for us. We have some new guys in Tanye and Bishop and we're missing Durand as well. Right now we are just trying to build a stronger chemistry. Coach L is doing everything he can to help us understand how important the little things are like winning the free throw battle and boxing out. It is starting to slowly come together. I think between the new guys and all of the seniors we will come together.

SOTU: How do you see your role on this team?

ES: My role is mainly to come in and provide as much energy as possible. I may need to match up with guards, wings, bigs, so I make sure I am prepared to contribute offensively but also guard all 5 positions. I focus on offensive rebounds, and guarding the other team's best guy. Something like a Dennis Rodman.

SOTU: Can you tell fans a little about the mohawk?

ES: Yeah I had never done anything like that before, and I thought would be fun. My family also encouraged me to do something different. I actually just recently cut the mohawk, I'm looking to try some new styles.

SOTU: That's very cool and fits the Dennis Rodman mold just a bit?

ES: Yeah. (laughs).

SOTU: Considering your incredible athleticism, ever consider pulling a Jimmy Graham, and giving football a shot?

ES: That would just depend on if the opportunity came up. That is something I have contemplated. I'd have to talk to my family, but I haven't had any formal communication with the football staff. But yeah, there's maybe a possibility.

SOTU: Hey maybe we can send a note to Al Golden on your behalf. Although Coach L would probably take care of that?

ES: Yeah I'm sure they would.

SOTU: Any final message for the fans?

ES: Come and support the team. It means a lot. We will do everything we can to give them a great show. Going back to last year, when we played Florida State. It was the first sell out of the year. And the team, and the coaches, we really fed off of it. When an opposing team comes in they feel the energy, and we'd like to get that every night.

Well there you have it Canes fans. Erik Swoope and the Miami Hurricanes are looking for you to come out and support them. We certainly appreciate Erik taking the time to do this Q&A with us, and wish him good luck during the season and in all of his endeavors.

NCDS: Miami's Eric Konkol on what drives him to coach

College Chalktalk
Editorial Staff
Nov. 17, 2012

Each morning my three and one-year old boys wake me at the crack of dawn, sometimes earlier, and once they are busy playing and ultimately breaking something, I take a few minutes to check emails and plan my day. Quite frequently, I receive an email from someone who is interested in getting into college coaching. When replying to these emails I'm reminded of why I wanted to get into coaching, why I love what I do, and the people that have helped me tremendously along the way.

During the summers before my junior and senior years in college, I worked basketball camps at my school, the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, and several others around the country. For each of those two summers I worked 10 weeks of camp. After my first week I was hooked. I loved working with the kids, talking hoops with the coaches that had been doing it for years, and seeing just a slight improvement in someone during the week was very gratifying. It was also much more fun than the construction and waiter jobs I had the previous summers!

After college, I started as graduate assistant and was fortunate to work with some great people. Looking back, I was so focused on doing whatever I could to help the coaches win games, secure recruits, and not much else. Being focused is important, but it wasn't until a few years into my career that I realized the greatest satisfaction in coaching – helping our players. The impact we have on our players is tremendous and the amount of development between 18 and 22 years old can be life changing. Helping players improve their game, advising them through adversity on and off the floor, watching them graduate, and staying in touch with them through their adult life is the ultimate for me.

I'm a believer that there is no such thing as a self-made man. You must have help along the way. I have been fortunate to play for and work for great coaches that have helped shape who I am. My high school coach Gregg Jensen, college coaches Bo Ryan and Terry Gibbons, and the head coaches I have worked for in Ed Conroy, Buzz Peterson, Ken Novak, Saul Phillips, and Jim Larranaga. The camaraderie of a team and the friendship you build with the other coaches on the staff makes the long hours and tough losses seem insignificant. I really can't imagine doing anything else.

Thank you to Chris DiSano for allowing me the opportunity to once again take part in the College Chalktalk NCDS to take a few moments, step back, and think about the big picture. Good luck to everyone this year!

Larkin's tenacity energizes Hurricanes

Miami Herald
Michelle Kaufman
Nov. 17, 2012

Shane Larkin sent his University of Miami teammates a group text message around midnight Wednesday as they got off a long bus ride home after an embarrassing loss to Florida Gulf Coast University. He was feeling "really down" and wanted to know what he could do to energize the group.

Friday night, the sophomore point guard sent out another message with his inspired play.

Larkin scored a career-high 27 points on 9-of-13 shooting, as the Hurricanes defeated Jacksonville 73-57 at the BankUnited Center. His previous high was 18 against North Carolina-Greensboro last January. From the start of the game, it was clear Larkin was in command. He barked out orders, yelled "I got ball! I got ball!" and sparked a team that had lacked focus.

"Your point guard is your leader, the extension of your coach out on the floor and I think us seeing him take that leadership role made us want to work that much harder," said senior center Julian Gamble, who started in place of injured Reggie Johnson. "We had really good energy, and that started with Shane. He had that energy for the entire 40 minutes. I didn't really notice all the points until I looked up at the scoreboard at the end."

Coach Jim Larranaga and his staff have been trying to get all the players to be more vocal. He describes his team as quiet and laid back and had been frustrated that they weren't communicating enough.

"Shane had a great night, not only scoring but controlling the tempo," Larranaga said. "Coaches have asked these guys to be more vocal, and their way of having a conversation is sending a text message. So, it's all right. At least then they're communicating. You can't

be talking at the pregame meal, talking in the locker room, talking back in the dormitories and then all of a sudden get on the court and be quiet. The whole game is about communication."

UM came out with a sense of purpose after the loss at Florida Gulf Coast and a loss to Division II Saint Leo in the preseason.

The Hurricanes raced to an 11-0 lead as Jacksonville missed its first eight shots. Larranaga said they scripted three plays to start the game and executed all three, which got them off to a good start. They led 27-23 at halftime. Their biggest struggle was stopping sharpshooter Dylan Fritsch, who had 15 points at intermission and wound up with 23, including six three-pointers.

Johnson missed the game with a sore tailbone. He fell taking a charge against Florida Gulf Coast and missed two days of practice. He is expected back Tuesday.

Gamble filled in nicely, contributing 13 points, two steals and a block. Erik Swoope added intensity, defense and seven points off the bench, delighting the crowd with two dunks, one a high-flying one-hander. Trey McKinney Jones added 11 points, six rebounds, three steals and three assists.

The Canes shot 63 percent in the second half, and 59 percent for the game. Things went so well for UM that the game ended with walk-ons Justin Heller and Steve Sorenson on the floor, along with 7-foot freshman Tonye Jekiri.

Larkin: Loss Was Unacceptable

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Nov. 15, 2012

The Miami Hurricanes were in a somber mood following a disappointing 63-51 loss at Florida Gulf Coast Tuesday.

"It was not good at all," sophomore point guard Shane Larkin said. "Everybody hates to lose on this team. Everybody is real competitive. On the bus ride home I don't think anybody said anything to anybody, it was real silent. I know I didn't say anything to anybody. We're just looking forward to the next game so we can hopefully play well and get this thought out of our mind."

Larkin scored a team-high 14 points on 5 of 13 shooting in 38 minutes. He also led the team with four assists, grabbed four rebounds and had a steal with three turnovers.

Miami took an early 10-point lead before trailing by seven at halftime, 32-25. The teams were tied at 39, but Florida Gulf Coast controlled the rest of the way in what has been described as their biggest win in school history.

"It was a tough game," Larkin said. "It was a rowdy crowd. They came out in a zone. We actually started the game well, up 15-5 and had the momentum. They called timeout and came out of the timeout in a zone and we just weren't hitting our shots. That zone really messed up our rhythm, they really were denying Reggie (Johnson) in the block. Coach said we didn't get Reggie the ball until five minutes into the game and we need to be more conscious of that because Reggie (Johnson) is pretty much unguardable in the block when they don't double-team him. It was just a tough game, they were making shots, they only hit one 3-pointer so our 3-point percentage was better, but they were just getting more rebounds—most of them were long because they were 3-point shots so it was on

the guards and the bigs. We all weren't boxing out as a group. We didn't collectively play tough enough to win the game."

Down the stretch, Miami was outscored 24-12 as they finished the game shooting 29 percent from the floor.

"I would just say we got out-worked and out-toughed," Larkin said. "We were shooting too many 3s, we needed to get in the paint. The zone that they were playing we just couldn't penetrate the way we needed to or get the ball inside either by dribble penetration or by the pass. You have to give all of the credit to their team, they scouted us well. They just did a great job that night."

It was the most disappointing loss in Larkin's young career.

"Definitely," he said. "That's the first time we've been favored heavily that I've lost since I've been here. I know we lost a couple early season games last year to Ole Miss, Purdue, and Memphis, but we weren't really favored, it was a toss-up game that either team could have come out with the win. You always want to win the games you're supposed to win, even though it's early in the season, every game counts when it comes down to Selection Day and something like that could come back to haunt you. It was a really important game and I just don't think as a team we took it serious enough and played hard enough to deserve that win."

Miami (1-1) returns to the court Friday against Jacksonville, which is also in the Atlantic Sun.

"We've seen that even though a team is in the Atlantic Sun, anybody can come out and beat you on any night," Larkin said. "That wasn't a wake-up call (against Florida Gulf Coast) because (the exhibition game loss to) St. Leo was a wake-up call and we're not as a good as we thought we were at the beginning of

the season. All of the magazines and articles of how could we should be this year and how we should be in the Top 25, but that's all out the window now. We're back at ground zero. I don't see as getting the respect that we thought we deserved because that was just acceptable. They're a great team, I'm not taking anything away from them, but from us, it was unacceptable. We didn't play with heart, we didn't play with passion, and I think these next couple of games we'll see that coming out of us that we know what we have to do know, how hard we have to play, and hopefully tomorrow is just the first step to become a greater team."

Larkin vows to be a more vocal leader than he's been.

"Tomorrow I'm going to come out with a lot of energy and just be loud and get on my teammates," he said. "I don't think I've really done that and been the type to not yell, but be firm with what I'm saying. Like when giving my opinion on what we should do, coach says whatever I see on the court is the right thing so I'm going to try to be more vocal and get on my teammates to try to get pick them up. ... Hopefully they see that I'm going to play as hard as I can so they can hopefully do the same thing. As a team we just need to play with more intensity."

Hoops need not panic despite upset loss

State of the U.com
Jerry Steinberg
Nov. 14, 2012

After an alarming exhibition loss to St. Leo's and huge upset loss to FGCU, 'Canes Basketball fans find themselves puzzled and concerned. But there are still reasons for hope.

ESPN's annual College Basketball Kickoff Marathon featured a number of great games. Talented G Ray McCallum and Detroit gave St. John's all they could handle before succumbing on the road in the 2nd half. Sampson Carter hit a last second three off a perfect pass from Chaz Williams to give UMass a 67-64 victory over Harvard. Michigan State rallied to a victory over #7 Kansas behind Keith Appling's 19 points. And last but certainly not least, Seth Curry and Duke manhandled defending champion Kentucky in prime time.

What do all of these teams have in common, besides boosting ESPN's ratings, and assuring the event becomes an annual fix for the hoops starved basketball junky?

Detroit heads to the BUC in over a week (11/24) to challenge UM. The Minutemen host Miami a week later (12/1), Sparty heads to Coral Gables as part of the ACC/Big Ten Challenge on 11/28, and of course the Dookies get Miami twice (1/23 & 3/2) as part of ACC play.

Long story short, the 'Canes need to figure things out and figure them out fast.

So how concerned should UM Hoops fans be?

While the upcoming schedule is daunting, and the loss to FGCU alarming, it's NOT time to panic yet, and here are the reasons:

Durand Scott's return. Miami is with out last year's returning scorer for just one more game. Besides the fact that he takes the ball to the hoop and can create his own shot, Scott

is an underrated defender as well as an excellent passer. Miami has really struggled to get the ball in the post, and has allowed opponents to penetrate far too often in its' first 3 contests (including the exhibition). Scott's presence will help both areas tremendously. More then anything else though, Scott will provide on the court leadership. Coach Larranaga has said on more then one occasion that Durand Scott is the heart and soul of this team. They sorely missed his leadership last night.

Improved Shooting. Through their first two games Miami has shot 41% from the floor, 60% from the line, and just 31% from three point range. There is NO chance this continues. Last year, despite Malcolm Grant's season long slump, Miami finished 43% from the floor, 72% from the line, and 35% from deep. Rion Brown (0-7 from the floor against Florida Gulf Coast), Reggie Johnson (33% FG through 2 games), and Trey McKinney Jones (22% 3P%) are all due to break out. When they do watch out! These are all guys who are proven. There is no reason to anticipate they will do anything other then what their track records indicate.

The Defense will get better. More disconcerting then perhaps anything else in Miami's first 2 games is the fact that Miami allowed Stetson to shoot nearly 45% from the floor, and FGCU a whopping 49%. Miami was 4th in the ACC last season in FG% defense at just under 42%. And this is essentially the same roster. If Miami can hold the NC States, Dukes and UNC's of the world down, you know they have capable defenders. Look for the return of Scott and a re-emphasis on defensive effort to lower those opposing shooting numbers. Wins will follow.

These guys are good. A handful of publications had Miami in their preseason top 25. ACC coaches picked them 4th in the conference. Joe Lunardi has yet to exclude from his brackets. Reggie Johnson didn't suddenly forget how manhandle a Plumlee. Kenny Kadji

is still the same inside-out threat that caught the eye of some NBA scouts. Shane Larkin didn't lose his lightning quick first step. Effort can be increased. Strategy can be altered. Skill and talent do not go away overnight.

Early season upsets happen, it's more important how you finish. How many people remember that defending ACC Tournament Champion FSU lost to Harvard last year?? Big East Tournament runner up and Sweet 16 qualifier Cincinnati took shots to the chin to both Presbyterian and Marshall in its first 5 games last year!!! Vanderbilt lost to Cleveland State as the #8 team in the country early on last year, and Pitt lost to Long Beach State as the #9 team just days earlier. The Hurricanes loss to FGCU, while embarrassing, is not unprecedented. Many a team has recovered from an early major upset to go on and do special things later in the season. Some teams take a handful of games to get into a groove. Better to struggle now then late in the season.

The expectations for the 2012-13 Miami Hurricanes basketball team are justifiably high. Last night's loss was in a word, inexcusable. But there is still a whole lot of basketball left to be played. There's a very good chance by the end of the year the upset loss to FGCU, while not forgotten, will merely be a footnote.

Hoops Buzz: 11/8

Inside the U
Chris Stock
Nov. 8, 2012

CORAL GABLES, Fla. -- The Miami Hurricanes begin their 2012-13 season Friday against Stetson with a 5:30 p.m. contest at the Bank United Center.

Miami is coming off a disappointing 69-67 loss to Division II school St. Leo in an exhibition game last week.

"There's a lot of different ways to learn about yourself," head coach Jim Larranaga said. "One is in practice, which we had been I would say lackadaisical in our approach to little things and when you do that in practice, often times it doesn't make an impression. When you do it in a game it makes a huge impression and we've been able to sit and watch tape with our team and with individual on our team that clearly explains the coaches' concern with paying attention to detail. I think every player realizes he has a lot of things to work on to get better and they're doing that. I think we have their attention and they're working hard right now."

Larranaga continued on the loss:

"Here's the funny thing, I think players naturally tend to think, 'I'm good and I play well,' Larranaga said. "They often times judge themselves in one category--scoring. If I'm scoring, I'm playing well and if I'm not scoring, I'm not playing well, which is obviously not true. There's so many aspects of the game. Probably the biggest and most important aspect of the game is conversion. You shoot and miss, you get back defensively and set your defense so your opponent has to face a five-man defense rather than facing one, two, three, or four so that was the first point of emphasis. The second defensively is that as big as we are and as athletic as we can be at times, you have to rebound the ball, but if you don't block out and do the little things well, it doesn't matter how big you are, you're not going to get

the rebound. In that case, St. Leo out-hustled us for a lot of balls that we would have gotten had we boxed out. Then on offense, it is about sharing the ball and getting high percentage shots and we didn't do that. You know we didn't do that is we only had seven assists. If we only get seven assists in a game, we'll probably lose that night."

The first practice after the loss was:

"I'd say serious. A little more sense of understanding. They watched the video tape and saw how we played, I'm sure they were surprised by it. They probably knew we played bad, but didn't realize how many mistakes we made."

Larranaga admitted he was surprised with the way the team played, but now turns their focus to Stetson.

"It's not like a veteran team to start that way, but I've been through this before and hopefully the response will be the same," Larranaga said.

Miami went 20-13 last season while Stetson went 9-20. UM has won the last eight meetings dating back to 2008.

"Stetson has a very, very fine team," Larranaga said. "The first thing we noticed was they were 14th in the country in tempo (according to kenpom.com) so they like to run up and down the floor very well. Their big guys run the floor very well and their big guys can shoot 3s. They're a team that moves the ball on offense extremely well. They back screen, down screen, flex cut in the tapes that we watched and do a very nice job in their half court sets."

News & Notes

- SG Trey McKinney-Jones has earned the nod as a full-time starter in the final open spot with Shane Larkin, Durand Scott, Kenny Kadji, and Reggie Johnson. McKinney-Jones led the

team in scoring with 19 points against St. Leo and is expected to handle more of a scoring load after averaging 7.0 points a game last season. "He better, he's someone we're counting on very much," Larranaga said. "He started a good portion of last season, has played very well on the offensive end this preseason and he's got major responsibility of helping us by making 3s, getting out on the fast break and making some layups, playing good defense, and rebounding."

- SG Rion Brown will start for Durand Scott, who will miss the first three games as he finishes serving a five-game suspension handed out by the NCAA last season due to impermissible benefits.

- SG Bishop Daniels (hamstring) did not play in the exhibition game, but is expected to play against Stetson. Daniels resumed to practice on Sunday and was limited on Monday, but has been shooting each night. "We're hoping he'll give us some quality minutes on Friday," Larranaga said.

- Muscle cramps ended PG Shane Larkin's game early as he missed part of the second half. He's expected to play Friday.

- PF Raphael Akpejiori has also been dealing with an injury, but was expected to practice Wednesday. There is no timetable for a return for SG Garrius Adams.

- C Reggie Johnson, who attended Wednesday's Miami Heat-Brooklyn Nets game, struggled against St. Leo with seven points and one rebound in 13 minutes. "He did not have a good matchup," Larranaga said. "That's a concern that anytime you don't matchup properly, one of the things that Stetson is that their two big men, both about 6-9, can shoot 3s and that's an area our big men have to do better helping us out there."

Rothstein Files: Six BCS Teams Primed To Make A Jump

CBS New York
Jon Rothstein
Nov. 7, 2012

Looking for a team from a BCS conference ready to make some noise?

Check out our list below of six schools — one from each major conference — that's ready to make a jump during the 2012-13 college basketball season.

BIG EAST – RUTGERS

The Scarlet Knights had four top 30 wins last season and return virtually every piece of significance except for rugged forward Gilvydas Biruta, who transferred to Rhode Island. Nevertheless, Kansas State import Wally Judge should be able to fill the void left behind by Biruta and possibly give Rutgers more of a legitimate presence at the rim on both sides of the floor. Scarlet Knights coach Mike Rice has a terrific three-guard attack with sophomores Jerome Seagears, Eli Carter and Myles Mack, along with a big wild card in versatile forward Dane Miller. If the 6-foot-6 Miller can keep his engine turned on, he's one of the better intangible players in the Big East, and maybe the country. Rutgers has caught the eye of several coaches in the Big East during the preseason — they're on people's radar. This team went 14-18 last year with a plethora of freshmen, and it says here at the very worst they'll flip that record. That means the Scarlet Knights will be in the NIT or possibly on the NCAA bubble — seriously.

BIG TEN – MINNESOTA

Gophers coach Tubby Smith told me a few weeks ago that this is the deepest team he's ever had in his coaching career — and he won a national championship at Kentucky in 1998. Minnesota returns all the components from last year's group that reached the final of the Postseason NIT, as well as Trevor Mbakwe, who should be this team's sixth man. The key for the Gophers will be consistent guard play from both Andre and Austin Hollins, along

with another strong season at power forward from Rodney Williams, whose game went to another level last year when Mbakwe went down with a knee injury. Keep an eye on skilled big man Maurice Walker, who could develop into a valuable reserve thanks to his high basketball IQ.

SEC – OLE MISS

In six seasons as Rebels head coach, Andy Kennedy has led Ole Miss to five NIT appearances and five 20-win seasons. Kennedy has regularly had the Rebels on the cusp of the NCAA Tournament, and that should happen this season thanks to the enhanced depth in this program. Ole Miss now has seven legitimate perimeter players that can be in their rotation with the additions of freshmen Derrick Millinghaus, Martavious Newby and Anthony Perez, along with junior college transfer Marshall Henderson. Veteran guards Jarvis Summers, Nick Williams and LaDarius White all return along with maybe the most underrated power forward-center combo in America in Murphy Holloway and Reginald Buckner. After Kentucky, Florida, Missouri and Tennessee, this is the team to watch in the SEC.

PAC-12 – USC

The Trojans have no business being picked ninth in the PAC-12 preseason poll — their ceiling is much higher. USC has drastically upgraded their roster from a season ago and they could augment things even more if the NCAA grants Omar Draby, a 7-foot-2 transfer from Rice — a waiver to play immediately. In addition to Draby, Trojans coach Kevin O'Neill might have the nation's deepest frontcourt thanks to three transfers — Eric Wise (UC Irvine), Ari Stewart (Wake Forest) and Renaldo Woolridge (Tennessee). That trio combined with a freshman sleeper in Strahinja Gavrilovic and two savvy veterans in Aaron Fuller and Dewayne Dedmon should make USC one of the tougher teams in America to play against in the paint. Veteran floor general Jio Fontan appears fully healed from last

season's knee injury and should form a potentially explosive backcourt with another Wake Forest transfer, J.T. Terrell.

BIG 12 – OKLAHOMA

What a difference a year makes. Lon Kruger may be only in his second season as the head coach in Norman, but there's a palpable buzz surrounding the Sooners. Oklahoma's three freshmen guards — Buddy Hield, Isaiah Cousins and Je'lon Hornbeak will all see major minutes immediately, and Cousins could be this team's starter at point guard. Hield is the type of microwave scorer that could develop into a lethal sixth man and Wyoming transfer Amath M'Baye is an athletic forward who should form a nice veteran nucleus with upperclassmen Romero Osby and Steven Pledger. Kruger is one of the best tacticians in the business and has nine capable bodies to work with. That should be enough to have the Sooners back to where they expect to be on an annual basis — the NCAA Tournament.

ACC – MIAMI

If the Hurricanes' personnel wore Duke or North Carolina on the front of their jerseys, they'd be the unanimous pick to win the ACC. Miami may have had a small hiccup earlier this week when they dropped an exhibition game to Division II Saint Leo, but they still have all the requisites to compete for a conference title and a bid to the NCAA Tournament. The combination up front of Kenny Kadji and Reggie Johnson is as good of a baseline duo as there is in college basketball, and Durand Scott is a savvy veteran guard that should be an All-ACC caliber player. If sophomore point guard Shane Larkin can become more of a distributor, the Hurricanes should be right in the mix for an ACC title and a trip to the field of 68.

ACC Basketball Preview: No. 5 Miami

News-Record
David Morrison
Nov. 6, 2012

We're in the midst of 12 days of semi-involved previews of all 12 ACC basketball teams, in reverse order from what they were picked to finish by us media schlubs at Operation Basketball on Oct. 17.

MIAMI HURRICANES

Coach: Jim Larranaga (second year, 20-13; 29th year overall, 490-347)

2011-12 record: 20-13, 9-7 ACC

Last NCAA appearance: 2008

Returning starters: 4

One to watch

C Reggie Johnson, Sr., 6-10/280: The Winston-Salem native has slimmed down, worked on his offensive skills and put the knee injury that cost him 10 games last season behind him. His biggest impact will still be on the boards, where he and Kenny Kadji can be game-changers.

Projected starting lineup (star consensus brought to you by VerbalCommits.com)

PG Shane Larkin, Soph., 5-11/160 (3.3 stars, 19 career starts): 7.4 ppg, 1.35 assist/TD ratio, 1.56 spg

SG Durand Scott, Sr., 6-5/202 (4.5 stars, 93 career starts): 12.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 3.1 apg, 45.3% from the field

SF Trey McKinney Jones, Sr., 6-5/216 (2 stars, 50 career starts): 7.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg, 37.4% from 3

PF Kenny Kadji, Sr., 6-11/251 (4 stars, 29 career starts): 11.7 ppg, 5.3 rpg, 1.59 bpg

C Reggie Johnson, Sr., 6-10/280 (3.5 stars, 62 career starts): 10.0 ppg, 7.2 rpg, 49.2% from the field

Star/Start averages: 3.46/50.6

Statistically speaking

1,217: Career points for Scott, the ACC's active leader.

What they were good at (complicated stats courtesy of the always vital StatSheet.com)

Protecting the ball: Second in the ACC in turnovers per game (11.6)

Jacking up 3s: Second in the ACC in percentage of points from 3-pointers (32.2)

Offensive efficiency: Fourth in the ACC in points per possession (1.06)

What they weren't so good at

Sharing: Assist percentage (48.2) was 11th in the ACC

Defensive boards: Ninth in the ACC in defensive rebound percentage (67.0)

Overcoming halftime deficits: Were 2-9 last year when trailing at the half

Here's your headline!

'Canes have experience, inside play to turn break into Triangle power structure

Miami set to challenge for ACC crown

FOX Sports South

Andrew Jones

Nov. 6, 2012

Don't get Reggie Johnson started when it comes to the perceptions about Miami's place in ACC basketball.

The Hurricanes' senior forward is fine with Duke and North Carolina serving as the darlings of the conference. He just wishes some other ACC teams would get some respect, too; primarily his Hurricanes.

The thing is, and Johnson is smart enough to acknowledge this, too, is that you must win to get noticed, and Miami has fallen a just short of that in recent years. This season, however, could be very different.

"We're Miami, man," he said. "If our jerseys said North Carolina across the chests we'd be a top-10 team right now, that's how I feel. If it said North Carolina or Duke right here we'd be a top-10 team. But we're Miami.

"Those teams have great traditions as far as going to the tournament and making noise. I feel like we can compete with those guys."

Miami may do more than compete with them. The Hurricanes have the components to soar to the top of the ACC -- if several factors go their way.

UNC is small and lacks depth inside and will start a freshman at point guard, so the Tar Heels could be a work in progress all season. Duke has perimeter shooting issues and not much legitimate interior depth. North Carolina State, which was picked by the media to win the ACC, hasn't done so since 1989, and if unpredictable junior C.J. Leslie is its leader, the Wolfpack can't be seen as a runaway lock.

That leaves the door open for a possible surprise team to pass them all.

Maryland has nice parts and Florida State won the conference tournament last March. But Miami is more experienced and deeper than either, and really, may be the most experienced team in the ACC.

Add in the fact that its second-year coach, Jim Larranaga, is the only coach in the ACC not named Mike Krzyzewski or Roy Williams to lead a team to a Final Four (George Mason in 2006), and you have the makings of a possible ACC champion.

The key is Johnson. A 6-foot-10 load north of 300 pounds for most of his career, he's playing just below 290 now and is moving quicker than ever. Less pressure on his knees could mean Johnson plays a full season, which wasn't the case last winter. He averaged 10 points and 7.2 rebounds per game, but those numbers will be significantly higher if he's healthy.

"I'm moving fine, I am moving so much better," Johnson said. "I am flowing better, and it's making us smoother."

Senior guard Durand Scott (12.3 points per game for his career) said his fellow classmate has never been more impressive than since he lost the weight.

"Reggie has always been very good," Scott said. "He has great hands, a soft touch and feel, but now his footwork is much better and we run a smooth offense with him on the floor. We're a lot better now."

Sophomore point guard Shane Larkin, the son of Baseball Hall of Fame shortstop Barry Larkin, has considerable potential and should build off a quality freshman campaign from last winter.

Then there's 6-10 senior forward Kenny Kadji, who averaged just below 12 points and more than five rebounds per contest last season. Kadji may have the most pro potential of any-

one on the roster, and, when ticking, he and Johnson are quite a tandem, which means Miami can be quite a team.

"If we play to our strengths, then all of those guys complement each other in a very positive manner," Larranaga said. "We can be very good."

Johnson speaks glowingly about his teammates. He believes in them, and he has faith in Larranaga, whom the players took a while buying into. But that's no longer an issue.

And if the Hurricanes fulfill Johnson's vision, getting national respect won't be, either.

Miami set to challenge for ACC crown

FOX Sports South

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These Hurricanes are worth watching

AP
Steven Wine
Nov. 6, 2012

Like other members of the Miami Hurricanes basketball team, guard Rion Brown lobbies his fellow students to attend games, with mixed results.

"We've been trying to reach out to them," Brown said. "Sometimes they say, 'Is there a game tonight? I didn't know basketball season started.'"

Another season is about to begin, and there should be good reason to watch the perennially attendance-challenged Hurricanes. They're coming off a 9-7 season in the Atlantic Coast Conference, their best showing ever in the league, and return nine players from a team that went 20-13 overall.

Coach Jim Larranaga begins his second season in Miami confident the long-overlooked program is making progress. But can the Hurricanes get South Florida to pay attention?

Last season, the Hurricanes drew an average crowd of 3,936 in their 7,200-seat arena, less than half the league average and well outside the top 100 in NCAA attendance.

"When you're in a place like Miami, there is so much to do," Brown said. "You can't blame people for saying, 'I can go here or there, so why go to the Miami basketball games?'"

But Larranaga believes in his product and knows how to sell tickets. Attendance more than doubled when he coached at Bowling Green and George Mason.

"What we found is that first of all, people want to follow a winner," he said. "Secondly, you've got to do a lot of community service and networking."

That's why Larranaga sent his players to freshmen dormitories a year ago to distribute pizza and chicken wings, and they'll do it again this season. Larranaga also spoke to fraternities and sororities and at freshmen orientation. He invited children to visit with players after games and receive coaching from them at practice. He organized an adult fantasy camp to cultivate support.

"You've got to build a fan base one fan at a time," he said.

And then win, which Miami expects to do this season. The Hurricanes return players who accounted for 80 percent of their scoring and 86 percent of their rebounds last season.

Among the returnees are guard Durand Scott (12.9 points per game last season), 6-foot-11 swingman Kenny Kadji (11.7) and 292-pound center Reggie Johnson (10.0), all seniors. Each believes the team will benefit from a year under Larranaga, who has 490 career victories and led George Mason to the Final Four in 2006.

"From top to bottom it's a great team," Scott said. "But we'll follow coach. We're just trying to get to where he has been before, which is the Final Four. We know exactly what he wants and how he wants it done. It's just like school — if you follow the teacher, you're going to be able to pass the test."

Larranaga said the Hurricanes are strong at guard and have excellent size. His biggest concern is their lack of a 6-8 ball-handling forward, which could create mismatch issues.

"If we can find a way to hide that weakness, we can be very, very good," he said.

The opener is Nov. 9 against Stetson. The Hurricanes play Michigan State at home Nov. 28, and also have home games against Duke, Florida State and North Carolina.

"I don't know if that has ever happened before here, where you have four potential sellouts," Larranaga said. "Those are all Top 25 teams. Hopefully the community and students will get behind us."

UM eager to rebound after setbacks last season

South Florida Sun Sentinel

Michael Casagrande

Nov. 3, 2012

Hurricanes boast a senior-heavy team eager to make most of Jim Larranaga's second year leading the program

This is the year.

Miami basketball had the talent in the past, but circumstances varying from injuries to NCAA investigations kept the Hurricanes grounded. The clouds effectively parted in the offseason and the team is as healthy as it's been.

So they're confident.

"I'm sorry if I sound cocky or whatever, but I think we're going to win big," center Reggie Johnson said. "That's my mindset. I think practices are harder than the game right now."

Picked fourth in the ACC by the coaches and fifth by the media, Miami cracked at least one Top 25 ranking in preseason magazines. If there's a time for the Hurricanes to strike, it's now.

2011-12: 20-13 overall, 9-7 in ACC

Postseason: Lost in second round of NIT

The Starting Five

PG Shane Larkin: A year older and wiser, the sophomore has more confidence in the game plan and more chemistry with teammates.

G Durand Scott: Will miss first three games with NCAA suspension, but teammates have raved about improvements made over the summer. Should make big impact after return.

G: Rion Brown: The only non-returning starter has a 3-point shooting touch and averaged 7.2 points a game

F Kenny Kadji: Dropped more than 20 pounds, will play with more athleticism in final Miami season.

C Reggie Johnson: Healthy again, the 6-10 big man worked hard to develop a jumper to complement physical play in paint.

Others to watch

G Trey McKinney Jones: He could challenge Brown for a spot in the lineup after scoring 7 points a game and starting 12 times. It's his second Miami season after transferring from UMKC.

F Julian Gamble: The oldest player on the team coming off a medical redshirt for a torn ACL. The NCAA granted the former starter a sixth season after the injury.

Three keys to success

1. It sounds obvious, but failure to stay healthy made the biggest difference a year ago. The win at Duke showed what was possible when all was in line.

2. Get everyone involved. The Hurricanes are as deep as anyone in the ACC. Using that bench and wearing down the opposition with full-court pressure could make the difference late in games.

3. Feed Reggie. The 6-foot-10 senior Johnson is healthy and not lacking confidence in any way. Get him involved down low because few can match him physically.

Three must-see games

Nov. 28 vs. Michigan State: In what could be the biggest home non-conference game in memory, the Spartans will bring a strong early indication as to how the Hurricanes will fare in the ACC.

Jan. 10 at North Carolina: The first ACC road test will air live in prime time on national television. The nation will see if they're for real or not.

Feb. 2 at NC State: The homestretch begins with the preseason favorite to win the conference. Johnson pointed to this game before practice started as the game he's anticipating the most.

2012-13 forecast

The second year of the Jim Larranaga era opens with as much promise as this program's had in recent years. The depth will be a strength with four starters returning from a team that ultimately under performed a season ago.

Having six seniors, most of whom will contribute a large share of production, means the time to win is now with rebuilding job on the horizon. Improvements in conditioning (Kadji) and shooting (Larkin) made the summer a productive time for the Hurricanes.

Now they just have to do it when it counts with the rest of the country watching.

ACC HOOP PREVIEW: Miami

StarNews Online
Brett Friedlander
Nov. 2, 2012

Coach: Jim Larranaga (2nd season)

2011-12 record: (20-13, 9-7 ACC)

Postseason: Lost to Minnesota, NIT second round

Projected finish: 5th

Returning starters (4): Durand Scott, 6-5, senior, guard (12.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg); Kenny Kadji, 6-11, senior, center/forward (11.7 ppg, 5.3 rpg); Reggie Johnson, 6-10, senior, center (10.0 ppg, 7.2 rpg); Shane Larkin, 5-11, sophomore, guard (7.4 ppg, 2.6 apg).

Returning lettermen (6): Rion Brown, 6-6, junior, guard (7.2 ppg, 2.8 rpg); Trey McKinney-Jones, 6-5, senior, guard (7.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg); Garrius Adams, 6-6, senior, guard (4.1 ppg, 2.5 rpg); Eric Swoope, 6-6, junior, forward (2.3 ppg, 1.7 rpg); Raphael Akpejiori, 6-10, junior, forward (1.6 ppg, 1.5 rpg); Julian Gamble, 6-10, senior, center/forward (4.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg in 2010-11).

Newcomers (2): Bishop Daniels, 6-3, freshman, guard (18.0 ppg, 4.0 apg at Word of God Academy, Raleigh); Tonye Jekiri, 6-11, freshman, forward (20.0 ppg, 12.0 ppg at Champagnat Catholic School, Hialeah, Fla.).

Outlook: Ask any coach or television commentator worth his salt and he'll tell you that the secret to success in college basketball is seniors. The Hurricanes have six of them. It also doesn't hurt to have a strong point guard-big man combination, as Miami does in senior center Reggie Johnson and sophomore playmaker Shane Larkin. If that's enough, the Hurricanes also have a coach in Jim Larranaga who took George Mason to the Final Four in 2006.

In other words, all the elements are in place for Miami to have a breakout season.

Because of the depth and diversity of the veteran roster, Larranaga has plenty of flexibility to fit any circumstance.

He can go big with a frontcourt that includes a slimmed down Johnson, third-team All-ACC selection Kenny Kadji and a healthy Julian Gamble, who missed all last season with a knee injury. He can go small and quick with a stable of guards led by sophomore point Larkin, the son of baseball Hall of Famer Barry Larkin, slashing senior Durand Scott and highly touted freshman Bishop Daniels.

Larranaga also has the luxury of dialing up some instant offense off the bench in junior sharpshooter Rion Brown or turning to a shutdown defender in Trey McKinney-Jones.

It's the kind of roster that, if it lives up to its potential, might finally get people talking about college basketball in South Florida. At least, when the NBA champion Miami Heat isn't at home.

Quotable quote: "We've got a heck of a team, and I mean that with passion. I get chills just thinking about it. We're going to be scary good, as long as we come to work. At every position we have, we're deep. Practice is a war, which is the way Coach L likes it." Senior center Reggie Johnson.

Projection: If you're searching for a dark-horse pick in the ACC this season, look no further than the Hurricanes. Think last year's championship Florida State team.

Like the 2011-12 Seminoles, Miami has an abundance of experienced talent and depth at every position on the floor. It has potential stars in Johnson, Kadji and Larkin, to go along with a bevy of solid role players. It also has a successful veteran coach whose system is now fully installed.

About the only thing that stands in the Hurricanes' way of contending for an ACC title and an NCAA tournament bid is themselves.

Though they've won 19 or more games in each of the past five seasons, only once during that time have they made it into the field of 68. If Larranaga can develop some chemistry among all those talented players while finding a way to avoid Miami's customary slow start in league play, this could finally be the year the Hurricanes get over the hump.

An unusual refrain: NCAA Tournament or bust

Miami Herald
Michelle Kaufman
Nov. 2, 2012

A year ago at this time, the University of Miami men's basketball team was just figuring out its new coach, Jim Larranaga.

The hyper-energetic New Yorker with his motivational quotes, professorial style and complex scramble man-to-man defense took some getting used to after years under Frank Haith, a more mellow Southern big brother figure who preferred playing zone.

Larranaga had to get to know the players he inherited, too.

He learned that although Kenny Kadji is 6-11, he is more comfortable facing the basket than backing up to it. In fact, Kadji was asked to drop 20 pounds this off-season — from 262 lbs. to 242 — because he will be asked to run more and to guard 6-7 and 6-8 forwards on the wings.

He learned how to motivate 292-pound Reggie Johnson and 176-pound Shane Larkin. He learned how to best utilize guards Trey McKinney Jones and Rion Brown. He realized that Durand Scott is a fierce competitor. And he discovered during the past few months that 6-10 senior Julian Gamble, finally healthy, is a heady tough-nosed rebounder who should contribute more than Larranaga initially thought.

Six seniors are back from the Hurricanes team that finished 20-13 last year, fourth in the Atlantic Coast Conference (9-7). That team reached the second round of the NIT, which left the players and coaches wanting more.

"Tournament and make noise," Johnson replied, when asked his preseason goals. "I definitely want to make noise in the NCAA Tournament, no ifs, ands or buts. Forget the

NIT. Forget all that. I'm telling you right now. Sorry if I sound cocky...Some of you probably think, 'Oh, he's crazy,' but I'm telling you right now what's going to be this coming season."

Johnson predicted the Canes would finish top three in the ACC.

UM cracked the national Top 25 in a few pre-season magazine polls and received eight votes in the AP poll. The addition of 7-foot freshman Tonye Jekiri of Hialeah's Champagnat Catholic School should help, as he is quick for a big man and a good shot blocker.

Larranaga said this year's team has a much better grasp of his system after a year of instruction. He no longer feels he has to win his players over. They are on board and ready to follow his plan.

"We should be able to do things in November and December that we couldn't even think about doing at any time last year," Larranaga said. "You'll see us pressing more, running more."

The Canes had a pair of signature wins last season — at Duke and at home against Florida State. They are hoping for more this year.

Larkin vowed to be more aggressive offensively than he was as a freshman. He won't be as deferential as he was a year ago.

"Hopefully we can build on what we started last year and make the NCAA Tournament this year," Larkin said. "I'll look to break out a little more. I don't feel we get the respect we deserve. Winning at Duke shows what we can do, but we need to do more of that."

Gamble agreed.

"I'm definitely hungry after having to sit out the entire season and seeing ups and downs, seeing adversity," Gamble said. "This is my last chance, the last shot for half our team

to go out and make history, make the Tournament. We haven't been since 2008, my freshman year.

"We're not leaving anything to chance. We're going to do everything in our power to make the tournament. There's no excuse with the amount of experience and talent we have. We can't blame it on the coaching staff because they're doing everything they can to help us. We are an NCAA Tournament team and we just have to go out and show it. We've talked about it long enough."

EARLY START

The Hurricanes will play their first exhibition at BankUnited Center on Friday at 7 p.m. against St. Leo.

SG Scott Has Great Expectations

InsideTheU
Rudy Rodriguez-Chomat
Nov. 2, 2012

CORAL GABLES, Fla. -- The University of Miami men's basketball team is an experience group coming into the 2012-13 season that starts up tonight with an exhibition game against St. Leo in Coral Gables.

With six seniors returning from a 20-13 team that advanced to the second round of the NIT last season, the expectations are high in Coral Gables, a rarity in basketball, but a true reality.

The leader of the team is senior shooting guard Durand Scott who will be handling the ball most of the season and creating the havoc the team expects to bring. But it's started with creating a family environment.

"Coach encouraged us, everybody on the team to stay this Summer and try to get on the same page, try to be together, try to get more closer knit and which everybody did and that worked out for the better of us," Scott said.

For Scott though, it was about improving a jump shot that can make him a much more dangerous weapon for the 'Canes. Scott has always been able to get to the hoop, but his jumper hasn't always been the best.

"Personally, I wanted to work on my jump shot. That was my main focus. My jump shot especially from the three-point line was my main focus. Not saying that I am going to go out there and shoot a bunch of threes, but I am feeling more confident in that and when I am open I will surely take the shot," Scott said.

And it's not simply to shoot the ball, but it will create lanes for him or give him passing lanes to find teammates when he's covered tightly. It can also allow him to use his ability to get to the rim when he's crowded.

"That will help me a lot. That would stop people from going under the screens. People will have to play me much closer and I can use my speed to get to the basket if I need to. So it plays both ways. Hard work pays off and hopefully that will correlate to the game," Scott said.

Confidence though is a key for the team. Scott says the team is very confident with all the seniors returning, including himself, Reggie Johnson, Kenny Kadji, Garrius Adams, Julian Gamble and Trey McKinney-Jones.

"Obviously, we got the head of the class with the six seniors. We're all confident, stronger, mentally ready. If we all put it in one basket we'll be fine," Scott said. "From top to bottom it's a great team, we're just going to follow Coach L. He's the leader. We're just trying to get where he's been before which is the Final Four. I think if we just listen to him we'll be in a great position to win some ball game."

Scott also raved about a couple of freshman and a senior that missed last season. Bishop Daniels redshirted last year. Tonye Jekiri is expected to play as a freshman and Gamble is returning for a sixth season after injuring his knee last year.

"You didn't get to see them all (Bishop Daniels and Julian Gamble), and our freshman Tonye (Jekiri). Those are new faces you'll be able to see on the court and obviously we have Reggie (Johnson) who sat out a few games and me with my suspension. Everybody is on the court this year. They (Daniels and Jekiri) are going to play a major role this year. They make our team bigger and fast. Bishop is quick. Julian is the highest I've ever seen him jump. We got

Tonye who is another freshman, a big body, can block shots and run the floor like a deer," Scott said.

Scott though will have to continue with his suspension that began last year in the ACC Tournament. He will have to sit out three more games, all three which Miami should win, even without him.

"It's tremendously difficult because it was the ACC Tournament, a game that we needed, they sentenced me for what they needed to do. I just moved on. There is nothing I can do about it now. I think with all that we have in place, we'll be fine," Scott said. "--It's definitely a big deal. I want to play every single game at the University of Miami."

However, don't think there aren't big goals for this team going into its season under Jim Larrañaga.

"We got our second year under his belt. We know exactly what he expects, exactly what he wants. He's been there before. It's just like school, if you follow the teacher, you'll be able to pass the test. That's exactly what we are going to do," Scott said.

It's not simply making the NCAA Tournament, something that Scott has never experienced. He's looking at an ACC Championship, a Final Four, a National Championship.

"It would mean a lot. I know I've never been there. That's a goal for me, but not just getting there, win an ACC Championship, win an NCAA Championship. I think we're a great team that will be able to play against the best. We'll just battle and do the best we can," Scott said. "We're very strong in every position. If you look down the line, we have so many exceptional players. I guess that would give us the confidence with Coach L and with the seniors coming back and we're a close team, we've formed a friendship with all these years."

College Basketball's 10 Best in the ACC

SI.com

7

Durand Scott

Miami

Stats to know: 12.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 3.1 apg

In a league with a good deal of inexperience at the point, it's nice to have a senior there. It's also nice when he knows how to get good big men involved, and Miami has two of those, too. If Scott rediscovers his three-point stroke, all the better.

Top 10 Three-Point Shooting Bigs in CBB

BleacherReport.com

It's always great to have players who can stretch the floor with their three-point shooting ability.

It's even better if those players are some of your bigs who can step out and knock down shots from beyond the arc.

Power forwards and centers who can hit three's add a whole other dimension to their team's attack.

By being able to face up and hit the pick and pop, these players of length create matchup madness for their opponents.

Here is a list of the top 10 three-point shooting bigs (players 6'8" or taller) in CBB.

8. Kenny Kadji, Miami

Kenny Kadji is a rare player of size (6'11", 250 lbs).

The rising senior is just as comfortable stepping out to the three-point line as he is posting up on the block.

Kadji hit 41.8 percent of his shots from beyond the arc in 2011-12, many off of a pick and pop.

He hit four-of-five three's in Miami's upset win over Duke at Cameron Indoor Stadium this past February.

Watch for the Hurricanes to have one of their best recent teams—it will feature 10 upper classmen.

#35 Miami Hurricanes: College Basketball 111 in 111

The Sports Bank

Welcome to The Sports Bank's third annual college basketball season preview series. Two years we looked at 99 teams in 99 days. Last year, we were slightly more aggressive and expanded to 111 teams in 111 days and will do so again as we look ahead to the 2012-2013 season.

We will rank the 75 power conference teams and top 36 mid-majors in reverse power ranking order. We'll break down rosters, transfers, incoming freshmen, non-conference schedules, and pick a player to watch for each team.

There have to be some bold predictions in my rankings or else I'd be boring. One of those is that the Miami Hurricanes will have a firm grip on being the fourth best team in the ACC since six of their top seven scorers are back from last season.

MIAMI HURRICANES

Last Season: T-4th, 9-7 in ACC, 20-13 overall

Predicted ACC Finish: 4th

Projected Depth Chart

C: Reggie Johnson (Sr)/Julian Gamble (Sr)/Tonye Jekiri (Fr)

PF: Kenny Kadji (Jr)/Erik Swoope (Jr)/Raphael Akpejori (Jr)

SG: Trey McKinney-Jones (Sr)/Garrius Adams (Sr)

SG: Durand Scott (Sr)/Rion Brown (Jr)

PG: Shane Larkin (So)/Bishop Daniels (Fr)

Gone: SF-DeQuan Jones, PG-Malcolm Grant

2012-2013 Outlook:

In his second year as head coach, Jim Larranaga returns some more than capable scorers on the wing led by Durand Scott. The 6'5" combo guard didn't make the leap many expected him to as a junior but should certainly be motivated to make the most of his senior campaign. There is terrific depth on the wing with Trey McKinney-Jones, Rion Brown, and Garrius Adams who were all valuable contributors a year ago.

With Malcolm Grant graduating, Shane Larkin takes over as the full-time point guard. After choosing to stay in home state rather than attending DePaul where he originally committed, the son of former Reds shortstop Barry Larkin was named to the All-ACC Freshman Team. Combo guard Bishop Daniels who redshirted last season due to a foot injury could see some time at the point and Scott is capable of running the show as well.

The Hurricanes also have quality depth and balance inside led by the physical Reggie Johnson. He missed the first nine games of last season due to a knee injury and proved to be a force in the paint when healthy. Florida transfer Kenny Kadji made the most of his first season at Miami, bringing more size inside but also the ability to stretch defenses with his outside shooting. At 6-10 and 6-11 respectively, Johnson and Kadji are a tough match-up for any opposing frontcourt.

Miami will also get a boost off their bench with the return of 6-10 Julian Gamble who started thirteen games as a junior but sat out all of last year due to a torn ACL. Juniors Erik Swoope and Raphael Akpejori provide more depth at the forward while seven-foot freshman Tonye Jekiri doesn't figure to make an immediate impact though with his size and upside has the potential to be the center of the future for the Canes.

There are no real question marks for Miami this season. They have a solid, experienced starting five with quality depth all across the roster. Now the pressure is on for Larranaga and company to pull it all together and make the most of their talented collection of players.

Player to Watch: Durand Scott

Since they solid balance across their roster, Miami doesn't need Scott to have a monster senior year. The one positive about Scott is that he can still impact the game without needing to shoot the rock. With that being said, showing more of a killer instinct will only increase the chances of the Hurricanes being able to compete with the likes of N.C. State,

Duke, and North Carolina in the ACC.

Key Non-Conference Games:

11/24 vs. Detroit

11/28 vs. Michigan State (Big Ten/ACC Challenge)

12/1 at UMass

12/14 vs. Charlotte

12/18 at UCF

12/22 vs. Hawaii (Diamond Head Classic)

12/23 vs. Arizona/East Tennessee State (Diamond Head Classic)

12/25 vs. San Diego State/San Francisco/Ole Miss/Indiana State (Diamond Head Classic)

Preview: Miami Hurricanes

CBSSports.com

Shawn Krest

Oct. 31, 2012

Last year: 20-13 overall, 9-7 ACC (fourth), NIT second round

Coach: Jim Larranaga (second year, 20-12; twenty ninth overall, 485-342)

Projected starters: PG Shane Larkin, Soph. (7.4 ppg; 2.5 apg; 1.6 spg); G Durand Scott, Sr. (12.9 ppg; 5.4 rpg; 3.1 apg); G Garrius Adams, Sr. (4.8 ppg; 2.1 rpg; 0.9 apg); PF Kenny Kadji, Sr. (11.7 ppg; 5.3 rpg; 1.6 bpg); C Reggie Johnson, Sr. (10.0ppg; 7.2 rpg)

Top newcomers: G Bishop Daniels. The 6-3, 176-pound redshirt freshman was a top 50 recruit last year, according to ESPN and Scout.com and was rated the number four dunker in the class. He sat out the season with a foot injury after averaging 18 ppg, 5 rpg and 4 apg as a senior at Raleigh's Word of God High School.

Key losses: G Malcolm Grant was the Hurricanes' third-leading scorer last season with 10.8 ppg. The senior also led the Hurricanes with 68 3-pointers.

What you need to know: In their second-to-last regular season game, the Hurricanes lost by four at NC State. Miami players consider that game to be an elimination game between two NCAA bubble teams. The Hurricanes went to the NIT, while NC State had a Sweet 16 run in the Big Dance and are now the conference favorites. Miami considers itself to be four points away from the Wolfpack and a dark horse in the conference.

Mark the calendar:

Dec. 23 in the Diamond Head Classic semifinal or consolation game: Assuming the tournament seeds hold, Miami should face No. 12 Ari-

zona in the semifinals. Miami's frontcourt will be tested by Solomon Hill and two McDonalds All Americans in Brandon Ashley and Grant Jerrett.

Feb. 2 at NC State: The Hurricanes will get a rematch with the Wolfpack in Raleigh. The teams match up well. Johnson and Kadji will try to shut down C.J. Leslie, while Larkin and Scott square off with Lorenzo Brown.

March 2 at Duke: Miami upset the Blue Devils at Cameron Indoor Stadium in overtime last season. With two regular-season games to go, this will be one of the Hurricanes' last chances to impress the selection committee. Biggest question: Can Miami take the step up that Florida State took last season? The Hurricanes have one of their most-talented teams since joining the conference. Johnson and Kadji are an imposing front line, and Larkin, Scott and Rion Brown give the Hurricanes shooting and driving threats in the backcourt. They look good on paper, but the Hurricanes will need to defeat the conference bigwigs to move into the upper echelon.

Best-case scenario: The Hurricanes' talent and hunger, combined with a soft non-conference schedule create a deep, confident team entering ACC play. The Hurricanes' belief that they're a few points away from being NC State is well-founded, and Miami competes for the ACC regular season and tournament titles.

Worst-case scenario: Scott's three-game suspension to start the season leads to Miami dropping a game they have no business losing. Johnson, Daniels, and Adams, who have all battled foot or leg injuries in the past, can't stay healthy, and the Hurricanes remain on the wrong side of the NCAA bubble for another year.

Reality: There's no reason why this shouldn't be a tournament team and an under-the-radar threat in the conference. Johnson, Kadji, Larkin, and Scott will get more votes for

postseason ACC honors than they did in the preseason.

Season opens: vs. Stetson, Nov. 9, 5:30 p.m. ET, ESPN3.

Countdown Player Profile and Q&A, Kenny Kadji

State of the U
Jerry Steinberg
Oct. 30, 2012

Kenny Kadji established himself as one of the premier front court players in the ACC last year. What does the 6'11 big man have in store for an encore?

Last season is his first year at Miami after transferring from UF, Kadji averaged 11.7 points, 5.3 rebounds, 1.6 blocks, and shot 42% from downtown. He seemed to get better as the season progressed, and has worked really hard this summer to get even better.

Here is our Q&A with the exceptional senior forward:

SOTU: Where did you learn to shoot like that? Are you now the best 3-point shooter on the team?

KK: Actually I learned from my dad, and I realized I could shoot that well freshman year of high school. I liked it so I kept doing it. I would say I am top two on the team, between me and Rion Brown.

SOTU: We've heard you have dropped 20 pounds, how will this change/improve your game?

KK: I think I will be more of an athlete. Shooting threes will not be my only attribute, I will do other stuff, like running the floor, finishing under the basket better. I can jump higher and run faster, which will help me guard quicker players and quicker forwards.

SOTU: Which returning player in the ACC is the most difficult to match up with?

KK: I think, (Kadji pauses) C.J. Leslie from NC State. He's tall, quick, he has a small forward body but at 6'9 has the size too.

SOTU: Which teammate has really impressed you so far in practice?

KK: I would say Reggie is playing well. But Julian Gamble is playing well too. Coming off an injury I didn't expect everything he is doing. But he is playing really well.

SOTU: Coach L mentioned you in the same breathe as Chris Bosh. Is there a pro player you feel your game is reminiscent of? Or an NBA player you model your game after?

KK: I like Chris Bosh. I like Lamar Odom as well. I think Odom is the guy I model my game after. He is a forward who can do a lot of things. He's been my favorite player for a long time.

Thanks to big # 35 for letting us catch up with him. This season promises to be a huge one for Kadji. Be sure to check him out in action starting November 9th, and through out the season.

Opponent Q&A: Talking Miami with State of the U

Streaking the Lawn

Tim Mulholland

Oct. 29, 2012

Streaking the Lawn got together with Jerry Steinberg from SBN's State of the U to discuss the Miami Hurricanes as we head into basketball season.

Streaking the Lawn got together with Jerry Steinberg, a fellow SBNation writer covering the Miami Hurricanes for State of the U. We wanted to see what he had to say about his team heading into the start of basketball season. Let's take a look!

Streaking the Lawn: What are your thoughts on Jim Larranaga after his first year in Coral Gables?

State of the U: Last year, Coach Larranaga did a fantastic job working around injuries (Reggie Johnson, Julian Gamble, Garrius Adams, Bishop Daniels), suspensions (Johnson and Durand Scott), deaths in the family (Malcolm Grant), and all while implementing a new system, and still had Miami within 1 game of an NCAA Tournament. I'd say I was rather impressed. This year the team appears to have supreme confidence. Coach L is a big reason why.

STL: What was your biggest loss from last season's team?

SOTU: Malcolm Grant struggled through a very trying personal year, and it showed on the court. When his older brother passed, his game took a big hit, understandably. Despite his off year, Grant's leadership and shot making ability will be missed.

STL: Who is the freshman that you think will make the biggest impact this year?

SOTU: Miami only has one true freshman, Tonye Jekiri. Jekiri is a 7 foot athlete, who runs the floor well, and should contribute

immediately behind Johnson, Kenny Kadji, and Julian Gamble. Redshirt freshman guard Bishop Daniels could also see a lot of playing time this year as a combo guard.

STL: The Hurricanes were picked to finish fourth in the league this year. Fair? Not Fair?

SOTU: Absolutely. The 'Canes have 4 players in Reggie Johnson, Kenny Kadji, Durand Scott, and Shane Larkin who should vie for All Conference honors. Add to mix the depth they have in proven swingmen Trey McKinney Jones, Rion Brown, and Garrius Adams, depth in the front court (Gamble, Jekiri), and talented athletes (Daniels, Erik Swoope) and you have a very versatile and dangerous squad. Plus they are in year 2 under Larranaga and should have a better feel for his system.

STL: Who does Virginia need to watch out for most this year?

SOTU: Well I think Virginia fans are already familiar with Kenny Kadji, but he is 20 pounds lighter this year and really running the floor well. Coach L has compared him to a right-handed Chris Bosh. Of course a healthy Reggie Johnson is always a concern for any opponent. Shane Larkin and Rion Brown really came on last season, as the season progressed. I suspect UVA will have their usual lock down defense. Most likely the size and skill of Kadji would give them the most trouble.

STL: Which of Virginia's players gives you the most concern?

SOTU: We know Joe Harris wasn't himself at the end of the season and expect big things from him now that his hand has healed. Jontel Evans can go an entire game with out scoring then suddenly make a clutch one. The big freshman Mike Tobey and the sharp shooting new comer Evan Nolte are also a concern, as we have yet to see them in action. More than anything the team defense of the Hoos concerns me, anytime Miami plays them.

Larranaga Sees Progress

**CaneSport
Staff
Oct. 28, 2012**

Coach Jim Larranaga says his team's practices are going well.

To the point that he ended one early-season practice early.

"We were scheduled to go from 2-4, and we went for about an hour and 10 minutes and I stopped practice and sent them home because we were doing so well I wanted to end on a very positive note," Larranaga said. "We had accomplished everything we wanted to accomplish."

Asked if it's common for him to end a practice early, Larranaga said, "I think it's the first time in my coaching career I did it so early. In fact there were times in February we were still going two-and-a-half to three hours, and I would tell the team we should have been done in an hour-and-a-half, but we couldn't get it right."

Larranaga said in the team's first scrimmage he could tell players were fatigued.

"We're practicing very hard - you have to know how much you can push your team and at what point you need to back off," he said.

Because of that Larranaga said the team won't be practicing five days in a row at any point.

How different are things now vs. when Larranaga took over a year ago?

"I think Reggie Johnson said it best (in an interview) - they asked 'What's the difference between last year and this year?'" Larranaga said. "And he said 'Last year we were used to doing it one way, then we were asked to do it another way. But this year we know we do it just one way, and that's the Miami way.' It

was great that we have now that understanding that we're not trying to do it to please one player or a group of players; we're trying to do it in such a way that it can be a consistent brand of basketball."

Larranaga added that overall "I'm very pleased with how our guys have been practicing."

* Asked about the battle for playing time between Trey McKinney Jones and Rion Brown, Larranaga said, "I just want them to play like they're playing. They're both great. (They are) two high quality performers. Trey has a little more versatility, can play the 1, the 2, the 3 and the 4. But Rion is also playing at a very high level. The two of them will play in the game a lot along with Durand Scott and Shane Larkin. Three of them will be out on the floor together a lot."

* Of Kenny Kadji's progress after losing 24 pounds this off-season, Larranaga said, "What I want him to be is an athlete. He's a very skilled player, can really shoot the ball. But at 262 pounds (last year) he didn't run the floor consistently well. (Now) he can get out and finish on fast breaks at a much higher rate. When we extend the defense he's going to be expected to sometimes be on the ball, pressure full court. At 262 pounds, once they beat the press he'd be out of the play, trailing and no help for us. (Now) he can spring back and be a major factor."

* Larranaga said the team will miss DeQuan Jones "because we don't have that 6-7, 6-8 versatile athlete who can play the 3 and 4."

Larranaga said McKinney Jones may wind up guarding players three or four inches taller that Jones covered a year ago.

* Asked about freshman center Tonye Jekiri, Larranaga said, "I really like the progress Tonye is making. We've worked very exclusively on him developing a great jump-hook.

I think that will be his greatest weapon throughout his college career. He's got a nice jump shot, but a guy of his size (6-11) with his versatility in and around the basket, to be able to just jump-hook over people would be very, very effective. He's working hard to develop that shot as his bread-and-butter move."

* Larranaga recounted his in-home visit with Bishop Daniels (currently hampered by a hamstring injury) that helped convince the then-early signee to remain a Cane.

"When I first got the job, actually during the process of looking at Miami and seeing they had signed Bishop Daniels, I spoke to my son Jay, who is now with the Boston Celtics - he said to me 'If you get the job and take the job, you need to immediately get on an airplane and go see Bishop Daniels because you'll love him,'" Larranaga said. "I told Bishop that. I said 'I haven't seen you play, but my son said you're great, loves your athletic ability and knows that I love athletes like you.' I think that made an impression on Bishop and his parents."

Daniels is hoops' speedster, high flier

**CaneSport
Staff
Oct. 27, 2012**

Hurricane redshirt freshman guard Bishop Daniels was in sixth grade when he dunked for the first time.

All 5-foot-9 of him.

It was the beginning of a high-flying prep career that now has him coming off the bench at the 1, 2 and 3 for UM ... when he gets healthy from a hamstring injury.

"I'll be giving breaks to everybody - more the 1 and the 2 than the 3," said Daniels, now a 6-foot-3, 176-pounder.

When healthy, Daniels flies up and down the court - teammates call him the fastest player on the team.

Daniels' take on the roadrunner hype?

"I've always been quick and fast," he said. "I've been pretty fast all my life."

And Daniels was fast to ask UM to pull his letter-of-intent once former coach Frank Haith - who recruited him - left the program two years ago.

UM declined to release him from the scholarship, and once Jim Larranaga was hired everything was smoothed out in one in-home visit. Daniels says if it hadn't work out with Miami that he would have gone to either Tennessee or Rutgers.

"I signed in the early period, and when Haith left they held me, had no AD, asked me to wait to see who the new coach would be," Daniels said. "So I stuck it out and coach L came to my house and we sat down. I realized that coach L might have been one of the best decisions I could make to better me as a man and a player.

"Coach L, what sold me wasn't anything in particular, just him knowing a lot about life and what he takes from his life experiences and puts into the game is remarkable. Everything he does is well thought out. I just felt like that was the best thing for me. I told him 'Yeah, I'm going to stick it out with Miami.'"

Daniels redshirted last year and says that was "frustrating."

"Half the season I was injured with a fractured big toe, couple of torn muscles on the bottom of my foot," Daniels said. "I just wanted to be out there, especially seeing all my teammates play, I felt there were times I could have helped them."

Daniels arrived at UM rated the No. 46 shooting guard in the nation by ESPN. He was rated the No. 4 dunker in the 2011 class by Rivals.com.

As a senior at Raleigh (NC) Word of God High School he averaged 18 points, five rebounds and four assists per game, helping lead his team to a 23-3 record and state semifinals appearance.

He played for the same high school as John Wall, the No. 1 draft pick in 2010 by the Washington Wizards.

And the two stay in touch.

"I was in the back court with him - I talk with John every now and then," Daniels said. "He helps me a lot, breaks things down for me."

How talented is this year's Hurricane team?

"We're real talented, have a lot of experience," Daniels said. "Everyone on the team can play; everyone knows their role and they do it well. The biggest thing for us is as a team we've grown together, know what it's going to take and what we have to do to make it to the

tournament. I think we'll do real well."

For his part, Daniels says he's particularly improved one aspect of his game entering this season: "I always had a mid-range jumper, but the three-point shot wasn't always the best for me," Daniels said. "I've been working on that a lot throughout this past year and this summer. I think I've gotten better at that. And I have a better IQ of the game."

While Daniels has high hopes for himself and the team, he also is out to prove just how fast he can go.

"Me and (fastest Cane football player) Phillip Dorsett joke about it all the time - I don't know if we'll race," Daniels said. "If we do, I'll put up a good run for it."

* Daniels' real first name is Delante. He says he got the nickname Bishop, which is his middle name, from a movie.

"It's a movie called Juice, and Tupac (Shakur)'s name in the movie was Bishop, and my dad was real heavy on Tupac," Daniels said. "So he gave me that name."

Kadji: Diet was 'awful'

CaneSport

Staff

Oct. 27, 2012

Big man Kenny Kadji played at 265 pounds last season.

This year?

A svelte 241.

It's all part of the plan to make Kadji able to run up and down the court better, helping him work into the scramble defense and lead fast breaks. Kadji said coaches told him to start losing weight right when last season ended.

"I feel way better," Kadji said. "I have more energy, can run up and down for a longer period of time. I lost a lot of weight, but I still bench the same, even more, than when I was 265."

Kadji says he lost weight by going on a diet that excluded his favorite things to eat - fast food, soda, ice cream ... and his favorite breakfast food, bacon.

"It was eating differently," Kadji said. "It's more vegetables, things like that, and you have to eat everything plain - chicken (with) no sauce."

Kadji says now that he's attained his goal weight he's able to add some of his favorite foods in moderation. He says the off-season diet "was awful - I wanted to quit every day."

Are there any concerns that with the lost weight he could get pushed around down low?

"I got stronger this summer, lost the weight but replaced it with muscle," Kadji said. "And I have to go against Reggie (Johnson) every day. If I do well against him I'll be fine."

What does Kadji want to improve in his game this season?

"Definitely rebounding," he said. "I'm trying to be more of an energy guy, like Durand (Scott), play harder defensively. And now I know I have the energy to do that, to run the floor, block shots. When I get on the court you can feel the difference just with the energy."

Kadji says this year's team is "so much different than last year. At practice everybody knows what they have to do, and that's because of coach L (Jim Larranaga). He gives you so much confidence. You know if you do what he says you'll wind up being a good team, a good player."

* Kadji said last year under a new coach "was like learning basketball again. When he was here last year - you had coach (Frank) Haith who played mostly zone. Last year we played mostly man, press. He said 'If you listen to me, do what I say, it might not be this year, but next year, the year after we'll be a way better team.' And we're starting to see that."

Countdown: Player Profile and Q&A, Rion Brown

**State of the U
Strauzer
Oct. 26, 2012**

We had a chance to talk to super Canes hoop-er Rion Brown to hear what to expect from UM this year on the court and what he's learned from Coach Larranaga.

Rion Brown came to UM in 2010 a 4 star recruit from Hinesville, GA the son of former Georgia Tech star Tico Brown who later went on to become the all-time leading scorer in the CBA. Rion is listed as a 6'6" guard but frequently played the 3 slot for the Canes last year.

Known for his shooting and athleticism, Rion was the second best 3 point shooter on the team last year hitting 41-104 (39.4%). Rion made many highlight reels last year with his high flying power dunks (watch him dunk on Reggie Bullock below) and should play a critical role on the team this year. We caught up with #15 recently.

SOTU: What is the biggest difference heading into this season vs. last now that you've had a year with Coach Larranaga?

RB: He doesn't spend so much time teaching every philosophy he has, we know them from first year. It's much more about basketball now.

SOTU: Can we expect more of a fast paced tempo from the Canes this year?

RB: Oh yes, expect a lot more pressing and more layups and open threes (in transition).

SOTU: Who are the leaders this year?

RB: Julian, Durand and Reggie but Julian has been around for a long time, he's the old man and he's been there for 6 years. He has seen a lot of different things and had a lot of different experiences so its good to have a guy like him around.

Durand is like a coach out on the floor, if we can't hear Coach L we look to Durand and Shane to be the leaders out there.

Reggie's been here 5 years and he always helped me out and even now is always in the big guys ears to help them out.

SOTU: What has been your focus this off-season?

RB: Working on my driving ability, everyone knows I can shoot. I want to be a threat to drive and kick and also have good handle on the ball.

SOTU: What is your favorite Coach L-ism?

RB: "practice doesn't make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect"

SOTU: Who in the ACC was toughest to guard last year?

RB: Harrison Barnes, he was the hardest player to guard since I've been here.

SOTU: Any message for Canes fans?

RB: PACK THE BUC!! We need all the fans we can get, were going to be a special team this year I just want everyone to be a part of it and be able to experience it because we are going to do really big things this year.

Thanks again to Rion Brown for taking time out of his busy day for us. Watch out for this sharpshooter when the "Canes open the season November 9th, and through out the season.

Brown: I want and ACC Championship Badly

CaneSport
Staff
Oct. 27, 2012

Junior guard Rion Brown will compete with Trey McKinney Jones for playing time this season.

And he says he's focused on "having a really good season."

"We lost two seniors, Malcolm Grant and DeQuan Jones," Brown said. "We have basically everybody back, and we were a really good team last year in our first year under coach L (Jim Larranaga). We had a lot of learning to do, and that learning curve has happened already and we can just focus on becoming a better team; he doesn't have to concentrate so much on teaching. It's 'Okay, this is what I need you guys to do. Just work hard, play hard.' So that's going to make us a better team. We're definitely playing a lot better together, cohesiveness."

What has he improved in his own game from last season?

"I'd say ball handling, being able to drive a lot more," Brown said. "I want to be an all-around player, not just a shooter - get my teammates some balls and just make offensive plays, period. Not just shooting out there, shooting threes. I want to be an all-around player."

Why wasn't this team able to live up to its potential a year ago?

"There were a lot of other things outside of basketball going on," Brown said. "When that happens you can't really get a togetherness all year like you want, really build and become a team. We had guys in and out of the lineup. I don't even know how many times we changed the starting lineup - guys weren't really comfortable all year. We'd have a stretch where we got comfortable, were playing well, and then something else happened where we have

to rearrange this, move this person there. This year we have a lot more stability knowing this is how it's going to be - hopefully it stays this way."

Brown has set the team's goals high.

"I want an ACC Championship, want it bad, and this is definitely the year to get it," he said. "And I'm looking at Sweet 16. Of course, I don't want to just stop there. But that's the least I can see happening."

* Brown says in an effort to get fans in the stands this season players may wear T-shirts that say "Game Day Today."

"Coach (will have) us handing out fliers to games - we're doing things to reach out (to fans)," Brown said. "'I hope they pack the BUC."

Countdown to Hurricanes Hoops: Bishop Daniels

State of the U
Jerry Steinberg
Oct. 26, 2012

One of two newcomers this year, the combo guard from Raleigh, North Carolina could be one of the 'Canes most exciting players.

Bishop Daniels came to Miami with a lot of promise. Unfortunately his freshman year ended before it started due to a foot injury. This year Daniels is determined to make up for lost time. The 6'2 guard is an electrifying athlete who can turn any play into a highlight reel.

Daniels has been slowed recently by a pulled hamstring, but is progressing nicely.

Here's our Q&A with the super quick redshirt freshman:

SOTU: Any new status on the hamstring? Are you fully practicing?

BD: I am back, participating in practice. Not fully, but I would say I will be back before any games start. Nothing serious, just precautionary.

SOTU: Besides dealing with not being able to play, did you gain any new perspective on the game watching from the bench last year? Did you get to practice at all?

BD: To answer the second part first, I did practice. I didn't start practicing until December last year, because of the foot injury. What I gained last year was I learned a whole lot of things. First of all, everything Coach L runs. What he does and doesn't want us to do. I was learning from players and coaches both how to be a lead guard. You have to know your personnel on the court. Who can do what on the floor and who can't.

SOTU: Do you see yourself more as a point? 2 guard? or combo?

BD: I am a combo guard. I'm not a shooting guard but then again I'm not a true point guard. I wouldn't say I'm a Chris Paul or anyone like that right now. But I could see myself making that transition as I develop.

SOTU: This may be the hardest question you have to answer this season, Who is faster, you or Shane Larkin?

BD: (Bishop laughs) I'd say in different areas, he's faster then me, in different areas I am faster then him.

SOTU - Being a little diplomatic on that one? (BD laughs) We also heard Erik Swoope is pretty fast?

BD: Oh yeah, he's real fast. He can get up and down the floor!

SOTU: Who is the most challenging player to match up with in practice?

BD: For me, because I play against them at my position everyday, Durand Scott and Shane Larkin. We battle it out. We make each other better. We go at each other so hard, we know we make each other better.

Thanks again to Bishop Daniels for letting us catch up with him. Watch out for the high flyer when the "Canes open the season November 9th, and through out the season. Here's a little taste of his explosiveness:

Hoops Buzz: 10/26

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Oct. 26, 2012

CORAL GABLES, Fla. -- The Miami Hurricanes basketball team are continuing their preparation for the 2012-13 season, which begins in two weeks.

Miami will face South Florida in a closed scrimmage on Sunday and will host St. Leo in an exhibition game on Nov. 2 before beginning their season against Stetson on Nov. 9 at the BankUnited Center.

"We have a veteran team of five seniors that are going to lead us to possibly the best season in Miami history," head coach Jim Larranaga said. "If we can stay healthy we have a chance to compete with the best teams, not only in our league, but around the country. We want the fans to join us early and often and get on board so we have that preverbal sixth man cheering us on."

Larranaga has been pleased with the team's efforts in practice thus far.

"I get on them because I want to know how much I expect of them, but I am very pleased with the efforts," head coach Jim Larranaga said.

News & Notes

- The team's two undisputed leaders, SG Durand Scott and C Reggie Johnson, were switched to the depleted second unit in a practice last week as a challenge by the coaching staff. In a surprise, they were able to lead the green team to a win in practice. "It was because Reggie and Durand were so dominant," Larranaga said. "Reggie was unstoppable near the basket and Durand was unstoppable on the perimeter."

- During Wednesday's practice, Trey McKinney-Jones did a nice job finding his stroke from distance and should have plenty of opportunities to shoot the ball again this season with the attention to Johnson down low.

- SG Bishop Daniels (hamstring) has been limited in practice since suffering the injury the second day of practice, but has been able to do side and individual work. Daniels says that he will play in the opener. "If he's healthy when we open the season Nov. 9, he's going to play," Larranaga said. "He knows well enough what we're doing. We don't do anything too complicated and he's out there at practice seeing what we do. We don't have to worry that he's going to be so far behind that he can't contribute. What we do have to concern ourselves with is keeping him healthy once he gets back."

- Assistant coach Chris Caputo joked with Shane Larkin and Rion Brown before Wednesday's practice about the two being excited about playing the up-tempo style Larranaga prefers when he took over the program, but the staff hasn't seen it enough from the guards.

- C Tonye Jekiri is the lone true freshman on the squad and continues to make strides with his game. "I like the progress Tonye Jekiri is making," Larranaga said. "We have worked exclusively on him developing a great jump hook because I think that will be his greatest weapon throughout his college career. He's got a nice jump shot, but a guy with his size and versatility in and around the basket, to be able to just jump hook over people would be very, very effective and he's working very hard to develop that shot as his bread and butter move."

- With Daniels and Garrius Adams (knee) out, more pressure is placed on walk-on guards Steve Sorenson and Justin Heller in practices. "It makes it challenging for our two walk-ons--Steve Sorenson and Justin Heller--who

do a terrific job to go against guys like Shane Larkin, Durand Scott, and Trey McKinney-Jones every day. It's tough enough if you're a scholarship player, but if you're someone new to the game and new to college like Sorenson is and face that kind of pressure every afternoon."

- Former Hurricane Guillermo Diaz (2003-06) practiced with the team on Thursday. Diaz ranks 10th on UM's all-time scoring list with 1,477 points and fourth with 174 3-point field goals. Diaz, a Clippers second round pick in 2006 who played six games in the NBA, has played professionally in the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, and Puerto Rico as well as earning a silver medal for Puerto Rico in the 2009 FIBA Americas Championship.

- Former Hurricane DeQuan Jones continues his strong case to land a spot on the Orlando Magic as he's averaged 9.6 points and 3.3 rebounds while leading the team in minutes during the preseason. Jones was a bench player for the Hurricanes last season finishing eighth in scoring averaging 5.9 points a game. When Larranaga was asked if he was surprised with Jones' success, he responded: "I guess I would say that I'm just happy. He is someone that is a great kid. He's a hard worker and last year he listened attentively to the things we were asking him to do and made a lot of serious adjustments to his game. When we first got here I think he saw himself as Kobe Bryant, a lot of fadeaway jumpers and a lot of complicated difficult moves and we tried to make him a little more fundamentally sound and a better defender and rebounder."

Gamble back, better than ever, ready to lead

**CaneSport
Staff
Oct. 25, 2012**

Julian Gamble is the oldest member of the Hurricane basketball team, and he remembers his freshman year when the team went to the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

So how does this year's team stack up to that one?

"Talent from top to bottom I'd say this has to be the best, but it might be second-best because it is hard to compete talent-wise and physically with a team where you had Jack McClinton with Jimmy Graham and Dwayne Collins and Lance Hurdle, really freak athletes like that," Gamble said. "But our roster now from top to bottom we have those same type of athletes, a lot of athletes. So talent-wise this may be the best team if not a close second."

Gamble took a medical redshirt last season after a knee injury.

And he says now he's back at 100 percent ... or better.

"I'm jumping higher than (before the injury)," Gamble said. "It's crazy to think about it because usually when guys come back you don't see that. But now I'm the guy they're throwing all the lobs to and I can do all the crazy, fancy dunks and all that."

"It feels great to be back. It's been a long road."

Larranaga has said he sees a sizeable role for Gamble, who will play off the bench behind Kenny Kadji.

"Now playing as well as I have (in practice) I know I can provide depth for the front line, a little bit of versatility where I can execute at the 4 spot," Gamble said. "I feel I'm a pretty

good dribbler and I can pass."

The oldest player on the roster, Gamble says he's also taking on a leadership role.

"Being here as long as I've been here and watching these guys come in and grow, I think I'm kind of appointed as a leader," Gamble said. "I enjoy that, accept that challenge. I just want to do everything I can for them. I've been around for a very long time, know what to expect before it happens. I'm hoping that my experience and me being a little charismatic can trickle down to my teammates."

* Gamble says he's not surprised at the NFL success of former teammate Jimmy Graham.

"Not really, because he kind of had football aspirations while we were playing basketball," Gamble said. "We would joke around and talk about it. Just to be able to see him get to where is and will be, it's really amazing. But I'm not surprised because I know the type of guy Jimmy is."

Countdown to Hurricanes Hoops: Tonye Jekiri

State of the U
Jerry Steinberg
Oct. 25, 2012

Miami has only one true freshman scholarship player on the roster, but he is a 7 footer, and a good one.

#23 Tonye Jekiri is an exceptional young man, who came to Miami from Nigeria just 3 short years ago. Jekiri quickly assimilated to his new surroundings and especially excelled on the court. Tonye averaged 20 points, 12 rebounds and 5 blocks per game as a senior in high school and was rated the 17th-best center in the country by ESPN.com and No. 13 by Scout.com. Tonye has been described as student of the game and an exceptional athlete. Jekiri is expected to provide immediate depth behind seniors Reggie Johnson, Kenny Kadji, and Julian Gamble.

Coach Jim Larranaga already loves his game.

"He's the most gifted in terms of speed and quickness of any frontcourt player we have," Larranaga said.

Here is our Q&A with the talented young man:

SOTU: Whats it like banging in practice with Big Reggie? Have you dunked on him?

TJ: It is difficult. But it is good because there are a lot of players in college basketball from other schools just like him. As far as dunking on him, no (Tonye laughs).

SOTU: What is the biggest adjustment from high school to division I?

TJ: Well in college you go from the weight room to practice, from practice to class, from class to study hall. It's not quite like that in high school. Also as far as the game, it is the speed. Everything is faster. Nothing is slow. So you have to make the adjustment. Managing your time and the speed of the game are the two biggest things.

SOTU:Scouting reports from your high school coaches praise your athleticism and ability to run up and down the floor. Do you anticipate getting out and running a lot this year?

TJ: Yes. yes! That is my number one weapon which I have, so everyday I have been working on it.

SOTU: As a true freshman on a senior laden team, how do you see your role?

TJ: Actually I am trying to learn as much as I can from Reggie and Kenny and Julian. Stuff like setting picks. Also to provide depth and be ready when my time comes. As a freshman I feel I am ready to go. And do my best to play defense and eat up space.

SOTU: Who is the funniest guy on the team?

TJ: (Tonye laughs). I would have to say Reggie or Julian. One of them!!!

Thanks again to Tonye Jekiri for taking the time to let us get to know him a bit better. Watch out for the big man wearing #23 come November 9th when the 'Canes open the season, as well as through out the season.

Canes practice for upcoming exhibitions

The Miami Hurricane

AJ Ricketts

Oct. 24, 2012

The days until the BankUnited Center opens its doors for basketball once more are dwindling.

With eight days until the Miami basketball team's first exhibition against St. Leo, and 15 until the season kicks off against Stetson, coach Jim Larranaga is pleased with how his team is progressing. Miami received two votes in the preseason USA Today Coaches Poll, the team's first time receiving votes in that poll since the 2008-2009 season.

Larranaga met with members of the media on Wednesday to give updates from the second week of practice.

Senior guard Garrius Adams and redshirt freshman Bishop Daniels have been unable to practice recently due to injury. Daniels suffered a pulled hamstring the second day of practice and has not participated since.

"Bishop knows what we're doing well enough," Larranaga said. "We don't have to worry that he'll be so far behind because of the injury. If he's healthy, he'll play the first game."

Larranaga is high on true freshman Tonye Jekiri, a 7-foot center who is projected to pick up decent minutes this season.

"Tonye is a student of the game. He is willing to learn and get better," he said.

The coaching staff is working with Jekiri on his jump hook – a move they want to become his go-to shot.

Reggie Johnson and Durand Scott have been very impressive in workouts. For Miami practices, the team is split into two squads – white being the starters, and green the backups.

During a scrimmage when the green unit was struggling, Larranaga moved Scott and Johnson from white to green, and noted how neither could be stopped, each helping the green team win the scrimmage.

"He's doing so well on his post moves," Larranaga said of Johnson. "You can't tell whether he's right- or left-handed on his hook shots."

Larranaga, who had offseason hip surgery himself, joked on the status of his recovery.

"I've been working on getting my 40-inch vertical back. I'm about 36 inches there," he said. "My game is kind of like DeQuan Jones – I'm a high flier."

Larranaga ended the press conference with some strong words that should excite everyone on campus. In a year in which expectations for Hurricane basketball are as high as they've ever been in Coral Gables, Larranaga realizes that this team has an opportunity to have a special season.

"Our fans need to come out early in the season and cheer our team on," he said. "We have a veteran team that can possibly lead us to the best season in Miami history. If we're healthy, we can compete not only with the top teams in the conference, but the country."

Miami will open up the regular season Nov. 9 at 5:30 p.m. against Stetson at the BankUnited Center. Student admission, as always, is free.

Countdown: A Conversation with Trey McKinney Jones

**State of the U
Strauzer
Oct. 24, 2012**

As we countdown to the first tip of the college basketball season we are going to provide a brief look at all the players on the Miami Hurricanes men's Basketball team. The first in this series is Trey McKinney Jones.

Help us countdown to hoops season! We here at SOTU plan to publish a player profile for each roster member of the Canes men's hoop squad. Today #4 is our first in this series.

Trey McKinney Jones, often referred to by fans as "TMJ," joined the Canes as a transfer from University of Missouri- Kansas City in 2010. After sitting out the required season in 10/11 he saw his first action as a Junior last year for Miami. He quickly found a home on the court under Coach L's system which utilizes athletic, quick shooters like Trey playing in all 33 games. He averaged 7 points and 3.5 rebounds and shot 72% from the FT line and 47% from the field.

We had a chance to speak with Trey recently and he said in the off season he has been working on "coming off the dribble and getting to the basket," to compliment his outside shooting ability. Last year Trey started 12 straight games and once Reggie Johnson returned to the lineup he gave the team valuable depth off the bench being able to spell both the guards and forwards. This year one of Trey's personal goals is to be a "player coach can't take out of a game."

We look for Trey to play a more expanded role in Coach L's up tempo game. When asked about the biggest difference from this year to last Trey said simply "more experience (under Larranaga) and a veteran team." He said the team's conditioning has greatly improved and that has allowed them to work on "the scramble a lot more in practice early and that

is going to be a big part of our defense, getting up and down the court for quick layups and open 3's in transition."

Trey's message for the fans? "It's going to be an exciting year!"

Interesting factoids on Trey, his aunt Esther won Olympic gold as part of the 4X100 relay team in 1992 for the US and his uncle Mark Jones played basketball professionally in the NBA and overseas.

Durand Scott showing off improved jumper

CaneSport.com

Oct. 24, 2012

Guard Durand Scott says he spent a lot of time this off-season improving his jump shot.

"That was my main focus," he said. "My jump shot especially from the three-point line was my focus, and I made a tremendous leap in that. I feel more confident - when I'm open I'll surely take the shot."

"That will help me a lot because people will have to play me a lot closer and I can use my speed to get to the basket if I need to. Hard work pays off, and hopefully that will correlate to the games."

Scott has high hopes for the season.

"Despite all the obstacles we faced last year, this year is the first time we've got everybody on the court," he said. "I'm really excited about that. The suspensions, injuries, redshirting are all in the past. I feel like we're all confident. Everybody is stronger, mentally ready, smarter. If we all put it into one basket we'll be fine."

Scott will serve a three-game suspension to start the season stemming from NCAA infractions - he started serving the suspension during the ACC Tournament last year.

"It's definitely a big deal (missing the start of the season) - I want to play every single game," Scott said. "It's unfortunate I'll be missing these three games. I'll go out there and cheer for my team and I think we'll do just fine. I'll be happy after those three games."

How difficult was it when he found out about the suspension last year?

"It was tremendously difficult," he said. "It was ACC Tournament, a game that we needed. But they sentenced me for what I needed to do and I pretty much moved on."

The ultimate goal this season?

"We're just trying to get where (coach Jim Larranaga) has been before, which is the Final 4," Scott said. "If we listen to him we'll be in great position to win some ball games."

"I've never been (to the NCAA Tournament) before. That's a goal for me, but not just to get there. Our goal is to win the ACC Championship, win the NCAA Championship. We just have to go out there and work hard, compete and battle. I think we're a great team that will be able to play against the best."

* Scott said in the second year under Larranaga "We know exactly what he expects, exactly what he wants, how he wants it done. All we have to do is follow him. He's been there before, knows exactly how to get there. It's just like school - follow the teacher, you'll be able to pass the test. That's exactly what we're going to do."

* Scott breaks down what he sees on this team: "We're very strong at every position," he said. "We have Shane (Larkin) who is a very fast point guard who can shoot the basketball, get inside the line, can play defense. It's hard to guard him, for someone to go behind him. You look at Reggie (Johnson), he's a big body inside. He wears people down and uses left hook, right hook. And we have Kenny Kadji who can stretch a 4 man out who can also handle the basketball and bring it up the court. Then we also have shooters in Trey McKinney Jones and Rion Brown. Up and down the chart we have so many exceptional players."

Tonye Jekiri at home on basketball court

CaneSport.com
Staff
Oct. 24, 2012

The culture shock for Hurricane center Tonye Jekiri when he arrived in Miami from Nigeria three years ago?

All it took was the twist of a shower handle.

"I remember I took a shower, was wondering where the water was coming from," the freshman Jekiri said. "In Africa you go fetch it with a bucket, or you see a tank that stores the water at the back of the house. Over here I was asking where the water was coming from. I kept looking because I'd been in the shower for so long and the water just kept coming out, didn't run out. That was one thing I was shocked about it."

Another shock (literally): Nonstop electricity.

"I kept waiting for it to be turned off at some point," Jekiri said. "Certain hours of the day it would come on back home."

Other adjustments: Air conditioning and supermarkets with fresh produce. Jekiri was used to roadside markets and people running up to the family car hawking fruit and vegetables.

"The supermarkets there sell things like cologne, no food," he said, adding that "It was a change in food here. My native food I would normally eat soup ... and the way the rice was made with spices was way different - it was a change. It was difficult for me those first months. I had to adapt to everything.

"Even the roads - in Africa they have potholes, and you only have one major road that will take you to your office and everything is on it; you're stuck in traffic for an hour or two."

Jekiri's road to Miami began at age 16 when one of his soccer coaches said based on his

size he could be a basketball player in the States. Arrangements were made for him to be evaluated at an American camp.

"It was because of my height," Jekiri said. "One of my soccer coaches started working with me on fundamental things like catching the ball, dribbling."

Soon after Jekiri packed his 6-foot-11 frame into a coach seat for the 19-hour flight in hopes a high school coach would take a chance on him. On day 1 of the camp he got his first five-on-five real game experience.

"I was just running the floor and getting rebounds, that was it," Jekiri said. "Coaches liked me because of my energy. They said I ran nonstop."

A coach at Hialeah (FL) Champagnat Catholic asked him to attend the school, and Jekiri and his mother agreed.

"It was a small private school, and we liked that," Jekiri said. "The coach was there watching me, said he'd love me to come to their school. When I went back home my mom decided that would be good for me."

When Jekiri moved to Miami for good, he faced a big academic challenge.

"It was difficult - the first months I was struggling with the educational system," Jekiri said. "So many classes I hadn't taken in my country I had to take like history, and I didn't know much about the United States. And I had to take Spanish."

The transition on the basketball court wasn't much easier. Starting out as a junior he struggled.

"I couldn't even make a layup then," he said. "On game time I had butterflies bad, struggled for seven to eight games. After that I had a good season just running the floor and get-

ting rebounds. I had little schools looking at me then, like FIU."

As a senior he made big strides, opening eyes by averaging 20 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots. It all started clicking for him, and he wound up rated the nation's No. 17 center prospect by ESPN.

"Miami, they came by during my senior season, watched me play and offered me a scholarship during the season," Jekiri said.

He wound up with 17 scholarship offers and took visits to George Mason, Clemson and Miami before settling on the Canes.

He says he chose UM because "The weather is the same as in Africa, warm. I've never experienced coldness, how that would affect my breathing. That was one reason I love Miami and decided to stay. Miami was my third visit, was the place I wanted to be and play ball."

Now Jekiri is focused on making a sizable impact when he's in games.

"I'll come off the bench, will help the team - I know I'm going to have a big role to play," Jekiri said. "I'll be getting rebounds, blocked shots."

He adds "I'm really happy to be a Hurricane. Putting on the jersey with my name on it, I was really happy. I just thank God for everything."

Brown Looking to Carry Over Success

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Oct. 24, 2012

If Rion Brown can duplicate his success at the end of last season, he would give the Miami Hurricane another threat on the court.

Brown, a 6-foot-6 junior shooting guard, averaged 12.8 points and 4.7 rebounds in Miami's final six games of the year. He shot 51 percent from the floor knocking down 15 3-pointers during the stretch.

"Honestly I think it was more so just the minutes," Brown said. "Durand was out and somebody else had to step up in that role. If you have something happen where you have to do it, I just stepped into that role. This year I'm trying to stay in that role. Malcolm is gone so we do need someone to step up in that role. That's my mindset right now."

More minutes were a factor as he averaged 28 a game compared 18 in the first 25 games. However, he was far more productive averaging 18.4 points per 40 minutes compared to just 12.9 before.

"It definitely gave me a lot of confidence and made me work harder this year to continue that good paly just to help the team out," Brown said.

Brown is currently in a battle with senior Trey McKinney-Jones for a starting role as both players have been praised for their work in practices thus far.

"Rion is stronger (than last year), jumping better, he's just playing really well," head coach Jim Larranaga said.

Brown and McKinney-Jones were similar scorers in their roles last year with Brown averaging 7.2 points on 43 percent shooting in 31 games while McKinney-Jones averaged 7.0 points on 47 percent shooting in 33 games.

"It's definitely a battle right now, but me and Trey are having fun with it," Brown said. "We know either way that we're going to get around the same minutes. It's just a matter of who is in the game at the beginning. Even if you look at last year we both were pretty much in at the end of the game and that's what really matters in that coach trusts you to be in. I would say that I'm not concentrating too much on starting. I just want to continue my good play whether that's coming off the bench providing a spark in keeping the offense going when those other guys come out, I can accept that. I hope Trey can too."

Miami returns a number of key players including six of their top seven scorers from last season's team, which finished 20-13 and 9-7 in the ACC, which was the best in school history.

"It's really exciting," Brown said. "Practices have been really fun. We go in there screaming and yelling all over the place. This is the first year that I've really seen that kind of energy in practice so I would definitely say this will be a good year."

Brown's goals for the upcoming season?

"Honestly, no less than Sweet 16," Brown said. "That's my mindset right now. Of course we want to get to the national championship, but as a realistic goal I definitely want to get to the Sweet 16 and I definitely want to win an ACC championship before I leave here."

Miami begins their season Nov. 9 against Stetson.

Countdown: The ACC's Best Individual Match-ups.

State of the U

Jerry Steinberg

Oct. 22, 2012

In Boxing, styles make fights. Basketball is a team sport, but like the "sweet science", individual styles do make for intriguing match-ups.

Today we breakdown the one-on-one battles that we most look forward to in ACC play.

Here they are:

Durand Scott, Miami Vs Michael Snaer, FSU
The Skinny: Scott gets the nod in slashing ability and as a passer. Snaer is the superior shooter and defender, and also has a better knack for game winning shots. Leadership ability is a draw.

The Numbers: Scott 12.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 3.1 apg - Snaer 14.0 ppg, 3.8 rpg, 1.9 apg, 40% 3P%

The Edge: Snaer takes it, because of his incredible crunch time ability.

Calvin Leslie, NC State Vs Devin Booker, Clemson
The Skinny: Leslie has developed into one of the best players in the conference, regardless of position. He is too athletic for power forwards, and too strong for wings. Booker has the ability to dominate but has yet to show the consistency.

The Numbers: Leslie 14.6 ppg, 7.3 rpg, 1.3 blks - Booker 10.5 ppg, 7.0 rpg, 45% FG

The Edge: Leslie. They have similar back to the basket games, but the big difference is Leslie plays with more confidence and passion.

Travis McKie, Wake Vs Joe Harris, UVA
The Skinny: Harris played a good part of last season with a broken left hand, showing tremendous toughness. Harris is the better pure shooter of the two. McKie has a far more versatile game, and does a great job on the glass.

The Numbers: McKie 16.1 ppg, 7.0 rpg, 1.1 apg, 38% 3P% - Harris 11.3 ppg, 3.9 rpg, 1.7 apg, 39% 3P%

The Edge: McKie. We love Harris' game, but few players in the conference do as many things for their team as McKie.

Rodney Purvis, NC State Vs Rasheed Sulaiman, Duke
The Skinny: Here we have two of the most highly touted freshmen SGs in the nation. Purvis makes his living off slashing moves and athletic finishes. Sulaiman has a polished medium game, and loves to pull up and shoot.

The Numbers: Purvis 25.4 ppg in H.S. - Sulaiman 25.8 ppg in H.S.

The Edge: Purvis has NBA ready athleticism and looks to be the more developed of the two right now. Unless one or both leave early for the NBA, this could be a fun match-up for years to come.

Richard Howell, NC State Vs Mason Plumlee, Duke
The Skinny: Both Howell and Plumlee rarely step outside 7-10 feet from the basket. Howell uses pure strength whereas Plumlee uses his athleticism, but both are fierce on the boards and both finish strong when they get the ball deep.

The Numbers: Howell 10.8 ppg, 9.2 rpg, 49% FG - Plumlee 11.1 ppg, 9.2 rpg, 1.6 blks, 53% FG

The Edge: Plumlee by the narrowest of margins. Coach after coach mentioned Plumlee as one of the most respected players in the conference, during last week's media day in Charlotte.

Kenny Kadji, Miami Vs James Michael McAdoo, UNC
The Skinny: In his first year at UM Kadji emerged as invaluable inside-out weapon, and a decent defender. Rebounding appeared to be a weakness. Playing behind John Henson and Tyler Zeller kept McAdoo from making a huge impact as a freshman, but he clearly has big time talent.

The Numbers: Kadji 11.7 ppg, 5.3 rpg, 1.6 blks, 42% 3P% - McAdoo 6.1 ppg, 3.9 rpg, 43% FG

The Edge: Kadji. McAdoo is expected to make a huge leap in production this year, and certainly the ability is there. He will get the opportunity to be the go-to guy this year as well. But Kadji is ALREADY one of the better players in the conference. Few remember that coming out of high school, the UF transfer was a top 30 prospect.

Jontel Evans, UVA Vs Erick Green, Va Tech
The Skinny: The pure scorer Vs the hard nosed defender. Both guys are underrated. Green can score in bunches, while Evans keys one of the best defensive teams in the nation year in and year out.

The Numbers: Evans 7.3 ppg, 3.9 apg, 1.6 stls - Green 15.6 ppg, 3.3 rpg, 2.8 apg, 1.3 stls.

The Edge: Green takes it here based on production. Evans deserves more credit than he gets for Virginia's stifling defense.

Reggie Johnson, Miami Vs Shaquille Cleare, Maryland
The Skinny: Two big wide bodies. Johnson, a senior, has the big edge in experience. The freshman Cleare, appears to be a better athlete. When these two collide, it could knock the Earth off its' axis.

The Numbers: 6'10 290 Vs 6'9 275. Oh yeah Johnson averaged 10.0 ppg and 7.2 rpg last year, while Cleare averaged 26.5 ppg and 10 rpg as a senior in H.S.

The Edge: Big Reg. Johnson is underrated as a passer, and has improved his outside shot significantly. Now healthy, there is no better space eater in the ACC. Cleare looks like the heir apparent to take over the roll of hardest to match up with, and perennial tormenter of the Plumlee brothers.

C.J. Harris, Wake Vs Seth Curry, Duke
The Skinny: Both guys are lethal from downtown.

Both also move well with out the ball. Harris looks more comfortable of the two as a play maker. When you need a big bucket, you can't go wrong with either guy.

The Numbers: Harris 16.7 ppg, 3.1 rpg, 2.5 apg, 42% 3P% - Curry 13.2 ppg, 2.6 rpg, 2.4 apg, 38% 3P%

The Edge: Harris. Curry maybe the better pure shooter, but Harris is the more skilled when it comes to everything else.

Shane Larkin, Miami Vs Marcus Paige, UNC
The Skinny: Larkin is already one of the faster and more athletic guards in the country. If his floor game catches up with his sparkling athleticism, he will be a superstar. Paige is a pure scorer who despite his diminutive stature, should flourish in Roy Williams' up tempo offense.

The Numbers: Larkin 7.4 ppg, 2.5 rpg, 2.5 apg, - Paige 26.9 ppg and 3.3 apg as a high school senior.

The Edge: Larkin showed great promise as a freshman, and is a menace defensively. Paige, and his pretty left-handed stroke, will eventually be the much better scorer of the two. Larkin is the better player overall, for now, but Paige will be a lot of fun to watch.

Rion Brown or Trey McKinney Jones, Miami Vs Scott Wood, NC State.

The Skinny: Wood is one of the premier shooters in the country, and can make shots even when contested. He does an excellent job moving with out the ball and is lethal from the charity stripe. Brown and McKinney Jones are interchangeable and pretty good shooters themselves. More importantly, they are both solid defenders. Brown can really finish above the rim as well.

The Numbers: Brown 7.2 ppg, 39% 3P%, McKinney-Jones 7.0 ppg, 37% 3P% - Wood 12.4 ppg, 41% 3P%, 91% FT

The Edge: Brown and McKinney Jones are better defenders, better ball handlers, passers, and finishers. But Wood gets the slightest of edges via his world class shooting ability.

Ian Miller, FSU Vs Lorenzo Brown, NC State.
The Skinny: NBA scouts have compared both to Oklahoma City Thunder All Star Russell Westbrook. Some have also mentioned Brown in the same breathe as Rajon Rondo. Brown is by far the best PG in the ACC but Miller is pretty good too. Both are athletic and fearless, but LBrown is far more advanced distributing the ball.

The Numbers: Brown 12.7 ppg, 4.5 rpg, 6.3 apg, 1.8 stls. - Miller 10.9 ppg, 2.0 rpg, 1.3 apg, 1.3 stls.

The Edge: Brown wins handily. Miller will get more chances to shine this season, and can give Brown a battle heads up, but Brown does it all. Few can match up with him in the country.

Reggie Johnson, three-point threat?

CollegeBasketballTalk

David Harten

Oct. 22, 2012

Apparently, Miami's big man has been getting up some shots in the offseason for Jim Larranaga's Hurricane squad.

The info comes from this story by The Sporting News' Ryan Fagan who wrote about how Larranaga's message of continuity has spread, and it may be one of the keys that determines where Miami finishes this season in the ACC.

A large portion of that burden falls on Johnson, a wide body who plays right at the rim and has apparently become adept at hitting both the right-handed and left-handed hook shot, Fagan writes.

But the most interesting part of the article is what comes at the end. Apparently, Johnson, along with the rest of the team, has taken part in a drill where they shoot as many threes as possible in five minutes. Hitting less than 40 means that player isn't allowed to shoot them in the game, 40-50 means a player is limited in the amount they can take and 50 or more splash-downs means he gets the all-clear to shoot. Johnson has routinely been in the 40s and hit a personal-best 59 last week. Johnson was just 4-11 from deep last season.

Will he get to hoist it like Jimmer?

The Hurricanes will need someone to, even if it is Johnson. Gone is leading three-point shooter Malcolm Grant (68 makes last season). Though, Trey McKinney Jones (40 makes) and Rion Brown (41 makes) return, along with Shane Larkin's 32 three's from last season.

So maybe it's not a necessity that Johnson develop a stroke from the outside. But hey, the world needs more big-guy three's. They're the college basketball equivalent to fat-guy touchdowns in football.

Jones seizes opportunity with Orlando Magic

Miami Herald
Michelle Kaufman
Oct. 19, 2012

There is a price to pay for being a rookie in NBA training camp.

DeQuan Jones, the former University of Miami forward, learned that as soon as he joined the Orlando Magic as an undrafted newcomer a few months ago. He has had to carry luggage for the veterans, make CVS runs to buy Old Spice body wash for the team and stop at Target to pick up a stepladder for captain Jameer Nelson, who at 6 feet needs a bit of help to reach the top shelf of his locker.

Jones is so accustomed to the rookie ribbing that he thought it was another joke when coach Jacque Vaughn on Sunday called his name to join the starters in the team shoot-around before the game against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

"Coach Vaughn always starts practice at the baseline, and on Sunday he said, 'I want the first five out here, and started listing off the names ... Jameer, D.J.' I was thinking, 'D.J.? That's me. Was that a typo?' Coach looked right at me when he said it, but I was hesitant to walk over because I've experienced all the rookie pranks and I thought maybe this was another trick. So, I just stood there until I realized it was for real."

Vaughn opted to rest J.J. Redick that night and wanted to see Jones in the starting lineup to evaluate how he would respond, and how he would do guarding the Cavs' better players. Jones didn't disappoint. He finished with seven points and nine rebounds.

He did well enough to earn a second start on the road against the Detroit Pistons on Tuesday night.

Before the game, Nelson, who has been particularly helpful to Jones, approached the

rookie and said: "This is your chance. Take advantage of the opportunity."

Jones took the advice. He scored a game-high 22 points on 9-of-13 shooting. He also did a standout job defending the Pistons' wings and made highlights nationwide with an acrobatic dunk over Detroit's top pick, 7-foot center Andre Drummond. During camp, Jones has impressed coaches, teammates, executives and fans with his explosiveness, athleticism and versatility. He has looked equally comfortable as a forward and a shooting guard.

The former Cane also has wowed fans with spectacular dunks that are circulating on YouTube and Twitter.

As a result, Magic coaches and executives find themselves in a DeQuandary. They have 20 players on the roster, and only 15 make the final cut the first week of November. Jones is likely battling Justin Harper, Ish Smith, Josh McRoberts, Armon Johnson, E'Twaun Moore and Christian Eyenga for one or two spots.

"I came into camp with no expectations," Jones said by phone. "I was just excited for the opportunity to finally live my dream and be part of an NBA organization. I sat around the TV for three hours during the NBA Draft, enduring the reality that I was not being drafted. I was down, but the next day, after a good night's sleep, I told myself, 'Stay focused. The ball's in your court. Don't give up.'"

The Magic called the following day, and Jones has exceeded expectations.

Not bad for a guy who averaged just 5.9 points per game his senior season as a Hurricane. Jones' last year at UM was hardly what he had anticipated when he signed with the program four years earlier as a much-hyped Atlanta high school and AAU star.

He was suspended by UM for the first 11 games of his senior season because his name was

implicated in the Nevin Shapiro booster scandal, an allegation he and his family vehemently denied. The school, unable to produce any evidence against Jones, reinstated him Dec. 21, 2011, after he retained an attorney to challenge the suspension.

Through it all, Jones kept a positive attitude and took advantage of the time on the bench to become a better student of the game. He paid close attention to advice from then-new coach Jim Larranaga and assistants Eric Konkol, Chris Caputo and Michael Huger. The lessons have served him well in Magic camp. Larranaga and his staff continue to text Jones several times a week with tips and encouragement.

"My introductory meeting with Coach L when he was hired, he told me the key to success was to utilize my strengths and hide my weaknesses," Jones said. "He broke my game down for me in a way nobody ever had, and taught me how to utilize my strengths in every situation, how to best cover a great shooter, how to guard a penetrator. He helped me understand how I can best make an impact with my energy and athleticism. Almost every day I reach back to a lot of what he and the other UM coaches taught me, and it still applies."

One of the few gaffes Jones has made in Magic camp came just before his first start. During pregame introductions, he jogged over and shook the hands of the referees, a college custom. The veterans immediately mocked him.

"Jameer was cracking up, told me that was a rookie move," Jones said, laughing. "Those are moments you take with you for a long time. I'm just soaking it all in, playing my game and hoping for the best."

Johnson shows leaner body, meaner game

The Sporting News
Ryan Fagan
Oct. 17, 2012

CHARLOTTE—Reggie Johnson's maturation into an elite player capable of leading his Miami Hurricanes deep into the NCAA Tournament took a giant step forward when he finally changed his socks last season.

Jim Larranaga, then in his first year with Miami, didn't want Johnson to alter the fabric of the socks or the cushion of the socks or the support of the socks.

He had to switch the color of his socks. Yeah, it sounded crazy to Johnson, too.

"I was like, 'I gotta wear white socks to practice? C'mon, Coach L, that's too much,' " he said with a laugh Wednesday at ACC media day. "But now I understand. Together, we can do damage, versus me wearing black socks and everybody else wearing white socks. That won't work."

The socks—and travel suits and matching shoes and so many other little things, as Johnson points out—were part of the three stages of growth Larranaga preaches. The first stage is dependence, where people rely on others. The second is independence, where people want to do their own thing—that's where the Hurricanes lived when Larranaga took over the program last year.

Then, there's interdependence, where people in a group rely on each other.

"With that, we need to be uniform," Larranaga said. "We need to believe in the same things and carry ourselves the same way. We want the socks to be uniform. We want the shoes to be uniform. But it's not so much that everything has to be exactly alike, but we can't have guys going independently on their own thinking, 'This is my thing.' There can only be one way, and that's the Miami way."

On the growth scale, Larranaga says, his team is past Stage 2 and heading toward Stage 3. Now ... "If he says wear the same socks this day, we just do it," Johnson said.

Entering his senior season, Johnson is healthy—a welcome development after he missed the first nine games last year recovering from a knee injury—and determined to finish his career strong. A 6-10 center, Johnson has dropped down to 290 pounds and added muscle definition to a body that was often termed "pudgy." His goal is to average 13 rebounds per game, and he won't snag many of them high above the rim.

Larranaga said he used to consider Jai Lewis—the rebounding machine on George Mason's Final Four team in '06—the best no-jump rebounder he ever coached. Now, Johnson is challenging that distinction. And, yes, that's a compliment.

"He's not a high-riser who plays above the rim," Larranaga said. "He's a guy that actually plays basketball the way it was intended to be played -- by position, using your body to get the right angle on a defender so that you can score without hardly jumping at all."

Johnson didn't only use his rehabilitation time to get in better shape. He developed his lefthanded jump hook, to the point where he says he is shocked how naturally he shoots with that hand.

"He really does play like he's ambidextrous," Larranaga said. "Over the years, I've coached a lot of very good big men, very skilled big men—Ralph Sampson, for one, and Olden Polynice. Reggie's the first big guy I've had that's equally adept at using his right hand jump hook or his left hand jump hook. That's a great weapon."

The 3-point shot is a weapon, too. Larranaga's players do this drill where they try and make as many shots from beyond the arc as possi-

ble in five minutes. Those who regularly make fewer than 40 have the red light in games. From 40-50, it's a yellow "make sure you're wide open" light. At 50 or more on a regular basis, it's a green light.

Last year, Johnson was consistently in the 40s in practice and he made 4-of-11 during the season. Two days ago in practice, Johnson made 59.

"That's a new record for him," Larranaga said. "As you make more shots, you develop more confidence."

What's the common thread with the new physique, the newfound range and the ambidextrous hook shot?

It's gotta be the socks.

Miami hoops player's diet: 'I'm a big fan of water now'

USA TODAY

Nicole Auerbach

Oct. 17, 2012

Reggie Johnson weighed 330 pounds when he arrived at Miami (Fla.) four years ago.

Now, the senior center says he's down to 290, five pounds off the weight he'd like to be this season.

"You've got a better chance at going into the draft at 285 than 330," Johnson said at Atlantic Coast Conference men's basketball media day Wednesday. "The way the game is played right now it's up and down. ... The more I lose weight the better the chances I can up my stock and get drafted."

Shedding pounds has been tough for Johnson.

"Sometimes, after a game you want to go to Friday's," Johnson said. "(My teammates) eat cheeseburgers. It's about discipline. It boils down to that. I'm a disciplined guy."

While friends and teammates order their burgers, Johnson orders salads or grilled chicken sandwiches.

"These guys keep me disciplined," Johnson said. "They know what it takes. They tell me, 'Reg, don't eat that. You don't need that.' I drink water instead of lemonade. I get water. I'm a big fan of water now. At first, I hated water. Now you see me, and I've got water in my hand."

A couple of years ago, then-Miami coach Frank Haith introduced Johnson to Dexter Pittman, who weighed more than 380 in high school. Pittman has since lost more than 100 pounds and was taken by the Miami Heat in the second round of the 2010 NBA draft.

Johnson said he and Pittman are good friends — "like brothers" — and they spend time together in south Florida. Pittman's weight loss has motivated Johnson.

"Big Dex had the same problem in college, and he looks awesome," Johnson said. "I can see myself doing the same exact thing."

"I see him doing it, man. He's at where I want to be at. He's in the NBA."

FSU, Miami picked behind Carolina trio in ACC

FOX Sports Florida
Bob Ferrante
Oct. 17, 2012

Florida State is defending its first Atlantic Coast Conference tournament title.

Miami is coming off its first winning record in ACC play since joining the conference in 2004.

And while both lose some key pieces, the basketball prospects for both programs are looking good for the 2012-13 season.

The Hurricanes were picked to finish fourth and the Seminoles fifth in polling by the ACC coaches on Monday. Two days later, the ACC media had Florida State fourth (with six first-place votes among the 53 ballots) and Miami fifth.

The coaches and media picked North Carolina State as the conference favorite, followed by Duke and North Carolina. It is the first time NC State has been picked as the media's pre-season favorite since the 1974-75 season and only the second time in the past 16 years that neither Duke nor North Carolina were picked to win the league.

Florida State, which enters the season No. 24 in the Coaches Poll, went 25-10 last season and made a stunning run to the ACC tournament title by winning games on consecutive days against Miami, Duke and North Carolina. The Seminoles lost six seniors from that team, including guards Luke Loucks and Deividas Dulkys and forward Bernard James — all starters.

Though the Seminoles may not be as deep as they were last season, they still have plenty of talent and return four of their top five scorers. Returning is guard Michael Snaer, who led the team in scoring (14 points), made clutch 3-pointers to beat Duke and Virginia Tech and is considered one of the league's top

defenders. Snaer was chosen as a first-team All-ACC preseason pick on Wednesday.

The Seminoles also return guard Ian Miller (10.3 points), and forwards Okaro White (7.7 points, 4.4 rebounds) and Terrance Shannon (8.3 points, 4.4 rebounds).

But the big key for Florida State will be replacing leading rebounder and shot blocker in James, who is now playing for the Dallas Mavericks. The team has three 7-footers on the roster — Kiel Turpin, Michael Ojo and Boris Bojanovsky — but none have played a game of Division I basketball.

"We do have a core of experienced guys," FSU coach Leonard Hamilton said. "If we are going to have the type of success that we think we are capable of, a lot will have to do with how fast we are able to bring our inexperienced players along. We are pleased with the skills they have and the potential and talent, but there's a learning curve."

Miami went 20-13 in coach Jim Larranaga's first season in South Florida. The Hurricanes went 9-7 in the ACC, stunning Duke in overtime on the road and beating Florida State in Coral Gables.

There is plenty of optimism for Year 2 of the Larranaga Era. Miami returns four starters, including guards Durand Scott (12.9 points, 5.4 rebounds and 3.1 assists) and Shane Larkin (7.4 points), forward Kenny Kadji (11.7 points, 5.3 rebounds) and center Reggie Johnson (10 points, 7.2 rebounds).

Larranaga likes the balance, experience and depth of the Hurricanes, which features a roster that includes six seniors and three juniors. He's especially pleased with the play of Scott, who led Miami in scoring and assists a year ago.

"Durand is a tremendous competitor," Larranaga said. "When we first got to Miami last

year, I honestly didn't know what to expect from him. But he made a great transition. More than him learning our system, I learned what he was all about. We were able to tweak our offense to give him a chance to do the things he does so well, which is take the ball to the basket and be creative."

Both teams will also be helped by players that were injured for significant portions of last season. Florida State welcomes back Shannon, who played in just seven games after suffering a shoulder injury in November.

"I can't tell you how much we missed Terrance last year," Hamilton said. "Terrance is just the ultimate competitor. He loves to do all of the dirty work. Terrance is a handful for most people because he just gives tremendous effort and he plays with such fire."

Miami returns Johnson, who Larranaga said was playing at just 60-70 percent after returning from December knee surgery.

"He spent all offseason at Miami getting stronger," Larranaga said. "He's going to be one of the strongest men in the country this year. He's running and jumping much better."

Both teams open the regular season at home on Nov. 9. The Seminoles play South Alabama and Miami takes on Stetson.

Top 68 Team Previews: #32 Miami Hurricanes

The Hoops Report

Stan Lloyd

October 14, 2012

Last Season: 20-13 (9-7)

Key Losses: Malcolm Grant & DeQuan Jones

Head Coach: Jim Larranaga

Projected Starting Lineup

G: Shane Larkin 5-11 So.

G: Durand Scott 6-5 Sr.

G: Rion Brown 6-6 Jr.

F: Kenny Kadji 6-11 Jr.

C: Reggie Johnson 6-10 Sr.

Key Reserves:

G Trey McKinney Jones 6-5 Sr.

F Garrius Adams 6-6 Sr.

F/C Julian Gamble 6-10 Sr.

G Melvin Johnson 6-3 Fr.

Last season was full of surprises for Miami and first year coach Jim Larranaga. It all started in the summer when star center Reggie Johnson injured his knee. Julian Gamble, who was Johnson's backup, then injured his knee. And as if the offseason couldn't end soon enough, the Canes were informed that DeQuan Jones would be suspended. Finally the season started and surely the madness was over. Wrong. The team's third knee injury in less than six months would sideline former starter Garrius Adams. The end of the season didn't go much smoother when leading scorer Durand Scott was suspended for the ACC Tournament and subsequently, the NIT.

The good news for the Hurricanes is that the road between the frustrating start to their season and the crushing end of it was full of promise. With all the turmoil the team faced, they still managed to go 9-7 in one of the toughest conference. During one stretch, they managed to win five straight ACC games, including three on the road. One of those wins was a 78-74 win over the 5th ranked Duke Blue Devils in Cameron Indoor. This year, Miami returns with most of last year's team in-

tact and with any luck, will be much healthier. This will be a very balanced team, both in the backcourt and the frontcourt.

The backcourt is full of talent, even though they lost Malcolm Grant. The depth at guard will be noticeable from day one. All-ACC candidate Durand Scott, who missed the last three games last year, will also have to sit out the first three games this season. In his absence, look for Shane Larkin (ACC All-Freshman selection) to step up. During the stretch at the end of the year when the Canes were without Scott, Larkin and guard Rion Brown averaged 12 and 15.7 points per game respectively. Also, Miami will be getting back Garrius Adams who can play any backcourt position.

The frontcourt will be stout if Reggie Johnson can return to the beast he was during his sophomore year. Two years ago, Johnson was unstoppable. He seemed to pick up double-doubles as often as Dwight Howard. However, he never seemed the same after the knee injury and managed just one double-double. He is joined in the frontcourt by former Florida transfer Kenny Kadji. Kadji gets it done on both ends of the court. Last season, he connected on 41.8% of his 3-point attempts and recorded 1.6 blocks and 5.3 boards per game.

The Hurricanes return to an ACC that, by most accounts, is up for grabs after the departure of several UNC, Duke, and FSU stars. What do the Hurricanes bring to the table this year? They return six of their top seven scorers, eight of their top nine rebounders, sixth year senior Julian Gamble, and a really good recruiting class. The ACC better take heed of the warning sirens now, because the Hurricanes are poised to storm through the league and leave a path of destruction behind them.

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TheHoopsReport.com

By Stan Lloyd

Oct. 14, 2012

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Jekiri Looking to Fill Role

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Oct. 12, 2012

CORAL GABLES, Fla. – Tonye Jekiri is Miami's lone true freshman and is looking to be a key role player this season.

Jekiri is a 7-foot, 227-pound shot-blocking center and solid rebounder originally from Nigeria before he moved to Miami and played two seasons at Champagnat Catholic.

As a senior, he averaged 20 points, 12 rebounds, and five blocks per game leading his team to a Class 2A state final.

"The biggest adjustment (from high school to college) was going from weightlifting to practice, it's not the same in high school," Jekiri said. "In high school I never lifted weights and went to practice. From weightlifting to practice to class to study hall, it was really tough for me. But I've kind of gotten used to it."

Head coach Jim Larranaga has been impressed with Jekiri's progress since he arrived in the summer.

"I like the progress Tonye Jekiri is making," Larranaga said. "We have worked exclusively on him developing a great jump hook because I think that will be his greatest weapon throughout his college career. He's got a nice jump shot, but a guy with his size and versatility in and around the basket, to be able to just jump hook over people would be very, very effective and he's working very hard to develop that shot as his bread and butter move."

Since arriving at UM, Jekiri has been praised Larranaga and the players for listening to instructions without any questions.

"With me playing basketball I'm still trying to learn because it is my third year playing basketball," Jekiri said. "I'm trying to learn rather than talking. I really believe you learn

more when you listen instead of talking more. There's not too much I can say because they have been in the game more."

Jekiri is one of five post players on the team with three—Reggie Johnson, Kenny Kadji, and Julian Gamble—leading the way as seniors.

"They really have showed me what it really takes to be a Hurricane player and how hard it is going to be for me even when I go ahead with more expectations when they leave, the coaches will be looking for me to step up and take that role," Jekiri said. "They have been really pushing me when it comes to practice and weightlifting. They have also told me about their past experiences and how they fought through all of the things, they have been a big help for me."

Jekiri is making sure he's improving daily not just for a role this season, but in the future when he'll have a larger role after the seniors depart.

"I really do think about that right now," he said. "Even when I come off the bench, it's still a big role for me. I always think about when I come into the game and how I'll have to step up. I always think about that and the future too when I'll have a bigger role."

To help Jekiri learn the game more, he spends time watching NBA and college games. In particular, he likes watching Kevin Garnett and Dwight Howard play.

"I like how they play, how they are leaders on their team and have really learned from them," said Jekiri, who also liked watching Thomas Robinson and Jared Sullinger in college.

Miami hosts St. Leo on Nov. 2 at 7 p.m. in their lone exhibition game. Regular season action begins Nov. 9 as the Hurricanes look to make a run towards an NCAA tournament appearance.

"As a team my expectations is for us to get to the NCAA tournament and the Sweet 16, 8, or 4 and I think we have weapons to get there, we just have to put ourselves together," Jekiri said. "Mostly we want to win back our fans because we need our fans to support us in every game. As a player my expectation is stepping up in every game, filling the roles, and being aggressive in every game."

Larranaga, players talk as practice begins

**CaneSport
Staff
Oct. 12, 2012**

With the bulk of the Hurricanes' men's basketball team from a year ago returning - the only losses are Malcolm Grant and DeQuan Jones - hopes are high.

Practice begins today, and center Reggie Johnson in particular can't hide his enthusiasm.

"We'll win big - I'm sorry if I sound cocky, but I think we're going to win big," Johnson said. "That's my mindset. We're going to win big."

"(We want to go to) the (NCAA) Tournament and make noise. Forget the NIT. I'm telling you right now what it's going to be for this upcoming season. ... It's going to be a fun season. Barring injuries we're going to be a heck of a team, a top three team in this league."

The returning starters are Johnson (10 ppg, 7.2 rpg), Kenny Kadji (11.7 ppg, 5.3 rpg), Shane Larkin (7.4 ppg, 2.5 apg) and Durand Scott (12.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg).

Garrus Adams (4.5 ppg, 2.1 rpg) is coming off a leg injury and won't start practice with the team at the start of the year (Larranaga says he could be back in a few weeks). There's good depth regardless of Adams' status with Julian Gamble back off a knee injury along with Rion Brown (7.2 ppg, 2.8 rpg), Erik Swoope (2.3 ppg, 1.7 rpg) and Trey McKinney Jones (7.0 ppg, 3.5 rpg).

Redshirt freshman Bishop Daniels had a foot injury that cost him last year but is expected to have a big role, and true freshman center Tonye Jekiri is a new addition.

Coach Jim Larranaga shared his thoughts on several of the players:

* Larranaga points to Daniels as someone who can help fill the loss of Grant.

"We lose Malcolm, but he's replaced by Bishop who is an outstanding athlete," Larranaga said. "He can't shoot like Malcolm, but he's fast."

* Larranaga said Kenny Kadji has dropped from 262 pounds last year to 242.

"We want him to run the floor better, be in better shape," Larranaga said. "More importantly, without DeQuan Jones we need someone to guard those stretch swingmen. He's going to need to guard a perimeter four man. That's quite a challenge for him. Losing the weight will help (and) he's stronger than a year ago."

* Larranaga said Gamble, who is coming off a knee injury that cost him last year, "has impressed me as much or more than anybody on the team, primarily because after his injury he couldn't practice for a very long time. I did not have a vision of what he was going to be like. Then in February when he came back and started practicing he labored at everything we did. I thought he'd have a very hard time contributing. During the summer he was in the weight room conditioning, getting stronger, and these last four weeks he's been very impressive running the floor, rebounding on both ends, being a heady player. He's going to fit very much into our rotation."

* Of Johnson, Larranaga said, "Reggie has learned more about what it takes to be successful in the game of basketball as he's gotten older. He's also learned a lot about the new coaching staff and what pleases us and doesn't please us. He's very focused on having his best year ever and we're very comfortable he's capable of doing that."

* Scott is out three games due to the remainder of an NCAA suspension

"The thing I was most impressed with Durand last year was his competitive drive," Larranaga said. "He's a tough hard-nosed competitor. I think he's going to have a sensational year, will be our true leader and I'm excited about the improvement he made in his game - he's shooting the ball better, has always been a solid three-point shooter and layup maker but now he's hitting a lot of 15-foot jump shots. He's making plays that I think will lead us to a lot of terrific wins."

* Larranaga said he expects Larkin "to take on more of a leadership role this year."

He said Shane "was one of the top stealers last year (and) I think can very easily lead the league in steals now" because of the style of defense Larranaga will implement with more experienced players.

He added that "We really like the improvement and confidence being shown by Trey McKinney-Jones and Rion Brown. There were times last year when both played well, but most of the time it wasn't at the same time."

Larranaga said of Jekiri that he's "very different than anybody we have. He's much faster, he's very active in his game, is very inexperienced right now so he's foul prone. But we instituted a new rule that we hope will improve fouling."

That rule?

"We just started it and it was very effective immediately - the moment you foul, if a coach calls a foul on you, you have to do 10 pushups right then and there," Larranaga said.

Last year this team finished with a 20-13 record and made the NIT.

"We have a veteran team, six seniors," Larranaga said. "Our goals never change - our goal is to be the best that we can be; everyone else thinks we can be very good, which is a good thing. Last year we came very close to reaching our full potential when we were healthy; we had a very hard time staying healthy, had some suspensions."

Asked how much more he can do with the team now as opposed to when he took over in terms of trying to install a new style of play, Larranaga said, "We're going to be far different at least to start the year. We're going to evaluate the month of November and December so we have a good game plan going into the ACC. ... we should be able to do things in November and December that we weren't able to think about doing at any time last year. You'll see us pressing more, running more than we did last year."

* With six seniors to replace in recruiting after this year, Larranaga was asked about the importance of this recruiting class.

"It's huge," he said. "We've been out there beating the bushes for a very long time. We feel good about where we are. But recruiting is not a science. It's really a crap shoot. It's often difficult to know or understand what someone else is thinking because one kid will leave campus telling us he's coming, and the next week he'll commit to someone else."

JOHNSON HAS HIGH HOPES

Johnson says "this is the biggest season yet for me and the seniors - it's going to be a good season for us."

Johnson says he thinks the team can finish in the ACC's top three and make a run at NCAA's.

"We're getting recognition, but I see us getting overlooked a lot," Johnson said. "I love it - it just makes us play harder."

Why does he think the team is being overlooked?

"I mean, we're Miami," Johnson said. "If we wore North Carolina or Florida State we'd be top 25 without a shadow of a doubt. We're Miami, so that's that."

Johnson says he's playing the best ball of his career. He was hampered by a knee injury that cost him part of last season and says "I'm back at 100 percent."

"I feel 100 percent better - my jumping ability, being able to cut and guard," Johnson said. "Having the whole summer to get better definitely paid off for me."

"My junior year was supposed to be my bigger year but I got hurt - I rebound better, see myself getting all the loose balls."

Johnson says he's worked hard to develop a couple of aspects of his game.

"Really my jump shot - coach L wants me to shoot that shot," Johnson said. "And then my left hand - I find myself going to my left hand hook more than my right hand, so that's kind of crazy."

* Johnson broke down what he sees for the ACC race this year, saying "People are picking NC State to win it, and I can see why. But don't (overlook) us. That's all I'm going to say about that."

* Asked how much last year's struggles were based on the team working to learn Larranaga's system, Johnson said, "A lot. Going from coach (Frank) Haith to coach L, that's two different coaching styles. Coach Haith was a zone; coach L was straight man. It was different, but toward the end of the year we started to get it."

* Johnson says Julian Gamble has stepped up a lot coming off injury.

"Julian has really stepped up, become a factor," Johnson said. "When I go out, Kenny goes out there'll be no fall-off."

LARKIN FOCUSED ON NCAA TOURNEY

Larkin says of this year's team that "We have a lot of veterans, so hopefully we can just build on what we started last year in coach L's first season and make the NCAA Tournament this year."

Larkin says he "feels more comfortable" this year.

"This year I'll look to break out a little more," he said. "I'll be more aggressive offensively. I know I can do more offensively than I did last year."

Larkin says despite losing Grant that he thinks Daniels will be a big asset.

"Bishop is fast as I don't know what - when he gets going up and down he's too fast," Larkin said. "It's just exciting to play with him. This year me and him together, I'm really excited for that."

"He's a crazy athlete, will show everyone this year."

He adds that "We have shooters everywhere. Everybody just got a lot better (from last year), will be able to produce this year."

Larkin sees a big difference in the offensive play.

"Last year we were stagnant on offense; this year we're getting ball movement," Larkin said.

The bottom line?

"I don't feel we get the respect we deserve," Larkin said. "I just believe in my team, and hopefully we can do well this year."

"It's going to be a good year."

SG Daniels Ready to Make Impact

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Oct. 12, 2012

CORAL GABLES, Fla. -- Bishop Daniels has countless highlight-reel dunks painted throughout YouTube world.

They are impressive for any player, but especially for a 6-foot-2, 170-pound high schooler.

Because of the electrifying dunks, Daniels has been labeled as "just a dunker"--a label he plans to erase this season.

"I've had people tell me all I could do was dunk," Daniels said. "I know that wasn't right. They had never seen me in person so you couldn't tell. I think that's what's going to show on the court a lot this year. If you haven't seen more than the highlights, then you haven't seen any of us play, especially me."

He may not have a jump shot like Ray Allen, but he does have speed, quickness, and other offensive skills that will enable him to score the ball. While scoring receiving more headlines, it's defense that Daniels takes pride in.

"I understood coming into college that defense is what is going to put you on the court," Daniels said. "Everybody in college can play offensively--they wouldn't be here if they couldn't--so I took pride in every day getting after it on defense because I know if you're playing defense and have a good offense, it's going to take you to that next level. And I want to win. I take pride in my defense because I don't want anyone to embarrass me."

Teammate Durand Scott has noticed Daniels' defensive prowess.

"He definitely has the potential especially on defense," Scott said. "I know when defense is needed, he's going to be someone to be called on because he's very fast, can lock up, is athletic, can block some shots, get some hands on some balls, he can press and things like that so he's definitely going to be needed on the floor."

Daniels has been slowed by a hamstring injury during preseason practices, which he suffered on the second day of practice.

"The last couple of weeks I've been in and out due to a minor tweak in my hamstring," Daniels said. "It's getting better. I've been watching practices, being active, and being involved in some of the dummy drills. I will be back before the first game comes, but the last couple of weeks has been learning for me."

The injury has come at a bad time for Daniels, who is looking to stake his claim on a

veteran team with six seniors after he missed last season due to a foot injury.

"Of course it's frustrating," Daniels said. "I can't really show it though and can't let it get to me. My confidence has to stay high because I've been through this before. I was hurt all of last year. It's frustrating, but I'm going to get through it. I've got good support in teammates, coaches, family at home just telling me to keep going."

When Daniels arrived at UM last season, he was expected to bring energy and athleticism off the bench. However, the foot injury derailed those plans and he was redshirted. He returned to practice in December and practiced throughout the duration of the season without any other issues.

"Last year was a struggle for me," Daniels said. "I wasn't ready for what I was put in being hurt and having to sit the whole season and watch my team go out there in and out fighting and I couldn't be a part of it. This year I'm coming in with a new mindset, ready to play. There's no sitting out for me, no more time to be wasting. I'm coming out there ready to play the first game. I'm not missing no games. It's a protection issue. I don't want to be injured or go back out there and re-hurt anything. I'm just chilling right now until I get back 100 percent where I can go every day."

After the season, the team collectively agreed to stay in South Florida for the summer as opposed to returning home to work on their games on their own.

"The whole team realized the potential of what we can actually do this year so we decided to stay and do four-man workouts, individuals, going at each other hard, playing pick-up, just getting better and grinding every day," Daniels said.

By staying in Coral Gables, Daniels passed on an opportunity to play in the tradition-rich North Carolina Pro-Am, which has featured NBA players Jerry Stackhouse, John Wall, Austin Rivers, and Brandon Jennings as well as collegiate players.

"I would have loved to have played, but I had to stay and handle some real business," Daniels said.

Daniels was able to squeeze in one appearance in the league this summer during a short trip back.

"It's a big deal," Daniels said. "It's something that we can come back and show how good we've gotten. The league is big, it's a great league."

Connection to John Wall

Growing up in basketball-driven Raleigh, N.C., Daniels, who was named after Tupac Shakur's role in "Juice", played with and against a number of talented players throughout his childhood.

One of those guys is Washington Wizards guard John Wall.

"Me and John have a great relationship," Daniels said. "I see him all of the time in the summer time. Every time I get to go home, I see him. He's a close friend of mine. We joke around, kid, stuff like that. He helps me out. It's a regular relationship, nothing out of the ordinary. That's my boy. We've known each other since we were little kids so that relationship is always going to be there."

Daniels and Wall played on season together at Word of God High School when Wall was a senior, Daniels a sophomore. Daniels has seen Wall's development over the years.

"Out of anybody that we were all close with when we were little, his mentality was probably the strongest," Daniels said. "He has a killer mentality. Whatever it takes to get it done and get the win, he's going to get it done."

In addition to Wall, Daniels also grew up with N.C. State's C.J. Leslie and Maryland's Dez Wells.

Season Opener Nears

Daniels will be looking to make an impact when the season kicks off Nov. 9 against Stetson with whatever role he is given.

"To be honest I just want to do whatever it takes to," Daniels said. "Whatever my role is, I'm going to do it day in and day out. Every night that we play we're going to be out there fighting hard and I'll be playing my role in that game."

After a year in college, Daniels believes he can have some of the same success he had in high school.

"I do think I'll be able to do some of things I did in high school," Daniels said. "Me being the player I am, I am going to have confidence I can whatever I want to on the court. There's nothing that's going to be able to stop me from doing what I did in high school because I'm not going to be playing against anyone different than I did in high school. It's just we are all getting bigger, stronger, and faster, and at the same I'm getting bigger, stronger, faster so I can do the same thing too."

Hoops Buzz: 10/12

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Oct. 12, 2012

The Miami Hurricanes basketball team kicks off the 2012-13 season with their first practice Friday.

Practice is scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. as schools around the country are allowed to start official practices.

The team has been able to be in the gym with certain limitations leading up to Friday's first official practice.

Head coach Jim Larranaga is back for his second season after going 20-13 last year.

"We're going to be far different at least to start the year," Larranaga said. "We'll continue to evaluate how we do the month of November and December so that we have a good game plan going into the ACC. We look at our team, we lose Malcolm Grant, who is an outstanding shooter, but he basically gets replaced by Bishop Daniels, who is an outstanding athlete, but can't shoot the ball like Malcolm, but is very, very fast. We also have a more experienced Shane Larkin, we expect Shane to take on more of a leadership role this year. We really like the improvement and confidence shown by Trey McKinney-Jones and Rion Brown."

Look for Miami to run more of Larranaga's signature "Scramble" defense this season as the team has made strides in improving from when he first took over. The Scramble defense is a man defense that implements a number of trapping principles designed to create turnovers.

"We were not able to do that; I don't think the guys picked it up very well at all during last season," Larranaga said, "but we've been able to continue to build on it and adding a

guy like Bishop Daniels—you need speed and quickness if you're going to trap one guy, that means somebody is open. You have to have the ability to rotate and cover that guy very, very quickly or you'll give up a lot of easy shots or very good offensive rebounding position. We know that from our experience so we're trying to teach our players how to do it correctly. We're getting better. We're not there yet."

News & Notes

- PF Kenny Kadji (11.7 ppg, 5.3 rpg) and C Reggie Johnson (10.0, 7.2) should provide the Hurricanes with a formidable frontcourt duo as Johnson is fully healthy heading into the season. "It's going to be dangerous," Johnson said. "It's going to be dangerous because teams can't double me as much as they want to. If they do, Kenny can burn them with the shot. I've got great shooters around me like Trey and Rion, those guys know how to move around me when I've got the ball in the post. It's going to be fun season. I think my assists will go up this season."

- PF Julian Gamble looks like he will fill a key role as the top post player off the bench in his sixth season. Gamble, who has averaged 3.4 points and 3.0 rebounds in 93 games, has made great strides recovering from knee surgery. "Jules has come back and put on a lot of strength," Larkin said. "His knee is a lot better. I didn't get to see him play before because I wasn't here, but from what I heard he's increased his play and intensity by a lot. He's great on the offensive boards and one of the smartest players on the team. He can bring a lot to our team this year."

- C Reggie Johnson has added a left-handed hook to his array of post moves, which he has found himself using more than his dominant right hand.

- With the graduation of DeQuan Jones and no replacement, UM lacks a versatile forward, which concerns Larranaga. "We'll have some

size, but my major concern is that we're a team that's big without a lot of versatility up front," Larranaga said. "We don't have guys that are 6-6, 6-7, 6-8, we have guys...that are 6-9 to 6-11 so we're big, which is good and going to be very good some nights, but it's also a major concern that we're not as versatile as we'd like to be." Jones is currently on the Magic's preseason roster.

- Freshman C Tonye Jekiri is battling for playing time with Raphael Akpejori to be the team's fourth post player. "Tonye is making strides," Larkin said. "He's only been playing basketball for a couple years, but he's making big strides. He's now getting a patented hook shot. He's really coming along so he'll be able to provide some depth of the bench for us."

- SG Bishop Daniels continues to get praised for his speed as he posted the lowest time in lane agility (9.10 seconds) during the pre-season testing. "Bishop is fast as I don't know what," Larkin said. "Everybody says I'm a blur on the court, but when he gets going up and down the court, he's too fast. It's just exciting playing with him because there's two of us out there instead of it being just one running up and down. This year, me and him together, I'm really excited about that."

- The 2013 recruiting class is an important one for Larranaga and his staff as the team will be looking to replace six seniors. Larranaga has only brought in three players since he took over the program—Larkin, Daniels, and Jekiri—so this is his opportunity to put his stamp on the program. Currently, UM has received two verbal commitments in the class: SG Davon Reed and PG Deandre Burnett. "It's huge," Larranaga said. "We've been out there beating the bushes for a very long time. We feel good about where we are, but recruiting is not a science and really a crapshoot. It's often difficult to know or understand what someone else is thinking. One kid will leave campus telling us he's coming and the next week he'll commit to somebody else."

Miami Hurricanes Basketball: Hoops Chatter, 10/12

CanesWarning
Matthew Osborne
Oct. 12, 2012

The Miami Hurricanes men's basketball team will officially begin practice on Friday. The team has been ranked No. 24 by the Blue Ribbon Yearbook and is coming off of a 20-13 record during head coach Jim Larranaga's first year.

The 'Canes will lose SG Malcolm Grant, but he is to be replaced by SG Bishop Daniels, a 6-3, 175 pound redshirt freshman from Raleigh, North Carolina. Daniels was named the No. 4 dunker in the 2011 class by Rivals and was ranked among the nation's top shooting guards (No. 29 - Scout, No. 46 - ESPN). He was recruited by Purdue, Tennessee, North Carolina State and Rutgers, to name a few.

Notable UM Returnees:

- PF Kenny Kadji (Sr.), Selected to third team All-ACC in 2011-12; 2011 Orange Bowl Basketball Classic Game MVP

- G Durand Scott (Sr.), 2011-12 All-ACC Honorable Mention; 2010 ACC All-Rookie Team; 2010 ACC-All Tournament First Team; 2010 Four-time ACC Rookie of the Week

- G Shane Larkin (So.), 2011-12 All-ACC Freshman Team; ACC Rookie of the Week Dec. 5

- C Reggie Johnson (Sr.), 2011 All-ACC Honorable Mention; 2010 ACC All-Tournament Second Team; ACC Player of the Week Feb. 6, 2012, College Sports Madness ACC Men's Basketball Player of the Week Dec. 19, 2011

Last month, Miami received their second verbal commitment from SG Davon Reed. Reed (6-5, 195) chose Miami over Xavier and Wake Forest. He is an ESPN Top-100 prospect and is looking to bring additional talent to UM in SF Reggie Cameron (6-7, 200), SF Josh Hart (6-5, 196) and PF Austin Colbert (6-9, 205). Miami lost out on 2013 recruit SG Kameron Williams (6-2, 175), who chose Ohio State over Miami, Wake Forest, Marquette and Syracuse. PG Deandre Burnett (6-1, 190) from Opa Locka, FL. became the 'Canes first 2013 verbal commitment.

Reggie Johnson expects 'Canes to make noise

FOX Sports South
Chris Perkins
Oct. 12, 2012

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Today is the day it all gets started, the first day of college basketball practice. And to hear senior center Reggie Johnson talk about the University of Miami basketball team, great things are about to happen for the Hurricanes.

Johnson predicts Miami, which returns four starters from last year's 20-13 team that narrowly missed the NCAA Tournament, will finish in the top three in the Atlantic Coast Conference, a league that has three teams — North Carolina State, Duke and North Carolina — in almost everybody's preseason Top 25.

"We're going to win big," said Johnson, who averaged 10.8 points and 7.2 rebounds per game while battling a knee problem last season. "I'm sorry if I sound cocky or whatever it sounds, but I think we're going to win big. That's my mindset."

And what, exactly, does "win big" mean?

"(NCAA) Tournament and make noise," said Johnson, whose Hurricanes lost in the second round of the NIT last season. "I definitely want to make noise in the Tournament, ain't no ifs, ands or buts about the Tournament."

"Forget the NIT, forget all that. I'm telling you right now. Some of you guys probably think, 'He's crazy.' But I'm telling you right now what it's going to be for this upcoming season."

Johnson has reason for optimism. UM's four returning starters all have legitimate credentials. And the 'Canes return six of their top seven scorers and eight of their top nine rebounders.

Among the returning starters — aside from the 6-foot-10 Johnson — the Hurricanes welcome back are:

— 6-11 senior power forward Kenny Kadji, a third-team All-ACC selection (11.7 ppg, 5.3 rebounds, 1.6 blocks, which ranked sixth in the ACC).

— Senior shooting guard Durand Scott (12.9 ppg), the team's leading scorer and an All-ACC honorable mention.

— Sophomore point guard Shane Larkin, the son of Hall of Fame shortstop Barry Larkin and an All-ACC Freshmen selection who averaged 7.4 ppg and 2.5 assists.

As for key reserves Miami has junior guard Rion Brown (7.2 ppg) and senior guard Trey McKinney Jones (7.0 ppg), who are both capable scorers. Also back are senior guard Garrius Adams (4.5 ppg, six starts) and junior forward Erik Swoope (2.3 ppg, eight starts). Senior big man Julian Gamble (4.0 ppg, 3.4 rpg), who missed last season with a knee injury, also returns.

Overall, the Hurricanes bring back nine scholarship players from last season, a year in which they finished tied for fourth in the ACC (their best finish since joining the league in 2004), beat Duke at Cameron Indoor Arena for the first time and defeated ACC champion Florida State.

Coach Jim Larranaga, who took over last year after a successful 14-year run at George Mason that included a 2006 Final Four appearance, didn't totally support Johnson's outlook, but he didn't shoot it down either.

"Reggie has been around a long time," Larranaga said, "he's a very experienced player, he knows the league very well, so he knows we have a veteran team -- six seniors -- and he has confidence in his teammates as well as himself."

"It's good to believe in yourself."

UM opens the season Nov. 9 with a home game against Stetson and soon afterward gets its first major test as it hosts Michigan State (Nov. 28), a pre-season Top 25 on almost every list.

On the down side for the Hurricanes, Scott, a three-year starter, will miss the first three games while serving a NCAA suspension and Adams will miss a few weeks while recovering from last month's knee surgery.

Still, Johnson is excited.

"Barring injury," he said, "we're going to be a heckuva team."

Larkin to Be Better As a Sophomore

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Oct. 11, 2012

Shane Larkin knows what is expected of him in his sophomore season.

The 5-foot-11 point guard who took over the starting duties mid-way through last year is reminded constantly.

"Get to the basket, get everybody involved, and use your speed," head coach Jim Larranaga instructs Larkin during workouts.

Larranaga had a meeting with Larkin Wednesday to re-iterate the goals for the son of the Baseball Hall of Famer.

"That's something I'm really going to try to do this year," Larkin said.

Larkin admits he was just trying to blend in at times during his first year in college and struggled with his shot selection.

Through experience and watching film with Larranaga, Larkin feels he has improved on those areas.

"I feel more comfortable with everybody," Larkin said. "So definitely with comfort you get to play your game more. I'm more comfortable so this year I look to break out a little bit more."

Larkin played in 32 games, starting 19, averaging 7.4 points, 2.6 assists, 2.5 rebounds, and a team-high 1.6 steals a game. This year he believes his added comfort will help him improve on offense.

"Just being more aggressive offensively," he said. "I know I can do more offensively than I did last year. I'm still going to play the same defense, reading the passing lanes, same on-ball defense, just be more aggressive on offense to look to get passes in the lane or

shoot the 3."

Larkin shot 36 percent from the floor, which was second-to-last on the team, and a number he'd like to improve on.

"Just get shots up," Larkin said of how to improve on the mark. "Coach L always tells us to get shots up before and after practice. During practice we get a lot of shots up too. Shooting is the only way to get better so that's what I'm doing."

Watching film with Larranaga has helped Larkin improve on his shot selection, which will help his shooting percent.

"Being a freshman just coming in not knowing what is a good shot," Larkin said. "Coach L has taught me a lot. We've watched a lot of film so I just know what's a good shot and what's a bad shot, when to shoot, when not to shoot, and that's going to help me out."

Miami went 20-13 last season, 9-7 in the ACC, but failed to make the NCAA tournament for the fourth straight year. The Hurricanes return six seniors and nine players who started games last season.

"We have a lot of veterans so hopefully we can build on what we started last season, coach L's first season, and make the NCAA tournament this year," Larkin said.

Larkin doesn't feel Miami gets the respect it deserves.

"I don't feel we get the respect that we deserve, but if we are sneaking up on people, then that's what we're going to do," Larkin said. "I just believe in our team and hopefully we can do well this year."

Playing in the ACC gives the Hurricanes plenty of opportunities to change the perception of the team.

"Beating the so-called big teams when we play them, like a signature win at Duke last year," Larkin said. "It shows what we can do, but we need to do more of that this year so people can see what we're about."

Miami hosts Michigan State, Duke, North Carolina, and Florida State as well as playing a mid-season tournament in Hawaii as part of their schedule this year.

"It's a great schedule, a lot of good games, just looking forward to going out and playing the best competition every night," Larkin said.

Larkin will resume the starting point guard duties with double-digit scorers Durand Scott (12.9), Kenny Kadji (11.7), and Reggie Johnson (10.0) also returning.

"Everybody can pretty much do everything from 1-2-3, Kenny is a stretch 4 so he can do a lot with the ball," Larkin said. "We can go four out and one in with big Reg and once Reggie gets it down low, it's pretty hard stopping without double-teaming. We have shooters everywhere. D-Scott has really been working on his shot. He's shooting a lot better. Everybody just got a lot better and everybody will be able to produce this year."

Miami averaged 70.7 points a game while shooting 43.1 percent as a team. Larkin believes the team will be better offensively in their second year under Larranaga.

"Offensively last year we were really stagnant and not moving, but this year we are getting better ball movement," Larkin said. "Everybody knows their roles and everybody knows what coach L is looking for. You can tell in practice we're scoring a lot easier. It's going to be a good year."

Miami having 48 guests at its 1st practice weekend

AP
Tim Reynolds
Oct. 11, 2012

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Practice opens at Miami on Friday, when 48 hopefuls will hit the floor trying desperately to impress Hurricanes coach Jim Larranaga.

None will make his team. They'll all have packed up and left by Monday. And they paid handsomely for this privilege.

When the Hurricanes start practice for the coming season, they won't be alone. Larranaga is marrying the formal start of Miami's workouts with a fantasy camp for adults, and believes there are many benefits to running the events simultaneously. Larranaga's players will draft and coach the 48 adults, splitting the group into six teams of eight players.

The campers will also be invited to watch Miami practice.

"Players tend to play better in front of audiences," said Larranaga, whose Hurricanes were 20-13 last season and are expected to contend in the Atlantic Coast Conference this year. "They tend to play harder. I was at a high school gym last week and the football team stayed around because they couldn't get on the practice field. The level of intensity increased dramatically because of the way the football players responded. The same happens with our players."

The cost: \$2,500, which might be considered a bargain in this growing fantasy-camp world.

Other schools that offer the experience to fans at various times during the year include Duke, Syracuse, Kentucky, West Virginia and Kansas. Michael Jordan offered one in Las Vegas for years; Dwyane Wade has lured people to spend \$12,500 to play with him and his friends for a few days in Miami over the past two summers.

Several of the campers who paid to be with Miami this weekend also signed up for most, if not all, the other major camps offered this year, treating it all like a circuit.

"These guys know their basketball," Larranaga said. "And for the players, it makes you aware that the things that you're doing, people are evaluating you all the time. No matter what you do, you're almost always being observed."

When Larranaga coached George Mason into the Final Four, he met one of the prerequisites for getting into what was then the can't-miss fantasy camp, the one Jordan hosted in Las Vegas. Only certain coaches are invited to work that camp, and getting to a Final Four earned Larranaga his call from Jordan to be part of it all.

Larranaga was hooked. He developed contacts, saw how the campers used the weekends to interact with one another, and quickly realized it's about more than basketball. He's worked plenty of camps since, and is a key part of how Wade operates the day-to-day schedule at his fantasy camp.

"These guys are in business with each other, they become very good friends," Larranaga said. "Our players see that."

It's loaded with perks for players. At Kentucky, coach John Calipari gives out \$150 Armani ties to all campers, some games are held at Rupp Arena and members of the winning team win \$2,500 Armani suits. At Syracuse, Jim Boeheim made sure campers got something they surely needed after Day 1 — massages. At Kansas, there's a huge photo of a businessman named Rick Schnall talking with Jayhawks star Thomas Robinson on the school web site; Schnall will be one of the players at Larranaga's camp this weekend as well.

"They all love it," Larranaga said. "They're serious about it."

Larranaga's "real" players may just put on a show for the campers as well. Miami has big expectations coming into the year, and senior center Reggie Johnson isn't shy about saying the Hurricanes expect to be an NCAA tournament team.

He thinks there's a simple reason why many may be overlooking the Hurricanes at this point.

"We're Miami," Johnson said. "If we were at North Carolina or Florida State, we'd be a Top 25 team, without a doubt. But we're Miami, so that's that."

UM men's basketball team has high expectations

Miami Herald
Michelle Kaufman
Oct. 11, 2012

It remains to be seen how the University of Miami men's basketball team will fare this season, but one thing is certain heading into Friday's official first practice: Senior center Reggie Johnson is thinking big.

"Tournament and make noise," he replied, when asked his preseason goals. "I definitely want to make noise in the tournament, no ifs, ands or buts. Forget the NIT. Forget all that. I'm telling you right now. Sorry if I sound cocky. ... Some of you probably think, 'Oh, he's crazy,' but I'm telling you right now what's going to be this coming season."

The Hurricanes finished 20-13 last season, were fourth in the Atlantic Coast Conference (9-7) and reached the second round of the NIT.

Nine players return from that team, including six seniors. The team boasts five players 6-10 or taller, speedy guards Shane Larkin and Bishop Daniels, and versatility in Durand Scott, Trey McKinney Jones and Rion Brown. UM cracked the Top 25 in a few preseason magazine polls.

"Barring injuries, we're going to be a heck of a team, top three in ACC," Johnson said.

Kenny Kadji, Johnson's frontcourt mate at 6-11, shed 20 pounds to become a more mobile big man at 242 pounds. Seven-foot freshman Tonye Jekiri of Hialeah's Champagnat Catholic School is quick and can block shots.

Julian Gamble, a 6-10 senior who missed last season with a knee injury, has been impressive in preseason workouts.

"Julian has impressed me as much as or more than anybody on team," second-year coach Jim Larranaga said. "After his injury he

couldn't practice for a very long time. I did not have a vision of what he was going to be like. In February, when he came back to practice, he labored at everything we did. I thought, 'He'll have a very hard time contributing.' In the summer, he was in the weight room conditioning, getting stronger. These last four weeks of practice he has been very, very impressive running the floor, rebounding at both ends, being a heady player. He's going to fit very much into our rotation."

UM's home schedule includes games against Michigan State (Nov. 28), Duke (Jan. 23) and North Carolina (Feb. 9). The first exhibition is Nov. 2 against St. Leo, and the regular-season opener is Nov. 9 against Stetson.

Hurricanes' big man predicts huge season

Palm Beach Post
Jorge Milian
Oct. 10, 2012

CORAL GABLES — University of Miami center Reggie Johnson is back healthy and fully confident in his team's ability to have a big season.

"We will win big," Johnson said Wednesday. "I'm sorry if I sound cocky or whatever it sounds, but I think we will win big."

Asked what winning big meant, the 6-10, 292-pound senior said: "[The NCAA] tournament and make noise. I definitely want to make the tournament. There is no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Forget the NIT. Forget all of that. I'm going to tell you right now, and some of you (the media) might think, 'oh, he's crazy,' but I'm telling you right now what it's going to be for this upcoming season."

The Hurricanes' last NCAA tournament berth was in the 2007-08 season. UM finished 20-13 and narrowly missed out on an NCAA berth last season in Jim Larranaga's first year as Miami's coach, then was ousted in the second round of the NIT by Minnesota.

Johnson missed the first two months of last season while recovering from knee surgery and also served a one-game NCAA suspension for accepting impermissible benefits. He came on to average nine points and seven rebounds per game.

- Guard Durand Scott will miss the first three games of the season while completing his NCAA suspension for accepting impermissible benefits. Scott will be eligible to make his season debut Nov. 24 against Detroit.

- Forward Garrius Adams had knee surgery in early September and is likely to miss the early part of the season.

Hoops Buzz: 10/10

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Oct. 10, 2012

The Miami Hurricanes men's basketball team begins official practice Friday with the 2012-13 season just around the corner.

Jim Larranaga is back for his second season as the head coach after going 20-13 last season and is looking to lead a team with six seniors to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2008.

"Our goals never change," Larranaga said. "Our goals are to be the best that we can be. I thought last year we did a good job coming very close to reaching our full potential when we were healthy. We had a very hard time staying healthy. We had a lot of injuries prior to the season, had some suspensions during the season and it's difficult to develop chemistry especially with new coaches and players trying to learn a new system. I thought the guys did a very, very good job and this year our goal will be the same—to be the best that we can be. I think everyone else thinks we can be pretty good, which is a good thing."

Friday's practice, which is scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m., is the first day of preseason practices in the NCAA. It will be closed to the public.

"If we can keep everybody healthy with the roster we have now, we should be able to do things in November and December that we couldn't even think about doing at any time last year," Larranaga said. "You'll see us pressing more, running more than last year."

Miami has an exhibition game on Nov. 2 against St. Leo before beginning regular season play on Nov. 9 against Stetson.

News & Notes

- SG Durand Scott will miss the first three games of the season due to completing his suspension handed out by the NCAA at the end of last season. Scott will be eligible to make his season debut Nov. 24 against Detroit. "The thing I was most impressed with Durand Scott last year was his competitive drive," Larranaga said. "He is a tough, hard-nosed competitor and whenever he is on the floor he is going to give it 100 percent. I think he's going to have a sensational year and be our true leader. I'm excited about the improvement he's made in his game. He's shooting the ball better. He's always been a solid 3-point shooter and lay-up maker, but now he's hitting a lot of 15-foot jump shots. He's making plays that I think will lead us to a lot of terrific wins." Scott led the team

in scoring last year averaging 12.9 points a game. In his career, Scott has scored 1,217 points, which ranks 21st on the school's all-time list with a shot of cracking the top eight.

- PF Kenny Kadji has dropped 20 pounds and is now 6-foot-11, 242 pounds. "The reason why we wanted Kenny to lose weight was because we wanted him to run the floor better, have him in better shape so he can play more quality minutes, and very importantly without DeQuan Jones, we need someone to guard these stretch 4-men the 6-7, 6-8 athlete. Kenny is 6-11 and is more suited to guard a post player, but he's going to need to go out and guard a perimeter 4-man and that's quite a challenge for him. Losing the weight will help and he's much stronger than he was a year ago."

- C Reggie Johnson is back healthy and fully confident in his team's ability to have a big season. "We will win big. I'm sorry if I sound cocky or whatever it sounds, but I think we will win big," Johnson said. He added that winning big means: "Tournament and make noise. I definitely want to make the tournament. There is no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Forget the NIT. Forget all of that. I'm going to tell you right now, and some of you (the media) might think, 'oh, he's crazy', but I'm telling you right now what it's going to be for this upcoming season." Larranaga said that he saw Johnson dunk just one or two times from December to March, but during practice and drills he's dunked the ball 10-15 times.

- Miami returns nine players who started games last season including: Durand Scott (30 starts), Kenny Kadji (28), Reggie Johnson (22), Shane Larkin (19), Trey McKinney-Jones (12), Erik Swoope (8), Garrius Adams (6), Rion Brown (3), and Raphael Akpejori (3).

- PG Shane Larkin says he feels more comfortable in his second year after averaging 7.4 points and 2.5 assists while making 19 starts as a freshman. Larkin would like to improve on his 36 percent shooting from a year ago, which was second to last on the team. The key to improve is to "just get shots up. Coach L always tells us to get shots up before and after practice. During practice we get a lot of shots up too. Shooting is the only way to get better so that's what I'm doing." Larkin also said as a freshman that at times he didn't know what was a good shot and credits Larranaga for helping him understand what a good shot is.

- SG Bishop Daniels is fully healthy and ready to make an impact this year after redshirting last season while dealing with a nagging foot injury. Daniels has been praised by his teammates for his

speed and explosive ability. "He's a crazy athlete so he'll definitely show everybody this year," Larkin said. "I can't even explain how athletic he is, it's crazy."

- PF Julian Gamble is back for his sixth season and had a strong offseason. "Julian Gamble has impressed me as much or more than anybody on the team," Larranaga said. "Primarily because after his injury he couldn't practice for a very long time. I didn't have a vision of what he was going to be like. In February when he came back practicing he labored at everything we did. I thought he'd have a very hard time contributing. In the summer he was in the weight room conditioning, getting stronger, and these last four weeks practicing since school began, he's been running the floor, rebounding the basketball at both ends, being a heady player so he's going to fit very, very much into our rotation."

- Swingmen Trey McKinney-Jones and Rion Brown will once again be in a heated battle for playing time as the two both showed last year of being productive players in spurts. McKinney-Jones averaged 7.0 points and 3.5 rebounds while shooting 46.7 percent in 33 games, making 12 starts while Brown averaged 7.2 points and 2.8 rebounds shooting 42.7 percent in 31 games, three starts. "Last year there were times when both of them played well, but most of the time it wasn't at the same time," Larranaga said. "Trey played very well and Rion did not, and then Rion played great for a while and Trey did not. By the end of the season they were both begging to feel good and play well. Right now they are both practicing very hard, very well, and I expect them to step up."

- SF Garrius Adams had knee surgery in early September and there is no timetable for his return. "If you asked me three weeks ago, I'd say probably in a month, but maybe now it's six or eight weeks now," Larranaga said. The eight-week mark would be the first part of November.

- C Tonye Jekiri is the only newcomer on the team. The 7-foot, 227-pound Nigerian is a shot-blocking specialist with raw skills. Recently the emphasis for Jekiri is to limit his fouling. One way the coaches have emphasized this is that all players must do 10 push-ups on the spot of each foul during practice. "He's very different than anybody we have," Larranaga said. "He's much faster, very active in his game, he's very inexperienced right now so he's foul-prone, but we have implemented a new rule that we hope will improve his defense without fouling."

UM hoops ready to sneak up on 'so-called big teams'

Sun Sentinel

By Michael Casagrande

October 10, 2012

Oh, Reggie Johnson is feeling it.

The senior Miami basketball player isn't sorta excited about the upcoming season. He's all the way jacked as practice opens Friday.

"I'm sorry if I sound cocky or whatever, but I think we're going to win big," the 6-10 center said. "That's my mindset. I think practices are harder than the game right now."

The Hurricanes have some preseason hype to go with it. They are cracking a few top-25 rankings thanks to their depth and health. Johnson is all the way back from his knee injury and has a prediction for the postseason.

"Forget the NIT. Forget all of that. I'm telling you right now," Johnson said. "Some of you think, oh he's crazy, but I'm telling you right now what it's going to be for this upcoming season."

"We are Miami," he said. "If we wore North Carolina or Florida State, we'd be a top-25 team without a doubt. But we're Miami, so that's that."

Point guard Shane Larkin feels the same way.

"I don't feel like we get the respect we deserve, if we're sneaking up on people, that's what we're going to do," Larkin said.

The recipe to that isn't complicated.

"Just beating the big teams," Larkin said. "Or the so-called big teams when they come here or we play them — like a signature win like Duke last year showed what we can do."

Basketball Team Testing Results

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
Oct. 1, 2012

The Miami Hurricanes basketball team has completed their fall testing in preparation for the 2012-13 season.

Strength and conditioning coach Jim Krumpas has helped improve the team's strength since being hired May 2011.

According to assistant coach Eric Konkol, since Krumpas became the strength the coach, the max bench team average has improved from 231 to 270 in 17 months and the 185 bench press rep test average went from 9.1 to 12.8.

The Hurricanes, which are ranked 24th in the Blue Ribbon preseason poll, begin their season on Nov. 9 against Stetson. Walk-on tryouts will be held on Oct. 10. Fall practice begins on Oct. 12.

Here's a look at the top performers in the vertical jump, bench press max, bench press reps, and lane agility drill:

Vertical Jump

Shane Larkin, 42.5 inches
Bishop Daniels, 40.0
Trey McKinney-Jones, 38.0
Erik Swoope, 36.0
Rion Brown, 35.5
Raphael Akpejiori, 34.5
Kenny Kadji, 34.0
Garrius Adams, 33.0
Julian Gamble, 32.5
Tonye Jekiri, 31.5
Durand Scott, 28.0
Reggie Johnson, 25.5

Bench Press

Erik Swoope, 340 pounds
Reggie Johnson, 320
Trey McKinney-Jones, 300
Durand Scott, 285
Julian Gamble, 275
Raphael Akpejiori, 270
Shane Larkin, 270
Rion Brown, 245
Garrius Adams, 235
Tonye Jekiri, 235
Kenny Kadji, 235
Bishop Daniels, 220

Bench Press Reps at 185 Pounds

Reggie Johnson, 23 reps
Trey McKinney-Jones, 23
Erik Swoope, 21
Durand Scott, 19
Julian Gamble, 18
Raphael Akpejiori, 16
Shane Larkin, 14
Garrius Adams, 13
Rion Brown, 12
Kenny Kadji, 9
Tonye Jekiri, 9
Bishop Daniels, 4

Lane Agility

Bishop Daniels, 9.10 seconds
Durand Scott, 9.26
Kenny Kadji, 9.35
Rion Brown, 9.41
Trey McKinney-Jones, 9.63
Shane Larkin, 9.66
Erik Swoope, 9.73
Julian Gamble, 10.02
Garrius Adams, 10.30
Raphael Akpejiori, 10.33
Tonye Jekiri, 11.10
Reggie Johnson, 11.36

Countdown: ACC Center/Power Forward Rankings

State of the U

Jerry Steinberg

Oct. 1, 2012

Today in the final installment of ACC positional rankings and analysis, I break down centers and power forwards. Not every team in the conference has a classic center, so I will rank the two positions as a unit.

The ACC has no shortage of talented and imposing big men. Miami returns a trio of seniors in Reggie Johnson, Kenny Kadji, and Julian Gamble that could be as formidable as any in the country. Around the league, UNC's James Michael McAdoo looks to be the Tar Heels next star, the Plumlee Brothers at Duke promise to be tough, and Maryland's Alex Len is an intriguing prospect to keep an eye on.

With out further delay here are my ACC team center/power forward rankings for 2012-13:

#1 Miami.

The key to the entire season for the talented 'Canes could come down to the health of 6'10 285 pound C Reggie Johnson. When healthy, there is no worse match-up nightmare in the ACC then the big body and soft touch of Johnson. Last season with the exception of a huge game against Duke on Super Bowl Sunday (27 points 12 rebounds), Big Reg did not look 100% (10 ppg & 7.1 rpg for the season).

Fortunately for UM and Coach Jim Larranaga, Johnson appears to be healthy.

"He's so much better than he was at any point last year," Larranaga said of the 6-10 Johnson.

"Reggie is 50% better a player than he was at any point last season. He's more agile. He's quicker. He has a chance to have a special season."

When Johnson isn't causing nightmares down low, 6'11 Kenny Kadji (11.7 ppg 5.3 rpg 42% 3P%) is a versatile big man who can score on the block or from downtown. The scary part for the rest of the ACC is that Kadji is only getting better.

"He looks like a right handed Chris Bosh," Larranaga said of Kadji.

"He's running the floor incredibly well and he's dropped weight. He's down to 242 from 262."

In addition to Johnson and Kadji, 6'9 sixth year senior Julian Gamble returns from injury. Gamble may not be the type of player to put up big numbers, but his intangibles and leadership should not be undervalued. Raphael Akpejori is a 6'10 junior who provides depth. Overall Miami's big men will be a load for any team in the county, and Johnson and Kadji should be All ACC candidates as individual performers.

#2 NC State.

When he's on, Calvin Leslie has the ability to dominate a game like no other player in the ACC, and few in the country. Leslie averaged 14.7 ppg, 7.6 rpg, and 1.6 blocks, but amped his game up to even higher levels last season during the Wolfpack's runs in the ACC and NCAA tournaments. The 6'8 Leslie is too strong to be guarded by wing players and too quick and explosive for power forwards. Already an established star, look for Leslie to accomplish tremendous things this year and possibly work his way into the NBA lottery. While not as versatile as Leslie, 6'8 250 pound senior Richard Howell (10.8 ppg 9.2 rpg) is an effective player from 8 feet in, and a monster on the glass. 7'1 Australian junior Jordan Vandenberg who comes off a last season due to injury, should provide depth in limited doses. Leslie and Howell will rival Johnson and Kadji frontcourt duos as the best in the conference.

#3 North Carolina.

The losses of John Henson and Tyler Zeller would leave nearly any other program in rebuilding mode. The Tar Heels however, simply re-load. No big man in the ACC or the country is poised for a bigger break out season than James Michael McAdoo. McAdoo - averaged 6.1 points, 3.9 boards and 19.0 minutes per game last season, which projects out to 15.5 points and 9.9 boards over 40 minutes. The numbers could work out to be even better with McAdoo inheriting the go-to role in Chapel Hill. 6'9 Freshman Brice Johnson is a lean, athletic prospect who will need to develop physically to become a force in the ACC. Nonetheless look for Johnson to contribute immediately as a shot blocker and finisher. Another freshman, 6'10 260 pound Joel James should also see the floor early and often, and provide a much needed physical presence for UNC. Desmond Hubert is a 6'10 sophomore who may not play much but has potential.

#4 Maryland.

If the Terps can get consistency out of 7'1 230 pound Alex Len, (6 ppg, 5.4 rpg last season) their front court will be special. Len showed promising ability as an offensive weapon in spurts as a freshman, and is also a deceptively good shot blocker (2.2 per game). This season the Ukraine native should have plenty of help up front in the form of 6'9 275 pound incoming freshman Shaquille Cleare. The big-bodied Cleare comes to Maryland with a polished low post game, including the ability to drop step from either side and a nice baby hook shot. Cleare also plays with the kind of force that makes his first name appropriate. Depth should be no problem as senior James Padgett is a hard working power forward who contributed 8.8 ppg and 5.8 rpg last year, and 6'8 250 pound freshman Charles Mitchell is another bruising presence down low.

#5 Duke.

Mason Plumlee (11.1 ppg & 9.2 rpg) emerged as a double double machine (12 last year) in 2011-12. The 6'10 235 pound senior may not have a polished offensive game, but he uses brute force and athleticism to produce big numbers. This season he won't have the presence of older brother Miles who graduated, but will have younger brother Marshall on the floor with him. Redshirt freshman Marshall does not have the aptitude for dirty work of Mason, but can score from 12-15 feet out. Joining the Plumlee brothers up front will be 6'11 senior Ryan Kelly. Kelly (11.8 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 41% 3P%) is at his best when he floats around the perimeter and can score in bunches. Josh Hairston is 6'7 junior who adds depth.

#6 Georgia Tech.

6'11 Daniel Miller (8.1 ppg, 6.5 rpg, 2.2 blocks) is an underrated post player with a nice finesse game, who should get more touches this season for the Yellow Jackets. Kammeon Holsley (9.4 ppg and 4.9 rpg, 59% from the floor) is a high percentage shooter, who at 6'8 forms a nice compliment to Miller. Incoming freshman Robert Carter is a 6'9 245 athlete who has nice power game and good shooting range. Julian Royal is a 6'7 role player who adds depth. Carter's presence and the continued development of Miller and Holsley might make GT's inside players the most improved in the ACC this season.

#7 Florida State

Replacing Bernard James will be no easy task for the Seminoles. James' leadership skills, defensive presence, and experience will be sorely missed. FSU is hoping that 6'8 Terrence Shannon (8.3 ppg in 7 games) can return from injury and provide the same toughness he was known for before dislocating his left shoulder. Joining Shannon will be a slew of newcomers, headlined by JUCO transfer Robert Gilchrist. Gilchrist is a 6'9 shot blocking force, who is originally from London, Nigerian born 7'1 Michael Ojo and 7'2 230 pound Boris Bojanovsky of the Slovak Republic appear to be long term projects. Coach Leonard Hamilton's ability to get the most out of any squad can never be underestimated, but he will have his work cut out for him with this inexperienced group. Good thing for Florida State they have a deep and talented back court.

#8 Virginia.

Perhaps no player is more irreplaceable in the ACC than Mike Scott is to the Hoos. Scott was my pick for ACC player of the year last season, and UVA will have a hard time replacing his production. Akil Mitchell (4.1 ppg & 4.4 rpg) and Darion Atkins (2.3 ppg & 2.3 rpg) can defend, but aren't particularly skilled with the ball. The most likely option to pick up some of the slack down low will be 6'10 freshman center Mike Tobey. Tobey is a well developed big with good hands who can score in traffic. Still, it may take him time to adjust to the rigors of ACC play.

#9 Clemson.

Devin Booker (10.5 ppg and 7.0 rpg) has the ability to hang with any player in the conference down low. Too often though Booker had off nights shooting, and seemed to get discouraged. The Tigers have very little other experience up front, so amongst the freshman group of Josh Smith, Jaron Blossomgame, and Larry Nnoko, someone will need to emerge. A more consistent and motivated Booker would be a huge help as well.

#10 Wake Forest.

7'0 250 Pound junior Carson Desrosiers (4.8 ppg & 4.4 rpg) had yet to establish himself as a presence down low, before transferring. His loss will open up minutes for 6'10 Sophomore Daniel Green, who also did not light it up last year. Fortunately for the Demon Deacs, an abundance of freshman big men arrive this year. Devin Thomas and/or Tyler Cavanaugh could man the four spot early on. 6'10 Andre Washington is freshman with good back to the basket skills who could play immediately as well.

#11 Boston College.

Dennis Clifford (8.9 ppg & 4.7 rpg) proved to be a skilled but athletically challenged 7 footer as freshman. BC would benefit from getting him more touches as he looks like he can be effective, even if awkward. 6'10 275 pound KC Caudill is similar to Clifford albeit less talented. Together Clifford and Caudill give the Eagles above average size. They will need to become better players however, for Boston College to become a better team.

#12 Virginia Tech.

No team has more question marks down low than the Virginia Tech Hokies. 6'9 Cadarian Raines (5.9 ppg and 3.9 rpg) & 6'8 C.J. Barksdale (2.7 ppg and 2.7 rpg) return. 6'8 Freshman Marshall Wood should also see time. Erick Green will likely not receive much help from this group.

Projected ALL ACC C/PFs:

1st Team: Reggie Johnson Miami & Calvin Leslie NC State.

2nd Team: Kenny Kadji Miami & James Michael McAdoo UNC.

3rd Team: Mason Plumlee Duke & Richard Howell NC State.

Best of the Rest:

Best Scorer: Calvin Leslie, NC State.

Best Rebounder: Mason Plumlee, Duke or Reggie Johnson, Miami.

Best Shooter: Kenny Kadji, Miami or Ryan Kelly, Duke.

Best Defender: Daniel Miller, GT.

Best Freshman: Shaquille Cleare, Maryland.

This wraps up our 2012 ACC positional breakdown. Please be sure to leave lots of feedback. I will do an overview of the series as a whole, including responses I receive, in the coming days.

Countdown: ACC Small Forward Rankings

State of the U
Jerry Steinberg
Sept. 26, 2012

With more and more teams going to three guard line-ups, the small forward position has become something of a commodity in College Basketball. Nonetheless some outstanding players remain at the three spot. Miami has a plethora of players who can man the wing.

Both Rion Brown and Trey McKinney Jones will be asked to play some at the two, but both are long and talented enough to guard SFs as well. Around the conference, despite the loss of UNC's premier SF Harrison Barnes, the ACC will have plenty of skilled and athletic wings.

With out further delay here are my ACC team small forward rankings for 2012-13:

(Author's note: Because of the abundance of three guard line-ups in the conference, some team rankings may seem slightly redundant to our shooting guard rankings.)

#1 NC State.

The Wolfpack return perhaps the premier shooter in the conference in Scott Wood. Wood averaged 12.9 ppg, shot 41% from deep and 90% from the charity stripe last year. Despite having talent all over the floor, NC State's success mirrored Wood's play on the floor (The Pack were just 4-7 in games where Wood failed to reach double figures). If Wood tires, NC State has the luxury of calling on 6'8 freshman T.J. Warren (ranked as high as the #4 SF in the country coming out of high school). Warren is a pure shooter who won't wow you with athleticism, but does have a very nice medium game. Overall, like nearly every other position on the floor, NC State has an abundance of talent at the three. Here's a closer look of what Warren can do:

#2 Wake Forest.

No team in the conference has a more traditional small forward than Wake Forest in Travis McKie. The 6'7 junior averaged 16.1 ppg, 7.1 rpg, and knocked down 48% of his shots from the floor last season. McKie is not only an excellent shooter and finisher, but a force on the boards on both ends of the court. 6'6 bruiser Arnaud Adala Moto should contribute as both SG & SF immediately. Aaron Rountree is a 6'7 freshman the Demon Deacons will develop behind McKie as well.

#3 Miami.

The 'Canes have the luxury of two players in Rion Brown and Trey McKinney Jones who can score, shoot, pass, dribble, and most importantly defend. On any given night, either can score in double digits. And while both may be better suited to play SG, they have the size (both 6'6) and versatility to man the 3. Brown's explosive finishes may have become a signature, but his defensive prowess (perhaps the best perimeter defender this side of Michael Snaer) is highly underrated. McKinney Jones was at times, Miami's most consistent performer last season. UM also returns Garrius Adams from a knee injury. Adams has the skill set to play either guard spot as well as small forward. Erik Swoope is an undersized yet tenacious competitor who adds depth.

#4 North Carolina.

6'7 Reggie Bullock has the size and versatility to hang with any SF in the conference. Expect Bullock to improve on 8.8 ppg and score in double digits on a regular basis. P.J. Hairston can also man both the 2/3 positions with aplomb, but is it Bullock who has the highest upside as a natural 3. Incoming freshman JP Tokoto has the look of a future slam dunk contest winner. While the rest of his game rounds into shape, the Tar Heels will still have the luxury of plenty of production on the wing in Hairston and Bullock. If Leslie McDonald and Dexter Strickland are healthy and productive at the 2 spot, and freshman PG Marcus Paige develops quickly, UNC's 3's have a chance to put up some big numbers.

#5 Duke.

While Duke may be short on experience at the three, they are long on talent. 6'8 Alex Murphy is a redshirt freshman who's game is remarkable similar to former Blue Devil stand out Kyle Singler. If Murphy can produce the way Singler did, Coach K will be one happy man. Duke fans will also get their first look at 6'8 Amile Jefferson. Jefferson's future would appear to be at PF, but while he grows more into his frame expect Jefferson to provide major contributions on the wing. His game should develop and mirror that of former UK standout Terrence Jones. Here are some highlights of Jefferson in action:

#6 Florida State.

FSU is still waiting for 6'8 junior Okaro White (7.7 ppg and 4.4 rpg last season) to fulfill his lofty potential. White can give the Seminoles anywhere from next to nothing to dropping 20 on a given night. If White's inconsistency remains an issue, look for Coach Leonard Hamilton to turn to 6'6 incoming freshman Montay Brandon. Brandon is an extremely versatile player who is equally adept at passing, handling, and scoring. Brandon's immediate future may be on the wing, but long term he could star at any one of three positions for Florida State.

#7 Virginia.

Like Miami, the Hoos SG and SF positions are mostly interchangeable. Both 6'6 Joe Harris and 6'5 Malcolm Brogdon can man either spot adroitly. The X factor for this team however, could come in the form of a more classic small forward. Enter freshman Evan Nolte, a 6'8 shooter/scorer who has range out to 25 feet and a very polished game overall. If Nolte assimilates to the ACC quickly, this unit could be even higher on the list by season's end.

#8 Maryland.

Freshman Jake Layman can play either forward spot, but will likely start at the 3. His prowess from three point range (at one point during his senior season in H.S. he went 8-8 in a game) makes him dangerous on the perimeter, and his 7 foot wingspan makes him effective inside. Like UVA's Nolte, and NC State's Warren, Layman has a chance to be very good immediately. Sophomore SG Nick Faust can also slide over to SF as well and provide punch when needed.

#9 Virginia Tech.

Junior Jarrell Eddie is an underrated 6'7 player, who has a chance to distinguish himself as the Hokies second best player this season behind Erick Green. Last year he tallied 9.1 ppg and more impressively knocked

down 44% of his three pointers. Look for a more explosive version of Eddie this season. The transfer of 6'7 225 prospect Montrezl Harrell to will hurt depth.

#10 Boston College.

Ryan Anderson led BC in scoring last season at 11.2 ppg, but shot just 27% from distance. Anderson's potential, especially as a scorer and rebounder, is impressive. BC will need his all around game to improve this season. Sophomore Eddie Odio would appear to be the next option at the 3, but looks to be a role player at best.

#11 Clemson.

The strength of the rebuilding Tigers this season could be on the wing. 6'9 senior Milton Jennings (9.7 ppg, 5.6 rpg and 1.1 apg) shows flashes of star ability but needs to be more consistent. Sophomore K.J. McDaniels will also be counted on for more production this season. Both are exceptional athletes who should provide Clemson with a lot of highlights, even if the team struggles for wins.

#12 Georgia Tech.

6'5 Junior Jason Morris will be counted on to improve on 7.8 ppg and 35% from the floor this season. Like Morris, 6'4 Stacy Poole Jr. is a scoring threat at both the 2/3 positions. This group will get a definite boost if 4 star recruit Marcus Hunt can contribute immediately. All in all, the Yellow Jackets have a chance to climb up the rankings at wing, especially if Morris' game improves.

Projected ALL ACC SFs:

1st Team: Travis McKie, Wake.

2nd Team: Scott Wood, NC State.

3rd Team: Reggie Bullock, UNC.

Best of the Rest:

Best Shooter: Scott Wood, NC State.

Best Pure Scorer: Travis McKie, Wake.

Best Rebounder: Ryan Anderson, BC.

Best Freshman: T.J. Warren, NC State.

Best Defender: Rion Brown, Miami.

Underrated: Jarrell Eddie, Va Tech & Trey McKinney Jones, Miami.

And with that, we conclude our look at the position of small forward in the ACC this season. Keep a look out for our next installment in the series, when we break down big men in the ACC in the upcoming days.

Rothstein Files: Larranaga, Miami Should Be In ACC Mix

CBS New York
John Rothstein
Sept. 26, 2012

NC State has been anointed as the team to beat in the ACC.

The Wolfpack bring back four starters from last year's team that advanced to the Sweet 16 and add three talented freshmen in Rodney Purvis, T.J. Warren, and Tyler Lewis.

Florida State is coming off a season in which they won the ACC Tournament and beat North Carolina and Duke twice along the way. The Seminoles have made themselves a perennial contender in the conference and regardless of the defections in Durham and Chapel Hill, the Blue Devils and Tarheels will always represent the gold standard in one of college basketball's most storied leagues.

But what about Miami?

The Hurricanes had the same regular season conference record as NC State last year (9-7) and return everyone on their roster of significance except for shooting guard Malcolm Grant and burly forward DeQuan Jones. After a season in which Miami coach Jim Larranaga had to deal with nagging injuries on what seemed to be a daily basis, the Hurricanes finally appear to be healthy — and that could be bad news for the rest of the ACC.

"We'll be healthier going into this season than we were at any point a year ago," said Larranaga, whose team finished 20-13 last year and lost to Minnesota in the NIT. "We were under one impression as a team last year and then things would change regularly. We'd lose somebody or then someone else would come back. Our chemistry should be much better than it was last season."

A big reason for that is Reggie Johnson.

The 6-10 big man missed the start of last year with a knee injury but appeared in 23 games and averaged 10 points and 7.2 rebounds per game. Johnson also was unstoppable (27 points, 12 rebounds) in a win at Duke on February 5th.

"He's so much better than he was at any point last year," Larranaga said of the 6-10 Johnson. "Reggie is 50% better a player than he was at any point last season. He's more agile. He's quicker. He has a chance to have a special season."

If he does, expect the same from Kenny Kadji. The lanky forward excelled as a high post threat when Johnson returned to Miami's lineup last season, averaging 13.4 points per game when paired with the broad shouldered center.

"He looks like a right handed Chris Bosh," Larranaga said of Kadji. "He's running the floor incredibly well and he's dropped weight. He's down to 242 from 262."

Forward Julian Gamble is fully healed from a knee injury and should be ready to have a major role. Freshman shot blocker Tonye Jekiri may be a year away from contributing but has good size at 6-11.

Larranaga seems committed to a combination of veterans at small forward in Rion Brown and Trey McKinney-Jones. 6-6 senior Garrius Adams could also be in the mix but is coming off a knee injury.

"We expect Rion and Trey to share the 3 spot," Larranaga said. "They're both excellent three-point shooters and excellent defenders. Rion really closed out last season strong offensively and we hope he picks up where he left off."

Miami should have one of the better back courts in the ACC with Durand Scott and Shane Larkin. Scott, a senior should be

primed for a big time year without Grant being a focal point in the Hurricanes offense and Larkin was mightily impressive last season as a freshman (7.4 PPG, 2.5 RPG, 2.5 APG).

"I think Durand will have his best season ever," Larranaga said of Scott, who averaged 12.9 points and 5.4 rebounds per game last year as a junior. "Shane Larkin is someone we're counting on. We need his assists totals to go up. Bishop Daniels is another guy who's a sleeper. He's a great athlete and without question the fastest guy on our team."

With better health and more capable bodies, Larranaga should be able to augment the pace and take advantage of his team's depth and athleticism.

"We should be able to pressure the ball more," Larranaga said. "We're hoping to have the opportunity to play more how we'd like to play. We know we haven't done what the traditional powers have done. Last year was the first time ever Miami had a winning record in ACC play. We had the same regular season record last year as both Virginia and NC State. If we improve and stay healthy, we have a chance to have a very good year."

Countdown: ACC Shooting Guard Rankings

State of the U
Jerry Steinberg
Sept. 24, 2012

In just 5 weeks College Basketball season will be underway and the long road to the Final Four will commence. In the historically powerful ACC, there are more than a few teams with ambitions of March glory. One of the most integral parts to any deep run, is having a shooting guard who can make a big bucket when needed. The Miami Hurricanes have a wealth of options at the 2 spot. Durand Scott can play both guard positions, and is at his best when he slashes to the hoop. Rion Brown is a knock down shooter, who last year was a revelation as a world class finisher at the rim. Trey McKinney Jones is a clutch performer, who gives the team a little bit of everything. And finally, redshirt freshman Bishop Daniels, is a tremendous athlete who is the wildcard of the group. But where do these 'Canes guards stack up against the rest of the league?? Let's take a look.

With out further delay here are my ACC team shooting guard rankings for 2012-13:

#1 Duke.

Like his father Del, and his brother Stephen, Seth Curry is a pure shooter. Last season, despite having to defer to Austin Rivers as the #1 option, Curry averaged 13.2 points per game and shot 38% from downtown. When Curry wasn't knocking down jumpers, Andre Dawkins (8.4 ppg & 39% on 3P%) was. Dawkins unfortunately will be red-shirting this year for personal reasons. Still, do not feel sorry for Duke. Curry will still be joined by 6'3 freshman Rasheed Sulaimon (ranked as high as the #6 SG in the country coming out of high school). Sulaimon is not quite the pure shooter of Curry or Dawkins, but has a smooth handle and is exceptional pulling up on the break, and should team up nicely with Curry. If there's one weakness or question mark for this group, it is defensively. If Duke's shooting guards improve in that area, watch out!

#2 Florida State.

There may not be a better all-around SG in the nation than Michael Snaer. Snaer is not just a big-time scorer, he is also one of the best perimeter defenders in the country. Last season the 6'5 senior averaged 14 points, 3.8 rebounds, 1.9 assists and knocked down 40% of his trifectas. Snaer is the unquestioned leader of the Seminoles and a potential All-American. FSU is also excited about 6'5 freshman Aaron Thomas. Thomas is a slashing athletic type who could make an immediate impact for the Seminoles off the bench.

#3 Miami.

Durand Scott enters his senior season as the 'Canes leading returning scorer at 12.9 a clip, but Scott can also pass (3.1 assists per game) and rebound (5.4 rpg). With Shane Larkin expected to man the point, Scott will be afforded more opportunities off the ball. Scott's bread and butter is taking the ball strong to the hole. Miami is likely to employ a three guard rotation, and the third

starter is a toss up between Rion Brown (39% 3P%) and Trey McKinney Jones (37% 3P%) Coach Jim Larranaga can't go wrong with either guy. Brown averaged 14.7 ppg over the last 4 games of the season, when things seemed to click for him. McKinney Jones, who is a versatile performer, will look to slash more this season. 2012-13 will also mark the debut of redshirt freshman Bishop Daniels. For a preview at what kind of a player Daniels is, see below:

#4 Wake Forest.

6'3 senior C.J. Harris is one of the better overall returning players in the ACC. Last season Harris averaged 16.7 points, 3.1 rebounds, 2.5 assists per game, and shot 42% on 3P%. Harris was also typically the premier performer in Deamon Deacon victories (WF was 8-3 in games where Harris scored 20 or more). For Wake to make a run at the upper half of the ACC, Harris will need to continue his superb play. This season he could get some help at the 2 from 6'6 205 freshman Arnaud Adala Moto, who is a very physical player.

#5 NC State.

The graduation of CJ Williams would be seen as a big loss, had NC State not gone out a signed 6'4 freshman sensation Rodney Purvis. Purvis, who's style is reminiscent of a young Dwayne Wade, has a sick cross and already has NBA talent as a finisher. If Purvis acclimates to the college game quickly, the Wolfpack may easily have the best SG in the conference by season's end. Good thing for NC State the young man is special, as there are no veteran options behind him at SG. Here's a little taste of what he can do:

#6 Virginia.

Joe Harris played nearly half the season with a broken left hand, and still averaged 11.3 ppg and shot 38 percent from downtown. The 6'6 junior should be healthy, and team up nicely with 6'5 sophomore Malcolm Brogdon (6.7 points, 2.8 rebounds, and 1.4 assists). With the graduation of Mike Scott, Harris and Brogdon will need to step up their scoring. Fortunately for the Hoos, both seem more than capable. Freshman Taylor Barnette could also get a look a SG.

#7 North Carolina.

It seems almost sacrilegious to rate the Tar Heels this low at any position. But with Leslie McDonald (missed all of 2011) and Dexter Strickland (7.5 ppg in 19 contests) coming off injuries, SG is a question mark by UNC standards. There is, however, depth. 6'7 Junior Reggie Bullock stepped into the void last season and averaged 8.8 points and shot 38% from deep. PJ Hairston is another big guard (6'6) who while not a great shooter or scorer, can provide quality minutes. With so much talent surrounding them, UNC SGs won't be asked to continue in the traditions of Michael Jordan and Jerry Stackhouse in 2012-13.

#8 Maryland.

Nick Faust was a bit of an enigma for the Terps last season. The ultra talented sophomore averaged only 8.9 points a game in his freshman campaign. He also only managed to shoot 37% from

the floor and 32% from downtown. He appeared to catch on late in the season, scoring in double figures in his last five games. Maryland will need more of that kind of production from Faust. The team caught a bad break when Sam Cassell Jr. was ruled ineligible by the NCAA. Two big question marks in freshman Seth Allen and transfer Logan Aronhalt (if healthy) will be counted on for depth.

#9 Georgia Tech.

Veteran Brandon Reed (7.5 ppg last season) returns, and should get the nod to start initially. But if 6'4 Kentucky transfer Stacy Poole Jr. provides the explosiveness the Yellow Jackets have been missing in recent years, he may end up being the guy. Poole Jr. plays with a high motor, and maybe a needed spark for GT, who come off an awful 2012. Freshmen Marcus Hunt and Chris Bolden (a one time UM commitment) could also contribute immediately.

#10 Boston College.

Both 6'3 Lonnie Jackson (8.3 ppg 39% 3P%) and 6'5 Patrick Heckmann (8.3 ppg 35% 3P%) showed the ability to score. Neither really stood out enough to climb higher on this list. BC does have some good, developing front court players, and perhaps Jackson or Heckmann will get enough open looks in 2012-13 to establish themselves. Incoming freshman Joe Rahon may get a chance to play both guard spots, and provides depth.

#11 Virginia Tech.

Erick Green is the kind of point guard, who almost makes having a big time shooting guard unnecessary. Nonetheless the Hokies hope that 6'5 Robert Brown (6.8 ppg last year) takes some of the pressure off Green. Green and Brown will have to carry the load, as depth is a serious concern for VT at the guard spots.

#12 Clemson.

A huge improvement from 6'2 sophomore T.J. Sapp (3.6 ppg last season) would be monumental for the Tigers. Next in line would be another sophomore in Devin Coleman, who also had a very nondescript freshman season. It could be a long season in Death Valley.

Projected ALL ACC SGs:

1st Team: Michael Snaer, FSU.
2nd Team: C.J. Harris, Wake.
3rd Team: Durand Scott, Miami.

Best of the Rest:

Best Shooter: Seth Curry, Duke.
Best Pure Scorer: Rodney Purvis, NC State.
Best Freshman: Rodney Purvis, NC State.
Best Defender: Michael Snaer, FSU.

And with that, we conclude our look at the position of shooting guard in the ACC this season. Keep a look out for our next installment in the series, when we break down small forwards/wing players in the ACC in the upcoming days.

Countdown: ACC Point Guard Rankings

State of the U
Jerry Steinberg
Sept. 24, 2012

Basketball season is still 6 weeks away, but for Miami hoops fans the anticipation is beginning to boil over. Today we begin the countdown to basketball season with an analysis of the point guard position in the ACC for 2012-13. The 'Canes return sophomore Shane Larkin, coming off of a very promising freshman year. And while senior Durand Scott will play more off the ball as a result of Larkin's emergence, Scott is an experienced play-maker who can take reigns when needed. Around the league there will be plenty of challenges for Larkin and Scott. While the premier abilities of Kendall Marshall were lost to the NBA., the league boasts 4 of the top 20 incoming freshman point guards in the nation. Also returning is NC State do it all point guard Lorenzo Brown.

With out further delay here are my ACC team point guard rankings for 2012-13:

#1 NC State.

If Kendall Marshall was the consensus top PG in the league last season, then Lorenzo Brown was clearly 1A. Brown averaged 12.7 points, 4.5 rebounds, 6.3 assists and 1.8 steals last season. Brown has the explosiveness that reminds some of Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook, along with the floor game that reminds others of Boston Celtics star Rajon Rondo. The 6'5 junior will surely have NBA suitors whenever he decides to declare, but for now his mission will be running the show in Raleigh for one of the best teams in the nation. When Brown needs a breather the Wolfpack will count on true freshman Tyler Lewis. Lewis is a heady pass first PG (ranked as high as the # 6 PG nationally coming out of high school), who will need time to develop physically in order to endure the rigors of ACC play. But for 2012-13 he will simply need to use his time on the floor find NC State's many talented finishers.

#2 Miami.

If all goes according to plan, Larkin will break out and establish himself as one of the best players in the conference this year. The son of baseball hall of fame shortstop Barry Larkin averaged 7.4 points, 2.5 rebounds, 2.5 assists, and 1.6 steals last season. In addition to playing some of his best basketball at the end of the season, Larkin also proved to a clutch performer. Larkin topped Miami, shooting 86% from the line in his first season in Coral Gables. Perhaps most impressive is Larkin's tenacious style on defense. You would be hard pressed to find a faster PG anywhere in the country. Miami also has the luxury of sliding Durand Scott to the point when Larkin needs a breather. Scott has been one of the best penetrating guards in the conference for 3 years now, and is coming off of a season in which he averaged a 12.9 points, 5.4 rebounds, and 3.1 assists. In addition the 'Canes can also count on 6'6 senior Garrius Adams to handle the point on occasion. Overall, Coach Jim Larranaga has tremendous depth at the point, but Larkin will be the key.

#3 North Carolina.

While it will be near impossible to replace Kendall Marshall's 9.8 assists per game, no one should feel sorry for UNC. Enter true freshman Marcus Paige (ranked as high as the # 4 PG nationally coming out of high school), a 6'0 Damon Stoudamire look-alike who brings supreme confidence and a sweet left-handed stroke to Chapel Hill. Here's a glimpse of what the young man can do:

#4 Wake Forest.

Like North Carolina, the Deamon Deacs will be counting on a first year player in Codi Miller-McIntyre to run the show in 2012-13. Miller-McIntyre (rated as high as the #9 PG nationally coming out of high school), is a wiry strong 6'2 point, who is an excellent finisher at the rim. While he may need some time to develop before bringing back memories of former Wake great Chris Paul, the 6'2 Miller-McIntyre should be one of the better true point guards in the conference this season. Backing him up will be 6'3 sophomore Chase Fischer. Fischer lacks the ideal floor game of a premier point, but is an improving shooter who can knock down shots from long range.

5 FSU.

The defending ACC Tournament Champs will count on Ian Miller (10.3 points, 1.3 assists last season) to run the show this season. Miller's raw athleticism and superior range has caught the eye of NBA scouts. With the graduation of Luke Loucks, the 6'3 Miller will need step up his floor game for the Seminoles to repeat last season's success. Word around Tallahassee is that freshman Devon Bookert from Alaska, has impressed Coach Leonard Hamilton and could handle some of the point responsibilities immediately. Sophomore Terry Whisnaut II adds depth.

#6 Duke.

It will be interesting to see who emerges between Quinn Cook and Tyler Thornton as the starting PG for the Dukies. Cook's freshman year was a wash, after arriving in Durham as a highly touted recruit. Expect a significant improvement this year (4.4 points 1.9 assists last season). Thornton is more of a defensive specialist, but can give Coach K solid minutes should Cook struggle. If both fail, the Blue Devils can hand the ball to explosive scoring guard Seth Curry. For Duke to achieve their lofty goals, however, they will need Cook to emerge and Curry to continue doing what he does best: catch and shoot.

#7 Virginia.

Jontel Evans is one of the more underrated players in the conference. And while not having Mike Scott around will make it harder to duplicate the 3.9 assists he averaged last year, Evans should improve on the 7.3 points per game he averaged. Under Coach Tony Bennett the 'Hoos focal point is always defense first, and Evans is no exception. There may not be a tougher point guard in the conference. Evans can be counted on for 30+ minutes every night, but should he need a rest look for 6'5 sophomore shooting guard Malcolm Brogdon to run the point. Brogdon appears more

then capable of playing either back court spot with skill.

8 Virginia Tech.

VT will need a little bit of everything from senior Erick Green in order to be successful this season. Fortunately for the Hokies, Green is a clutch performer who can both score and distribute. Last season Green averaged 15.6 points, 3.3 rebounds, and 2.8 assists. Marquis Rankin and Robert Brown add depth, but Va Tech will go only as far as Green can take them.

#9 Georgia Tech.

Mfon Udofia was a solid performer last season for the Yellow Jackets. A bit of a streak shooter, Udofia averaged 9.9 points, 3.4 rebounds, and 2.8 assists last year. Udofia will need to shoot less and look to get others involved more often in his senior season. GT should have more talent around Udofia this season, which could help his assist totals. Sophomore Brandon Reed and Corey Heyward would appear to be the frontrunners to back Udofia up.

#10 Maryland.

It is hard to evaluate the performance of the Terrapins point guards last season considering Terrell Stoglin was such a dominant figure with the ball. Junior Pe'Shon Howard missed time with an injury, but was solid averaging 6.5 points, 3.7 rebounds, and 3.7 assists in 14 games. Shooting guard Nick Faust may get some time at the point when Howard needs a rest. Senior Logan Aronhalt and freshman Seth Allen will also vie for time.

#11 Boston College.

Jordan Daniels had an up and down freshman year (6.4 points 2.6 assists) at the point for the Eagles. BC is a very young team, and Daniels' development will be a key in their growth. Two three-star freshman in Joe Rahon and Oliver Hanlan could push Daniels, should he struggle.

#12 Clemson.

The departures of Andre Young and Tanner Smith leaves a big void in the back court for the Tigers. Rod Hall will get the first crack at running the team, but freshman Adonis Filer and Jordan Roper could push for immediate PT. This looks to be a rebuilding year in Death Valley.

Projected ALL ACC PGs:

1st team: Lorenzo Brown NC State,
2nd team: Ian Miller FSU,
3rd team: Shane Larkin UM.

Best of the Rest:

Best Scorer: Erick Green Virginia Tech.
Best Defender: Shane Larkin UM or Jontel Evans Virginia.
Best Freshman: Marcus Paige UNC.
Best Passer: Lorenzo Brown NC State.

And with that we conclude our look at the position of point guard in the ACC this season. Keep a look out for our next installment in the series, when we break down shooting/scoring guards in the ACC in the upcoming days.

Celtics make Jay Larranaga hire official

Boston.com

Gary Dzen

Sept. 19, 2012

The Celtics announced today that they have officially added Jay Larranaga to their coaching staff as an assistant coach. Larranaga comes from the Erie BayHawks of the NBA Development League. The 37-year-old Larranaga is the son of Jim Larranaga, head men's basketball coach at the University of Miami.

Top 10 Reasons Miami can win the ACC this season!

State of the U
Jerry Steinberg
Sept. 11, 2012

Yes we know, despite the awful loss this past weekend there's no need to panic, and football is still king. But just in case you wanted to take a break from the gridiron, we are here to tell you Miami's basketball team has a chance to be special this year. With out further delay, here are our top 10 reasons the 'Canes can win the ACC this season:

1) Reggie Johnson is healthy. With the exception of monster performances against FAU (15 points, 9 rebounds, 5 assists, and 5 blocks) and his super duper Super Bowl Sunday destruction of Duke (27 & 12), Reggie was not himself last season. Word around the program is, "heeeeeee's back!!!!" If the 6'10 300 pound Johnson is at 100% he is a match-up nightmare for every big man in the country.

2) The Progression of Shane Larkin. The son of hall-of-fame baseball player Barry Larkin, averaged 7.4 ppg 2.5 rpg 2.5 apg and 1.6 stls last season.. Larkin may already be one of the quickest players in the country and played exceptionally well at the end of the season. If his floor game improves he could become a superstar.

3) Kenny Kadji is the most versatile big man in the ACC. Over a 5 game stretch last season, Kenny Kadji averaged 17.5 ppg 8.1 rpg 2.0 blcks and knocked down 8-16 from long-range. If Kadji can bring that kind of effort consistently and improve his rebounding, Miami will be very difficult to beat.

4) Julian Gamble is back. The 6th year senior was granted medical hardship by the NCAA, and while his numbers will never wow you, his grit and leadership is invaluable. Gamble gives Coach Larranaga much needed depth at the 4 and 5 spots as well.

5) Rion Brown is ready to break out. While he averaged only 6.9 ppg last season, expect more from Brown this year. Brown averaged 14.7 ppg over the last 4 games of the season, when things seemed to click for him. Along with the prettiest stroke on the team, Brown showed off explosive athleticism in 11-12. Expect his star to rise with the graduation of Malcolm Grant opening up minutes next season.

6) Trey McKinney Jones is underrated. McKinney Jones averaged 7 ppg 3.5 rpg and shot 37.5 % from downtown last season. TMJ hit several clutch shots through out the year and at times was Miami's most consistent player.

7) Miami is due for some breaks. Untimely injuries, back breaking suspensions, and poorly officiated games all hurt the 'Canes last season, and they still finished 9-7 in the ACC. Minus all the distractions and bad luck, the sky is the limit for this squad.

8) Alex Oriakhi transfers to Missouri. When Oriakhi announced he was transferring from UConn, the ACC big boys (NC State, UNC, and Duke) were all salivating at the possibility of landing the big man on campus. Old friend Frank Haith, however, does UM a solid and gives Kadji/Johnson one less big body to contend with.

9) Duke, FSU, and North Carolina all lost key performers. Say goodbye to Austin Rivers, Bernard James, and Kendall Marshall. Yes we know Seth Curry, Michael Snaer, and James Michael McAdoo return But Miami hung in tough with these teams last year, and the 'Canes return nearly everyone.

10) Pack the BUC!!!! Historically attendance at the Bank United Center has been anything but impressive. But expect that to change. First, the team is going to be VERY good. Second, coming off the championship that Lebron James and the Heat delivered, South Floridians will catch basketball fever. Finally Charlie,

Josh, and I will not rest until it becomes so!!

And with that, we return you to your regularly scheduled programming.

Let's go 'Canes!!!

Rothstein Files: ACC Offseason Notebook

CBS New York
By Jon Rothstein
Sept. 4, 2012

FIVE QUESTIONS ENTERING THE ACC

1. WILL NC STATE LIVE UP TO THE HYPE?

2. WHY DOESN'T MIAMI GET MORE RESPECT?

I really have no idea. The Hurricanes return the majority of pieces from last year's team that was terrific at times during the second half of the season when they were finally healthy. Burly big man Reggie Johnson is finally close to 100% and should form potentially the best power forward-center combo in the ACC with Kenny Kadji. Sophomore floor general Shane Larkin looks primed for a breakout season and Durand Scott is one of the better off guards in the conference. If Jim Larranaga catches a break and avoids any major injuries, Miami is more than capable of challenging for the ACC title. Seriously.

3. WHAT WILL DUKE LOOK LIKE WITHOUT AUSTIN RIVERS?

4. CAN MARCUS PAIGE RUN THE SHOW FOR NORTH CAROLINA?

5. WHO IS THE SLEEPER?

Dare we say Florida State

ACC PRESEASON POWER RANKINGS

1. NC STATE

THE SKINNY: Mark Gottfried returns four starters from last year's squad that reached the Sweet 16.

2. NORTH CAROLINA

THE SKINNY: Freshman point guard Marcus Paige could be another Damon Stoudamire.

3. MIAMI

THE SKINNY: The Hurricanes could win the conference if they stay healthy.

4. DUKE

THE SKINNY: Blue Devils will be more balanced post Austin Rivers.

5. FLORIDA STATE

THE SKINNY: Leonard Hamilton absolutely loves his freshman class.

6. MARYLAND

THE SKINNY: Mark Turgeon should have better chemistry during his second season in College Park.

7. VIRGINIA

THE SKINNY: The Mike Scott era is officially over in Charlottesville.

8. GEORGIA TECH

THE SKINNY: The Yellow Jackets bring back five starters and add a stud in freshman power forward Robert Carter.

9. CLEMSON

THE SKINNY: Backcourt inexperience is a major concern for the Tigers.

10. VIRGINIA TECH

THE SKINNY: James Johnson will have to do more with less.

11. WAKE FOREST

THE SKINNY: Jeff Bzdelik needs instant contributions from first-year PG Codi Miller-McIntyre.

12. BOSTON COLLEGE

THE SKINNY: The rebuilding process continues for Steve Donahue.

ACC PRESEASON FIRST TEAM

Lorenzo Brown, NC State

Seth Curry, Duke

C.J. Leslie, NC State

James Michael McAdoo, UNC

Reggie Johnson, Miami

ACC PRESEASON PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Michael Snaer, Florida State

TEN THAT HAVE WAITED AND WILL MAKE A MAJOR IMPACT

1. Kiel Turpin, Florida State (red shirt)

2. Terrance Shannon, Florida State (injury)

3. Robert Gilchrist, Florida State (JUCO)

4. Aaron Thomas, Florida State (prep school)

5. Alex Murphy, Duke (red shirt)

6. Marshall Plumlee, Duke (red shirt)

7. Jordan Vandenberg, NC State (red shirt)

8. Julian Gamble, Miami (injury)

9. Bishop Daniels, Miami (red shirt)

10. Pe'Shon Howard, Maryland (injury)

TEN BREAKOUT PLAYERS

1. James Michael McAdoo, UNC

2. P.J. Hairston, UNC

3. Okaro White, Florida State

4. Shane Larkin, Miami

5. Rion Brown, Miami

6. Nick Faust, Maryland

7. Alex Len, Maryland

8. Akil Mitchell, Virginia

9. Jarell Eddie, Virginia Tech

10. Milton Jennings, Clemson

TEN IMPACT FRESHMEN

1. Rasheed Sulaimon, Duke

2. Amile Jefferson, Duke

3. Marcus Paige, UNC

4. Rodney Purvis, NC State

5. T.J. Warren, NC State

6. Tyler Lewis, NC State

7. Shaquille Cleare, Maryland

8. Robert Carter, Georgia Tech

9. Montay Brandon, Florida State

10. Aaron Thomas, Florida State

FIVE UNDER-THE-RADAR FRESHMEN

1. Mike Tobey, Virginia

2. Jake Layman, Maryland

3. Charles Mitchell, Maryland

4. Jaron Blossomgame, Clemson

5. Tonye Jekiri, Miami

Bracket reveal: Diamond Head Classic

ESPN.com

Eamonn Brennan

July 26, 2012

Tournament bracket for the Diamond Head Classic

When and where: Dec. 22-23, 25 at the Stan Sheriff Center in Honolulu, Hawaii

Initial thoughts: San Diego State and Arizona are the main attractions, and rightfully so -- UA is a potential top-10 team, while SDSU has blossomed into a perennial NCAA tournament program in Steve Fisher's recent rebuild. That said, don't sleep on Miami. If they stay healthy, the Hurricanes have bodies big enough to trouble anyone. San Francisco lost nine -- yes, nine -- players this offseason, six of whom transferred out of the program in rather unexpected fashion. In other words, at least the Dons get to go to Hawaii this year. Silver linings and all that.

Matchup I can't wait to see: To be perfectly frank, I'm not sure I can get too worked up about any of those first-round matchups, although the hometown Warriors hosting an ACC school should make for a fun atmosphere. If the Hurricanes survive that, their matchup with Arizona would be a quality marker for both teams as they prepare for conference play.

Potential matchup I'd like to see: San Diego State vs. Arizona. Two top programs in the West slugging it out on Christmas night? Yes please. The way-too-early edge probably goes to the Wildcats, given all the talent in Sean Miller's 2012 recruiting class, but an experienced, physical Aztecs team should be up to the challenge.

Five players to watch

Jamaal Franklin, San Diego State: A multitalented swingman, Franklin had a very good sophomore season, but he still has plenty to

improve, particularly his outside shooting. If he branches his game out further away from the rim, he could be a nigh-unstoppable force in the Mountain West this season.

Grant Jerrett, Arizona: How good is Miller's 2012 class? Top-five prospect Kaleb Tarczewski is only barely its highest-ranked member. Jerrett comes in at No. 9 in the ESPN 100 (and fellow power forward Brandon Ashley ranks No. 16), and his scouting report says he's improving at "an alarming rate." By the time December rolls around, Arizona's young frontcourt might just be the best in the country.

Durand Scott, Miami: Scott will be the lead guard for a Miami team with a very clear goal -- a trip to the NCAA tournament -- in Jim Larranaga's second season. With Malcolm Grant departed, Scott will need to do even more to lead a brutish frontcourt duo of Kenny Kadji and Reggie Johnson.

Chase Tapley, San Diego State: The SDSU senior is one of the few remnants from 2011's dream 34-3 season, and he had a chance to step into a starring role last year. In addition to shooting 43 percent from 3, Tapley was also his team's best perimeter defender.

Kaleb Tarczewski, Arizona: The No. 4-ranked player in the class of 2012 is the centerpiece -- literally and figuratively -- of Miller's very impressive recruiting work since his arrival in Tucson. Tarczewski could be this season's Cody Zeller, an intuitively talented big man who is far from the complete package, but is good enough to lead his vaunted program back to national relevance once again.

Title-game prediction

Arizona over San Diego State: If this game were earlier in the season, when Arizona's coterie of freshman were still finding their sea legs, I'd probably give the edge to SDSU. But come Christmastime Arizona will have had nearly two months to build around that

star-studded freshman class, and their sheer talent wins out.

Who others are picking:

Andy Katz: Arizona over San Diego State

Jason King: Arizona over San Diego State

Myron Medcalf: Arizona over San Diego State

Dana O'Neil: Arizona over San Diego State

Larranga's preparedness, motivation could lift Canes

The Miami Hurricane

Patrick Riley

July 17, 2012

He quotes Albert Schweitzer, reads books about everything from management to self-help and was drafted by the Detroit Pistons in the sixth round of the 1971 NBA draft.

But Jim Larranaga, head coach of the men's basketball team at the University of Miami, is best known for something completely different.

"Well, first thing I thought about was the Final Four run," said shooting guard Rion Brown of his first thought of Larranaga.

However, while his famous run with George Mason in 2006 certainly catapulted "Coach L" into the national spotlight, it was 20 years earlier that his success story started as head coach at Bowling Green.

"They had had four straight losing seasons," the Bronx native said. "My first year they were picked to finish last in the league and we were able to go from being picked last to finishing tied for second."

After 11 seasons with Bowling Green, which included three NIT appearances, opportunity came knocking again when Richmond, James Madison and George Mason were all looking for new head coaches.

"I inquired with all three schools and only George Mason returned my call," Larranaga said. "When I got the job they had had seven straight losing seasons from 1991 to 1997. I think four of those seasons they finished last, so they happened to be looking for someone who had already built a program."

It soon became clear that Larranaga was just the man for the job.

During his 14-year tenure with George Mason, he transformed the Patriots into the winningest program in Colonial Athletic Association history and became the most successful coach in the history

of the conference. His unprecedented accomplishments culminated in the much-talked about Final Four run.

To get there, he had to first employ a quote from one of his favorite books: "Get the right people on the bus and then decide where you're going."

"When we first arrived ... we told everybody we were going to recruit locally and they said, 'Well, you'll never win, because Georgetown, Maryland and George Washington will get all the best players and you'll stink.' But on our Final Four team ... the five starters were all from within an hour and a half from campus," Larranaga said.

It was also during his time with the Patriots that Larranaga introduced the country to his motivational skills and powerful pregame speeches, like when he told his team before facing UConn in the Regional Finals in 2006 that the CAA stood for Connecticut Assassins Association.

The famous pregame talk was developed the morning of the game, when Larranaga read an article that made it very clear that the Connecticut players knew little about his team.

"They didn't know anything about George Mason," the triumphant coach said. "They were asked who the coach was, they said, 'I have no idea.' They asked what league we were in, one of them said, 'They're in the Missouri Valley.' And the other guy said, 'No, they're in the Patriot League.' So in formulating my thoughts going into the pregame I structured it so that our players understood that they don't know anything about us, we know everything about them. We're better prepared to win this game."

Larranaga's pregame speeches are often not quite so spontaneous, but rather meticulously conceived much earlier.

"I normally start writing my pregame talks in July ... I have thoughts about what a game might be like so I might use a quote, I might use one word, I might use a story to share with the team to put them in the ... best mental frame of mind to play."

His love for reading and broad arsenal of motivational quotes often aid Larranaga in instilling such

a frame of mind in his players.

"One of my favorite books is called 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.' So there are stories there that I always share with the team," he said. "They always have a moral; there is always a point. Some nights it'll be a quote. It might be by Albert Schweitzer, who once wrote, 'Success is not the key to happiness, happiness is the key to success.'"

But even though success has been following him wherever he goes, Larranaga has never lost sight of his main motivation.

"Everything he does, he does for the players," said Miami assistant coach Chris Caputo, entering his 10th season at Larranaga's side. "He always has their best interests at heart."

Larranaga did exactly that with Jai Lewis, a talented player who came to George Mason with one problem: He was 300 pounds.

"A lot of coaches would have just said: 'Hey, you need to go run on the treadmill, you need to go run on the track, we're going to make you lose 50 pounds.'"

Not Larranaga.

He saw Lewis' potential and knew he had to be much more subtle in his approach. So Larranaga told Lewis, who planned on playing football after college, that he would send out letters to every NFL team and tell them about him, but that he had to be in good shape.

Instead of demeaning him for what he wasn't, he tried to enhance what he was. Lewis grew into George Mason's leading scorer and rebounder when the team made its improbable run to the Final Four.

At Miami, Larranaga is looking to do many of the same things that have brought him so much success in the past, and his goals are as ambitious as ever: to be mentioned in the same vein as Duke and UNC.

If history has taught us anything, that goal is not out of Larranaga's reach.

Kadji proves his worth after long journey

The Miami Hurricane
July 17, 2012
David Furones

With his first season wrapped up, Kenny Kadji had consistently proven to coach Jim Larranaga that he can be one of Miami's most productive and dependable weapons.

Kadji, the 6-foot-11-inch forward/center who sat out his first season at Miami after transferring from Florida, finished second on the team with 11.7 points per game and led the team with 170 total rebounds and 51 blocks.

Kadji believes Larranaga has put him in the best position to display his skill set.

"I can go inside and play, I can come out, catch and shoot, and I'm okay putting the ball on the ground," Kadji said. "I think I'm a pretty all-around player."

Since frontcourt mate Reggie Johnson returned to the lineup after surgery on his right knee, Kadji has improved his play dramatically. He's scored in double figures in eight of his nine games playing alongside Johnson.

"We believe Kenny's benefited the most from Reggie being back," Larranaga said. "Now he gets to play on the perimeter where he feels most comfortable, but he also can go inside and not get double-teamed. He's also being guarded by the second biggest guy and not the biggest guy."

Kadji had a unique journey to get to Coral Gables.

Born in Douala, Cameroon, he moved to France at age 14 and then to the United States at 16. He played high school basketball at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla., before enrolling at the University of Florida.

Kadji first started playing basketball when he was 10 years old in Cameroon with his cousin, Whale.

While soccer is the sport of choice in Cameroon, Kadji said all of his relatives play basketball because of the height that runs in their family.

"It was great growing up in Cameroon. You could just go out, spend time at your neighbor's house," he said. "Miami is probably three times bigger than the city I was living in."

Kadji had no idea he had any potential in basketball until his days in France playing at the same boarding school as the NBA's Mickael Pietrus and Boris Diaw.

Coming out of high school, he was heavily recruited and chose Florida after Billy Donovan had just won back-to-back national championships, but after a freshman season that was cut short due to a herniated disc, Kadji looked to transfer.

He decided to take his talents to Coral Gables.

"I just wanted a new start," he said. "Miami was recruiting me out of high school. It was in-state and my parents didn't want me to go out of state. I thought we could have a great team."

Having now played under Larranaga, Donovan and Frank Haith in his college career, Kadji insists Larranaga is the best coach of the three.

"He's the best because he takes every player differently," Kadji said. "Coach L will look at your character, how you respond to things, and adjust. I think that's the best way you can do it."

Kadji is currently listed as a sophomore and may apply for a sixth year of eligibility during his senior year in similar fashion to Adrian Thomas two years ago.

ACC's most important players

ESPN.com
Robbi Pickeral
July 16, 2012

Boston College: Ryan Anderson

The forward was a unanimous All-ACC rookie selection last season after leading his team with 11.2 points and 7.4 rebounds. But the freshmen-laden Eagles averaged only 59.1 points and 40.8 percent shooting. So as Anderson's numbers build, so perhaps will BC's.

Clemson: Milton Jennings

Remember when the senior forward was touted as the first McDonald's All-American signed by the Tigers since 1991? With Andre Young and Tanner Smith having graduated, Clemson needs Jennings to finally live up to that potential. Last season, he served two suspensions and averaged 9.7 points and 5.6 rebounds.

Duke: Seth Curry

Austin Rivers was Duke's go-to guy last season, but his early departure makes Curry, a senior, Duke's leading returning scorer (13.2 ppg). Coach Mike Krzyzewski has said he wants Curry to be able to concentrate more on scoring this season, and it helps that he won't be asked to play point guard, like last season.

Florida State: Michael Snaer

The 6-foot-5 senior isn't just key because he's the team's leading scorer (14 ppg), but because he's the Seminoles' leader, period. His two ACC game winners gave the Seminoles a fearless attitude last season that should carry over to this season, too, even with so many of last season's players gone.

Georgia Tech: Mfon Udofia

No returning Yellow Jackets averaged double figures last season, but the closest is Udofia (9.9 ppg at point guard). His senior leadership will be as important as his stats, as Tech will continue to try to rebuild after an 11-win season. Perhaps making things a bit easier for

the young team: Udofia and the Jackets will open at their new arena, McCamish Pavilion, in November.

Maryland: Nick Faust

With last season's ACC leading scorer, Terrell Stoglin, gone, Maryland needs some offense, and this sophomore looks like a good candidate. Although the guard averaged 8.9 points last season (third on the team), that jumped to 13.4 over his last nine games. And the Terps would like to see it jump even more.

Miami: Reggie Johnson

At 6-10 and 284 pounds, this senior is an exhausting load for most big men to contend with. With veterans Kenny Kadji and Durand Scott also back, expect second-year coach Jim Larranaga to try to get more of everything out of Johnson (10 points, 7.2 rebounds), who got a late start last season after knee surgery.

North Carolina: James Michael McAdoo

Questions linger about who's going to get the sophomore forward the ball (Will Dexter Strickland be healthy? Will Marcus Paige be ready?), but with little experience in the frontcourt, McAdoo is going to be counted on to be UNC's go-to big guy. He came on strong at the end of the last season, averaging 10.6 points and 4.8 rebounds over his last seven games.

NC State: C.J. Leslie

The 6-8 forward averaged a team-best 14.7 points, plus 7.3 rebounds last season and helped the Wolfpack to a late surge that pushed them to their first NCAA berth since 2006. State isn't very deep in the frontcourt, so his decision to return bolstered the Wolfpack as a top-10 favorite.

Virginia: Jontel Evans

It's going to be difficult for the Cavs to replace forward Mike Scott's offense, but Evans, a senior guard, returns with defensive intensity and consistency. Last season, Evans became

the first Cavalier since 2001 to be named to the ACC's All-Defensive team, and coach Tony Bennett will expect him to set the stick-to-itive tone, again.

Virginia Tech: Erick Green

New head coach James Johnson is expecting the senior to lead the Hokies on and off the court, and to that end, Green attended Chris Paul's CP3 Elite Guard Camp and the Deron Williams Skills Academy this summer. The second-team All-ACC selection averaged 15.6 points last season, and his consistency will be key to a team that features a single-digit number of scholarship players.

Wake Forest: Codi Miller-McIntyre

After the transfer of Tony Chennault, the freshman point guard will likely have to play 30-plus minutes from the get-go. How well, often and consistently he can get the ball to veterans C.J. Harris and Travis McKie will impact how much the Deacons improve on last season's 13-18 finish.

Johnson: ACC Title or Bust

InsideTheU
Chris Stock
June 30, 2012

Miami Hurricanes senior center Reggie Johnson has high hopes for the 2012-13 season.

After a 20-13 finish last season and failing to make the NCAA tournament for the fourth straight year, Johnson is excited about this year's team under second-year head coach Jim Larranaga.

"It's ACC championship or nothing for us," Johnson said. "If we don't win it, I'll be disappointed. I don't what people say or if it's a long shot. I know what kind of guys we have. Hopefully we can win the ACC championship and make a good run in the NCAA tournament and win that too."

Last year, Johnson entered his name into the NBA Draft before returning for his junior campaign. After this season he didn't contemplate leaving early.

"Because I knew what type of team we could have," he said. "I think we have a top three team in the ACC and a top 25 team to begin the season. We still have to go on the court and prove it, but everyone is working hard."

In addition to Johnson, who has averaged 9.5 points and 7.3 rebounds in 91 games at UM, the Hurricanes return their top two scorers in Durand Scot and Kenny Kadji as well as Shane Larkin, Rion Brown, Trey McKinney-Jones, Garrius Adams, and Julian Gamble.

Johnson averaged 10.0 points, a team-high 7.2 rebounds, and shot 49.2 percent in 23 games, making 22 starts as he dealt with recovering from offseason knee surgery, which he had one year ago to the day.

"Looking back I wasn't healthy, but right now I feel like I'm back to myself," Johnson said.

"I'm able to do the things I'm used to doing and I'm playing above the rim right now. They said it would take six months to get back on the court, but it really takes about a year to be all the way back."

Johnson recently participated in the Amar'e Stoudemire Skills Academy at the Attack Athletics facility in Chicago, Ill. June 21-23. He checked in at 6-foot-9 and 329 pounds with a 7-1.5-inch wingspan.

"Everything went good," Johnson said. "I learned a lot from Amar'e and I got good feedback from the coaches. They told me to keep doing what I was doing. They loved everything about my hands and feet, and hopefully I'll get an invite to the LeBron James Skills Academy."

He was one of 14 big men who participated in the event. Other ACC participants included Duke's Ryan Kelly and Mason Plumlee, and N.C. State's CJ Leslie. North Texas' Tony Mitchell, Kansas' Jeff Withey, Colorado's Andre Roberson, and Ohio State's Deshaun Thomas also participated.

Since returning from Chicago, Johnson has resumed his offseason workouts with the team.

"Workouts are going good," Johnson said. "Everyone is putting in work together in hot Miami."

While he's excited about a number of his teammates, he believes Brown will be one that will step up this season.

"Anytime I kick it out to him I know it's a guaranteed bucket," Johnson said. "I think me and Rion's camaraderie has grown. I know what he likes to do."

Having shooters around Johnson is something he enjoys as a good passer out of the post.

"I've got a lot of weapons," he said. "That's what's excited about this season. I know teams are going to focus on me, but it's going to be hard for teams to double-down and if they don't I'll take my chances with anyone in the country one-on-one."

Incoming freshman Tonye Jekiri, a 6-foot-11 center, has been working out with the team and has been impressive.

"He's a deer," Johnson said. "He runs the court like a deer and finishes well. He's a freshman so he makes mistakes, but he rebounds and plays defense. I'm looking forward to playing with him."

The 2012-13 schedule has not been announced yet, but Miami will host Michigan State on Nov. 28 as part of the annual ACC-Big Ten Challenge.

"It's going to be a big-time game here in Miami," Johnson said. "Hopefully we get off to a winning start to the season. It's going to be exciting. I want the ACC to get back to winning the challenge. Hopefully we can do our part. It's going to be a big game and that's what college basketball is all about."

The Makings of an Inspirational Coach

The Tablet
By Jim Mancari
May 24, 2012

After a stellar 40-year basketball coaching career for the current University of Miami, Coral Gables, Fla., head basketball coach, Jim Larranaga, it's all coming back to where it started.

The Archbishop Molloy, Briarwood, graduate was inducted May 17 into the CHSAA Hall of Fame at the 27th annual CHSAA Golf Outing and Hall of Fame Dinner at the Brynwood Golf & Country Club in Armonk, N.Y.

Larranaga actually couldn't attend the ceremony, since the 62-year-old coach is recovering from hip replacement surgery that occurred three days before his induction. The other four inductees include Jack Bruen from Power Memorial Academy, Manhattan; Robert Caputo from Iona Prep, New Rochelle; CHSAA official John Hughes; and Bill Stetter from Cardinal Hayes H.S., the Bronx, and Holy Cross H.S., Flushing.

Larranaga prepared an acceptance statement that his high school teammate John Carey and coach Jack Curran read at the dinner. He credits Curran as his inspiration to want to pursue a career in coaching.

"To play for Jack Curran was an honor and a privilege," Larranaga said. "It meant so much to me and had such an impact on my entire life...not just my basketball life, but my entire family and professional life."

From a young age, Larranaga developed a passion for basketball by watching his older brothers, Bob and Greg, play at St. Helena H.S., the Bronx, where the family resided. Jim went to St. Helena Elementary School right in the Bronx, but he received a call one day in the eighth grade from Curran, inviting him to try out for a basketball scholarship with the Stanners.

Curran signed Larranaga, even though the it would mean an hour and a half commute to and from school each day. At first, Larranaga's father was against this decision, but Bob and Greg convinced him that Jim would be playing for the best coach in the city – Curran – and getting a top-notch education at Molloy.

"It was the best decision I could have made," Larranaga said.

Larranaga fondly recalls his memories of Coach Curran and the CHSAA. His freshman and junior varsity teams won the city championship in 1964 and 1965, respectively, but his varsity teams were ousted in the city semifinals the next two years by Rice H.S., Manhattan.

"I think the CHSAA is the best high school basketball league in the country," Larranaga said. "Competing in it as a high school player was a real thrill. We played against great players every day."

Larranaga credits Curran for teaching him "everything" about basketball and life including discipline and an emphasis on the little things, which he now translates to his own players. Curran lives in Rye, N.Y., so he often drove Larranaga home to the Bronx and shared stories that each had a moral.

"I thought he was a great role model, a great teacher and a great mentor to all of his players," Larranaga said. "I knew when I was in high school that I wanted to follow in his footsteps to become the kind of coach he was and to become the kind of leader that he is."

His dream coming out of high school was to play basketball at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass., for Naismith Hall of Fame legend Bob Cousy. Cousy recruited Larranaga but decided the young man was more suited to be a Division II player.

Larranaga instead accepted a scholarship offer to Providence College, Providence, R.I. One of his fondest college basketball memories was when he scored 39 pts. against Cousy's Boston College Eagles. Cousy said to Larranaga after the game that he had made a mistake.

In the sixth round of the 1971 NBA Draft, the Detroit Pistons selected Larranaga, a combo guard/forward. However, Curran had recommended Larranaga for an opening at Davidson College, Davidson, N.C., as an assistant basketball coach. Davidson allowed him to try out for the Pistons, but he did not make the team so instead took the coaching job.

After coaching jobs around country and even the globe, Larranaga settled in as the head coach at George Mason University, Fair-

fax, Va., in 1997. While there, he transformed the program into a perennial Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) contender and had a winning record for 13 consecutive seasons.

His crowning achievement at George Mason came in 2006, when he guided the mid-major program to the Final Four of the NCAA men's basketball "March Madness" tournament. Though the team did not win its own conference title that year, it received an at-large bid to the tournament as a No. 11 seed. Naturally, fans and analysts alike predicted an early exit for the Patriots.

However, the team had returned all five starters from the previous season and bought into Larranaga's philosophy of "attitude, commitment and class."

"Our players, rather than believing the experts, believed in themselves," Larranaga said. "They had a tremendous amount of confidence in their ability."

The team rattled off wins against Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich., Wichita State University, Wichita, Kan., and the basketball powerhouse University of Connecticut, Storrs, Conn., before losing in its Final Four game to the eventual tournament champion University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla. At the time, George Mason was the first mid-major team to reach the Final Four in over a quarter century.

Though he was George Mason's and the CAA's career wins leader (271), Larranaga accepted the head-coaching job at Miami on April 22, 2011. It was a tough decision, but he said one of his lifelong goals was to coach in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC).

"When the opportunity arose, it seemed like the perfect time," he said.

The Hurricanes finished 9-7 in conference play in Larranaga's first year – marking the first time the team has finished with a winning record since joining the ACC.

Looking back at his career, Larranaga will never forget the words instilled in him by Coach Curran: "Practice does not make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect."

Hoops Weight Room Results Are In

CaneSport.com (Rivals)

Matt Shodell

May 16, 2012

The hardest work for the Hurricane men's basketball team began after the season ended March 19.

That's when strength and conditioning coach Jim Krumpos, better known to players as "Killer K," started molding them. Players worked hard over the last two months to get stronger and faster in the weight room located in the depths of the BankUnited Center. And Krumpos came up with an innovative way to get their competitive spirit going around the barbells and sand bags. He drafted two teams that competed against each other in categories ranging from leg press and bench to box jumps and sand bag squats. They competed once a week over a full month, with winning players receiving a T-shirt.

"The winning team is getting a Dri-FIT shirt with an Ibis holding some dumbbells," Krumpos said. "And we're having dinner at coach's house - the winning team gets steaks and the losing team gets hot dogs."

Any other punishment for the losing team?

"No, they just have to hear about it from their teammates," said Krumpos, who was hired last year after Jim Larranaga took over the program.

In the end it was Group B that came out victorious, with team members Durand Scott, Justin Heller, Erik Swoope, Reggie Johnson, Raphael Akpejori and Bishop Daniels. Overall they had a 1,423-1,397 rep advantage and won three out of the four competitions ([FOR FULL INDIVIDUAL RESULTS CLICK HERE](#)).

Results varied from week to week for players, and some numbers were impacted by changing up when events were done - for instance one week the leg press might be the first thing players did when they were fresh, another week it could be the last event after they are exhausted. Some exercises also had more weight added each week.

Asked why he decided to turn workouts into a competition, Krumpos said, "We just wanted

to kind of harness their competitive spirit a little bit more, to work on that. Most of these guys, if you give them a competition it doesn't seem so much like work. They want to get into it."

Krumpos drafted the teams himself.

"You have a point guard on each team, shooting guard on each team, a small forward, power forward, center," Krumpos said.

- The leg press reps were performed at 360 pounds, with Swoope doing the most reps on the team (34). The bench reps were done at 155 pounds for post players and 135 for guards (after the first week, when it was a percentage of each player's body weight); Trey McKinney-Jones and Durand Scott tied for the most reps at 28. Tying for the lead in chin-ups was Shane Larkin and Erik Swoope at 28. The leg curl champion was Julian Gamble at 34 reps (it started at 90 pounds and went up 10 pounds each week). The barbell curl started at 75 pounds and ended at 95 pounds the final week - the champ was Shane Larkin and Reggie Johnson at 36 reps. The incline leader was Scott at 34. The lat pull started at 135 pounds (going up five pounds each week), and the champ was Johnson with 36 reps. The box jump leader was Rion Brown with 42 reps. The seated press started at 65 pounds and went up five pounds per week, and McKinney-Jones did the most reps with 39. The sand bag squat (starting with a 50 pound sandbag in each hand, then one over their shoulders later) winner was Larkin with 49 reps.

"It was about effort every week," Krumpos said. "We've just really tried to work hard, get better in here and work on effort. I have a year under my belt with these guys now, have been able to correct a lot of the imbalances and get a base level of strength. So now we can really start pushing them to another level. They have a good foundation, a good base."

* Due to recovery from injury Bishop Daniels and Garrius Adams did not compete in lower body workouts.

"Bishop had a strained hamstring and Garrius had his knee cleaned up a little bit," Krumpos said.

Krumpos also said that Reggie Johnson is back at 100 percent after knee surgery cost him the start of last season.

Johnson's weight is currently 310 pounds.

"He's lost eight pounds since the season," Krumpos said. "We're looking at (reducing) his body fat. Reggie's leg strength is back; we're continuing to work on his body composition."

"This is the first time he's really been able to do everything since I've been here. (Last year) he was just getting into our stuff and then he got hurt."

Julian Gamble continues to work his way back after missing last year with a knee injury. He is not back at 100 percent yet.

"He's had so many different injuries to the knee - he's still getting back to strength," Krumpos said.

* A focus for Kenny Kadji is "getting him more muscular," Krumpos said. "A goal for us as a team is getting all of our posts up and down the floor better. You look at ACC teams that are good, they have post players that can really get up and down the floor well. Kenny needs that bulking aspect of it, but he also needs his body fat to go down."

* Who made the biggest strides in the weight room since the season ended?

"Shane Larkin, he's just genetically very gifted, is a freak," Krumpos said. "He's made great strides. Raphael has made some great, great improvements. And Kenny Kadji - he's done a great job with his diet, his work ethic."

* Krumpos said nine of the team's 12 players will remain on campus in the first summer session with everyone participating in the second summer session. Krumpos declined to say which players will not be on hand for the first session.

Krumpos said during the second summer session there will be more competition among the team.

"We'll do obstacle course relays, tire flips, all sorts of stuff once a week and continue to develop that competition and the guys grinding with a purpose and a goal," he said.

5 Teams That Will Rise Next Season In College Basketball

CBS Sports.com
By Jon Rothstein

1. IOWA

The Hawkeyes will lose veteran guards Matt Gatens and Bryce Cartwright but Fran McCaffery has this team on the cusp of finishing in the top half of the Big Ten and challenging for a bid to the NCAA Tournament. Iowa will add two quality freshmen that figure to contribute immediately in 6-foot-11 big man Adam Woodbury and crafty floor general Mike Gesell. Ultra skilled combo guard Devyn Marble and bruising forward Aaron White figure to be borderline All-Conference players as juniors while Zach McCabe also adds insurance up front. The X-Factor for McCaffery will be versatile wing Melsahn Basabe, who had a tremendous freshman season but hit a little bit of a wall as a sophomore. Also keep an eye on 6-foot-5 sharpshooter Josh Oglesby, who should get better with experience and added strength.

2. ARKANSAS

Don't be surprised if the Razorbacks finish among the SEC's top four teams. Mike Anderson will welcome back maybe his best all-around player in forward Marshawn Powell, who missed nearly all of last season with an injury. The fastest 40 minutes in basketball should be back in full effect in Anderson's second season in Fayetteville thanks a terrific back court headlined by star guard BJ Young, who should be one of the conference's better players as a sophomore. Joining Young on the perimeter will be guards Mardracus Wade, Rickey Scott, and the always instinctive Rashad "Ky" Madden. Devonta Abron is a quality role player up front and Hunter Mickelson should be one of the more improved players in the SEC.

3. USC

The Trojans may not qualify for the field of 68 but they'll be vastly improved under Kevin O'Neill. Decimated by injuries last season, USC was never a team with a chance — and that will change in 2012-13. High-octane scoring guard Jio Fontan returns from an ACL injury to form a potentially explosive perimeter with Maurice Jones and Wake Forest transfer Ari Stewart, who should add some much needed versatility at 6-foot-7. UC Irvine import Eric Wise is a bruiser at 240 pounds and will have an impact up front along with Aaron Fuller and 7-footer Dewayne Dedmon, two players who both fought injuries at one point or another last season. The top of the PAC-12 looks set with UCLA, Arizona, Washington, and Stanford, but don't be surprised if O'Neill has this group challenging for a spot in the league's top third.

4. ST. JOSEPH'S

Phil Martelli returns every single piece from a group that won 20 games and reached the NIT. With both Temple and Xavier suffering major defections, the Hawks should be in the mix with both Saint Louis and Umass as teams that have the potential to win the Atlantic-10. The triumvirate of Halil Kanacevic, C.J. Aiken, and Ronald Roberts figures to be capable of matching up with any baseline in America and Chris Wilson seems primed to take a major step forward at point guard as a sophomore. Look for Martelli to use a three guard alignment frequently with Wilson running the show and Tay Jones and Langston Galloway on the wings. Hawk Hill got a taste of what this group could do last year in wins over Creighton and Temple and next season they should have a legitimate chance to taste what everyone is really craving — a trip to the NCAA Tournament.

5. MIAMI

Once this team gets healthy, the rest of the ACC should be put on notice. Jim Larranaga's first season with the Hurricanes was spent rarely at full strength — but if that changes in year two, Miami should be a regular installment in the Top 25. Shane Larkin and Durand Scott are two quality breakdown guards and Trey McKinney-Jones is a "swiss army knife" type that can do a little bit of everything. Up front, Kenny Kadji and Reggie Johnson should be one of the better power forward-center combos in the country and Rion Brown is a veteran wing with accurate range from deep. Keep an eye on freshman combo guard Melvin Johnson, an efficient scorer when given extended minutes.

Miami Signee an Impressive Player

InsideTheU
Alex Schwartz
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WESTON, Fla. – There might not be a high-level player in the class of 2012 who is more under the radar than Tonye Jekiri of Champagnat Catholic (FL).

A 6-foot-11, 220-pound center who has signed with the University of Miami, Jekiri has only been in the United States for two years and has not had the exposure that many other top seniors have had.

However, after watching Jekiri play on Friday night it is clear that he deserves to be considered amongst the nation's elite post players.

Although his squad lost 67-59 to the Sage-mont School (FL), Jekiri was by far the best player on the floor.

Jekiri posted an unofficial line of 23 points and 18 rebounds, 10 of which came on the offensive end. In addition, he had 2 blocks, 2 assists, 1 steal, and 5 turnovers. He shot 11/15 (73.3%) from the field and 1/4 at the free throw line.

All five of Jekiri's fouls came in the second half and two of them were on the offensive end, including the final one with 13 seconds left. Those last few ticks joined the final 2.1 seconds of the first half as the only time Jekiri spent on the bench, as he also showed impressive stamina.

"I thought we came to win," Jekiri said after the game of how it went. "We had a lot of things to bring and we brought them all. We had some mistakes and turnovers, we played—I don't think I brought my best game. If I did, I think we go home celebrating. Me and my teammates don't think we played well."

Jekiri and the Lions are in the midst of a superb season, though. Champagnat Catholic head coach Daniel Serrano said that the team is 19-4 and that his star big man is posting 18 points, 12 rebounds and 5 blocks per game.

As aforementioned, Jekiri is only in his second year in the United States. The big man, who is originally from Nigeria, has also only been playing basketball for two years.

"I actually starting play with a coach who saw me and tried working me out," Jekiri said of his introduction to the game. "I was playing a little bit of soccer, then I started playing basketball."

As is the case with many kids who are new to the game, Jekiri can really see himself coming along as a player.

"I see myself developing," Jekiri said. "I see a lot of change every game, need to keep working [and] playing some of the best players in the state like tonight; I had a good matchup, think I learned a lot. My coach, he makes changes to my free throws, my movement in the post."

Asked what he feels the strongest part of his game is, Jekiri actually listed quite a few attributes.

"Right now, defense, rebounding and blocking shots," Jekiri said, adding, "and scoring."

Jekiri is looking forward to quite a few different things about being at the University of Miami next school year.

"My excitement is that I will be working with a great team and I would say a great coach," Jekiri said. "I am excited for the next level, competing against the best in the ACC. I just love Miami because it's a great school in terms of academics and basketball-wise. It's gonna be fun."

If Tonye Jekiri continues to perform at this high of a level, Miami fans may well have just as much watching him play as he will at the school.