

Miami Men's Basketball Clips

2019-20

Don't define Miami's Dejan Vasiljevic as only a 3-point shooter

ESPN
Dan Hajducky
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University of Miami sharpshooter Dejan Vasiljevic has made a life out of redefining himself over and over.

Born in Calgary and Alberta-bound until age 6, Vasiljevic and his family would eventually move to Melbourne, Australia, more than 8,500 miles away -- essentially, the opposite side of the world.

"I'm Canadian," the 6-foot-3 combo guard notes without a trace of Australian accent. "But Australia has been home for most of my life."

The son of semipro Serbian handball players, basketball wasn't a priority in his youth. In fact, sports included pretty much everything but basketball.

"My mom was really into soccer," Vasiljevic says. "So, growing up, I played that and tennis for fun with friends. Cricket, too. I didn't really pick basketball up until I was 12."

That might come as a shock to Canes fans: Vasiljevic is currently third in the ACC in 3-pointers made. He's also ninth in 3-point percentage and seventh in true shooting percentage (minimum 50 3-point attempts). With 172 career treys, he's 10th on Miami's career list.

In Melbourne, when Dejan's father, Todor, saw that his son had a knack for basketball, he wanted to mold his game after the late, great Croatian player Drazen Petrovic, the early European expat who helped pave the way for the truly global modern NBA.

"My dad idolized him," Vasiljevic recalls. "He would cut old black-and-white footage so I could see how passionate he was. He wanted me to play like he did."

"He would point and say, 'That's who you can become.'"

That passion took Vasiljevic to the Australian Institute of Sport, and soon afterward, he blossomed on the under-17, U18 and U19 Australian national teams. In 2014, Vasiljevic was an all-tournament team member at the U-17 FIBA World Championship, leading Australia to a silver medal against a United States squad that included current NBA players Jayson Tatum and Josh Jackson.

Given his pedigree, American colleges came after Vasiljevic in hot pursuit.

"Stanford, Miami, LSU, Louisville, Cal-Berkeley," Vasiljevic says nonchalantly. "Miami was the best opportunity, academically and on the court. The coaches wanted to give me an opportunity, and my family loved Miami, so it seemed like the best fit."

Hurricanes head coach Jim Larrañaga was elated.

"DJ is a tough, hard-nosed defender with a unique set of offensive skills," Larrañaga says. "He's got a high basketball IQ, he [can] fill up the basket from deep and has a great feel for the game."

"[We] like recruiting guys from winning situations. DJ is a great competitor, has proven himself in championships on the international level and he's been a terrific fit in our program."

Vasiljevic had an immediate impact, playing every game as a freshman in 2016-17. He set a Miami rookie record for 3-pointers made despite coming off the bench and playing just 17.5 minutes per game. He was starting by his sophomore season, nearly doubling his rebounding total while becoming one of the ACC's most lethal long-distance men, improving his 3-point field goal percentage from 35 percent to 41 percent.

"The first two years were a learning curve," Vasiljevic admits. "It's insane how quick the game is being played. Here, you're playing against bigger, stronger guys who can pass and move."

"I had to consider that and really work on my defense. I'm never gonna be the quickest guy out there, so I always know where I need to be, in the right position at all times. I scout the other team really well."

Another thing about Vasiljevic: He is meticulous. Ask his roommate.

"DJ is very organized," laughs center Ebuka Izundu, Vasiljevic's roommate for the past two years. Vasiljevic's punctiliousness is a subject of debate between the two. "We're both clean ... but he's very clean."

"He plans ahead, he gets things right," Izundu adds. "He comes an hour before games, gets treatment, shoots for a beat, then [centers] his body."

Vasiljevic's meticulousness manifests itself in a pregame routine that resembles a hardened mine worker rather than that of a 21-year-old college junior.

"DJ lives in the gym," Larrañaga says. "He is

constantly perfecting his shot and works tirelessly to improve all facets of his game."

"On game days, I do things at a certain time," Vasiljevic says. "I always stretch with my strength coach at a certain time, always get taped at a certain time. Then I have little pre-game rituals with the team -- I always follow my schedule the day before and the day of a game, so I know what to do and when to do it."

Outside of team scouting sessions, Vasiljevic comes in for solo video scouting. And that nearly 40 percent career mark from 3-point range? Not an accident.

"And I always have to make 300 shots before a game," Vasiljevic asserts. "Well ... 305, actually ... I always do things in order. Always."

Vasiljevic's diligence is also literally embodied in his physical transformation from his sophomore to junior season.

"DJ got injured last year and worked tirelessly to recover in time for this season," Larrañaga remembers. "He got in the best shape of his career and has the opportunity to leave the University of Miami as one of the top shooters in program history."

Shockingly, it wasn't Vasiljevic who led the metamorphosis.

"All the credit goes to my girlfriend, Gemma," he says.

If that sounds cliché, think again; Gemma St. Louis is a pre-med neuroscience and Spanish major at Miami. She engineered a diet and lifestyle plan -- two meals a day, breakfast and an early dinner, and cut out carbs -- that enabled Vasiljevic to lose 25 pounds, shedding 10 percent body fat, while recovering.

Miami has stumbled a bit since starting ACC play. The Hurricanes are 4-9 from the beginning of December and 9-11 for the season. Come March, Vasiljevic knows he will have a decision to make.

"I graduate in May," he says. "I could come back for my senior year and work on a master's or declare [for the NBA draft]."

"But I'm not worried about that right now. I'm just trying to concentrate on the season. I just try to be efficient and do my job. Do what I can for my teammates and do the little things to help my team win."

For a young man who is the composite of cultures and countries on opposite sides of the planet, Vasiljevic has no qualms about his place in the world.

Whatever It Takes

Christy Cabrera Chirinos
HurricaneSports.com
Sep. 25, 2019

CORAL GABLES, Fla. – He arrived at Miami two years ago with a glittering resume.

Jordan Brand Classic Regional Team selection. All-Met Player of the Year. DC State Athletic Association MVP. Washington, D.C. Gatorade Player of the Year. And an ESPN Top 50 ranking.

Chris Lykes, for most of his basketball playing career, had known nothing but success.

Then, during his sophomore year as a Hurricane, things changed.

Miami, hampered by injuries and depth issues, struggled through a 14-18 season. There were just five conference wins and there was no postseason berth to celebrate.

Lykes posted impressive numbers -- his 16.2 points-per-game average led the Hurricanes and ranked ninth in the ACC. His individual performances earned him praise from some of the biggest names in college basketball, but the guard wasn't happy.

His individual success meant little if the Hurricanes weren't winning and so, with his junior season looming and a high-profile season opener against Louisville now less than two months away, Lykes has vowed to do everything in his power to make sure this year, Miami is a winner.

"Whatever it's going to take for this team to win more games, I'm going to do," Lykes said. "Whether that means getting more assists or being the defensive leader of the team, I'm going to do it. Winning is what I care about. I think I help set the tone, but at the same time, we have a lot of guys who are hungry. Our freshmen are eager to show that they can play at this level. We've got a lot of guys on the same page right now, but I do feel like it starts with my intensity on both ends of the floor, so, it's a good job for me."

That mindset, that willingness to go above and beyond and to make sure his teammates are involved is exactly what Hurricanes coaches want to hear from their standout junior.

Before Lykes and the Hurricanes traveled to Italy this summer for a foreign tour that included three games against European opponents, Miami coach Jim Larrañaga challenged the 5-foot-7 Lykes to take his game to the next level by not only working on his defense, but finding ways to make his teammates better

and be a leader on and off the court.

The message was heard, with Larrañaga saying he noticed an improved defensive intensity from Lykes and an effort from the guard to distribute the ball evenly.

That, Larrañaga said will make a difference once the season begins and the Hurricanes are facing some of the top teams in the nation in conference play.

"I think he made a sincere effort in doing all the things the coaches were asking him to do," Larrañaga said. "Be a leader on the court, be a leader when you're on the bench, be a leader when you're in the huddle. Talk more. Be more positive. Chris has a tendency to be emotional and we don't want him to lose that. We just want him to channel it in a positive way. ... He handled everything [in Italy]. I was very, very pleased and excited to see the steps he's taken in the right direction."

While he understands why it's important he become the leader his coaches have asked him to be, Lykes concedes that's a task that hasn't always come naturally.

As a freshman, he didn't feel right speaking up while surrounded by older teammates. Even last year as his production on the court increased, Lykes tried to find his voice. But there were times he still deferred to the veterans in the locker room, especially as the losses kept mounting.

Now one of those veterans himself, Lykes knows he's got to step out of his comfort level, especially given how many newcomers are on the Miami roster this season.

He even did some of that Wednesday during the Hurricanes' first practice of the season, pulling a younger teammate aside to offer encouragement and guidance during the workout.

"I think naturally I've always been more of a show-by-example guy, but coaches have really stressed to me that they need me to be a little more vocal. I started a little bit last year, but I think I've matured a lot more and I can do even better job," Lykes said. "I want the young guys to see how intense it's going to be because we're not having a season like we did last year."

And while Miami's coaches have asked Lykes to change some of his approach heading into his junior season, one thing they want to see stay the same is Lykes' passion for the game.

In his first two years at Miami, he's become a

fan favorite in South Florida and beyond.

His ability to drain long shots and connect on no-look passes often draw cheers, while the fearlessness he shows against opponents with a clear size advantage has earned him respect.

"He's an exciting player. You can expect the unexpected from him," Larrañaga said. "I'm not surprised by the unexpected, but he'll make a great move and there's probably no one else on the court that can do it. He's made so many plays in his first two years where the crowd just responded. ... He's like a little dynamo. ... He'll have a very good year if the other guys play well, too."

Next in Miami's PA Pipeline

Alex Schwartz
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CORAL GABLES, Fla. – Lonnie Walker IV was the first one-and-done player in program history.

Ja'Quan Newton scored 1,145 points, a top-30 mark all-time at The U.

Davon Reed won ACC Scholar-Athlete of the Year and went No. 32 in the NBA Draft.

All three hail from the Philadelphia area and, clearly, made their mark in Coral Gables under Jim Larrañaga. Walker matriculated from Reading, Pa., while Newton came right from the City of Brotherly Love and Reed did so from nearby Ewing, N.J., and a Philly-based AAU team.

Miami freshman Isaiah Wong came to The U by way of Monsignor Bonner in Philadelphia and knows of the ties bonding his prior home with his new one.

"It's just a good opportunity to be in a position they were at," Wong said. "I was really following Lonnie Walker. When Miami first recruited me, I was looking up good players and I saw Lonnie Walker played [one season here]. I saw he was from Philly, so he was one of the people I really followed."

A 6-foot-4-inch guard originally from Piscataway, N.J., Wong spent the final two years of his high school tenure at Bonner. It was there that he truly burst onto the scene as a big-time recruit, one who would ultimately finish No. 78 in Rivals' rankings.

Wong averaged 22.2 points, 6.9 rebounds and 3.3 assists per game as a junior playing in the Philadelphia Catholic League, the same league Newton left in 2014 as its all-time leading scorer and a Rivals top-40 prospect.

"I've talked to Newton a whole bunch of times," Wong said. "I [have also] talked to Lonnie a couple of times. They usually come in throughout these past months, just walking in and playing with us."

During the recruiting process, Wong says Coach L did not harp on the Philadelphia connection too much. However, the names did come up, including one in particular.

"He wasn't really talking about them a lot, but they were mentioned, especially Lonnie [because] he was from [the Philly area] and he was like a top [recruit]," Wong said. "I feel like

I can be in the same situation as him, in coming from Philly."

Wong has already had the opportunity to don a Miami uniform three times, averaging 14.0 points on 46.2 percent shooting on the Hurricanes' foreign tour to Italy in August.

The backcourt scorer displayed an impressive game, one that syncs up well with what he feels are his best attributes on the court.

"I say I can hit open shots, I can dribble and I'm a good offensive player," Wong said. "I can play defense. I pretty much can do anything on the court, I feel like. [I'm able to] get players shots and get my own, too."

Wong, who enjoys watching James Harden, feels his strength and defensive focus are two aspects of his game he needs to improve on.

As those improvements come, Wong will look to become the next standout on the list of Hurricanes to go from Philadelphia to the Miami record books.

Beverly Next in Line

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HurricaneSports.com
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CORAL GABLES, Fla. – Harlond Beverly is aware of who came before him and knows he has big shoes to fill.

A 6-foot-4-inch guard, the Miami freshman was one of the most highly-touted players in the country in the class of 2019. The Detroit native, who comes to The U by way of Montverde Academy (Fla.), placed No. 54 nationally in the 247Sports composite rankings.

Beyond his stature as a ballyhooed recruit, though, Beverly is also stepping into a spot at Miami that has consistently featured high-level success during Jim Larrañaga's eight-year tenure.

While different in their own ways, players such as Bruce Brown Jr., Sheldon McClellan, Trey McKinney-Jones, Davon Reed and Lonnie Walker IV have all occupied the role of a long wing for Coach L, en route to NBA careers.

"That was the focal point of the recruitment," Beverly said. "UM showing me highlights of guys that they had prior to me and showing how they can take things . . . they weren't necessarily as good at and making them better. So, I feel like that was great. It was very appealing for me, so I can improve."

Beverly cited Brown and Walker as players the staff showed him a lot of, also mentioning Shane Larkin, the 2013 ACC Player of the Year and also an NBA player, albeit as a point guard.

Miami, one of two ACC schools to have a player selected in the NBA Draft each of the last three years, clearly knows what it takes to develop wings. However, Beverly also knows much of the onus to keep the lineage alive falls on him.

"I have to give 100 percent every day," Beverly said. "That's what [the coaches said] they did, that's how they improved every day. So, if I want to be where they are at, I've got to do the same thing."

Beverly sees similarities between his style and that of both Brown and Walker, specifically referencing his defensive abilities and overall knowledge of the game.

The 2018 Michigan Class D Player of the Year at Southfield Christian, Beverly does not model his game after anyone who came before him in Coral Gables, or anyone else for

that matter, but rather says, "I just want to be the best version of me."

What does that entail? Well, Beverly lists his height, athleticism, defense, passing and scoring ability as his strengths on the hardwood.

Those are some of the traits possessed by Hurricanes who filled his role before him and found major success.

"It means I've got a lot of work to do," Beverly said of being next in line behind that group. "I'm excited for the season. I can improve; I'm just excited for it."

That excitement will become reality Nov. 5 at the Watsco Center, when Miami hosts Louisville, expected to be ranked top-10 nationally, in the season opener.

Walked His Own Way

Alex Schwartz
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CORAL GABLES, Fla. – When Baltimore native Anthony Walker went to Hope Academy in Stockbridge, Ga., for his freshman year of high school it was not because of basketball. At all.

In fact, Walker, now a freshman forward at Miami, was not even on the hoops team while there.

Rather, his first time playing competitive basketball was as a sophomore, when he returned to the Old Line State and helped lead Perry Hall High School to the first state title in program history. His junior year, Walker again guided Perry Hall to the 4A state crown.

After that—well, basketball factored more into his next decision. Walker made the choice to attend Brewster Academy in Wolfebroro, N.H., for his senior year.

A stellar academic school with a powerhouse hoops program that has featured numerous NBA players such as Will Barton, Donovan Mitchell, Thomas Robinson and TJ Warren, Brewster was the spot Walker felt he had to go for his final year before college.

“I just talked about it for a long time with my family and my mom,” Walker said. “She didn’t want me to go to a different state so soon because I was still in high school, but that just being such a prestigious school, being in one of the best high school leagues [and having] other players on the team that were going everywhere else, like Texas and Ohio State, I just had to go. It was great competition and I just wanted to get better.”

Along with those Texas- (Kai Jones) and Ohio State-bound (Alonzo Gaffney) teammates was Jalen Lecque, who signed a deal with the Phoenix Suns straight out of Brewster. All three were top-55 prospects in the 247Sports Composite rankings, while Joel Brown (Cal) was another highly-touted 2019 recruit whom Walker faced every day in practice.

“Just going against and playing with players that were better than me, going against players that were also the man on their old high school team before Brewster,” Walker explained, “I learned how to play a role that I would have had to learn playing here at The U. So, it was a great experience.”

The NEPSAC, arguably the top prep league in America, features numerous post-graduate, fifth-year players. For Walker, already rela-

tively young for his grade, that meant consistently taking on opponents who were not just extremely talented, but also older than him.

He felt his competitiveness improve throughout the season, which featured a run to the NEPSAC AAA title game. He also felt his confidence rise, both from his good days against elite competition and from bad days when he still hung tough.

While Walker certainly improved on the hardwood while at Brewster, he thinks his time in New England also helped him off the court.

“It definitely prepared me very well for college, me being away from my mom and . . . having to manage my own time and take care of my own self,” Walker said. “So, I think I matured pretty well.”

Now that he is at the college level, the 6-foot-9-inch wing with pogo stick-like bounce, has set some general goals for his freshman campaign.

The goals, though, may not be what one would think, as they are not about numbers or accolades. Rather, they are about continuing to grow and develop, like the decision to attend Brewster was.

“Just to get adjusted to the collegiate level,” Walker said. “Just playing against the best and hopefully making a great impact on this team so going into my sophomore year I can become more of a leader.”

Walker recognizes the needs to improve both his handles and his jump-shot, but knows his leaping ability will help him from the start.

“I heard I’ve got a pretty good second jump, so I feel like I’m a good rebounder,” Walker said of his strengths. “I feel like I’m a great athlete. I feel like I can jump and chase balls in the air that most players can’t.”

One other thing most players also can’t do is play in the nation’s premier college conference, the ACC. However, four years after not even playing high school hoops, Anthony Walker is ready to do just that.

Hardwood Homecoming

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MIAMI, Fla. – Chris Lykes spent most of his morning answering question after question at Operation Basketball, the ACC's annual pre-season media day event in Charlotte, North Carolina.

But the moment his return flight landed in Miami, Lykes' focus was on one thing: finding the fastest way possible to the American Airlines Arena where he hoped to meet his Hurricanes teammates in time to watch the Miami Heat host the San Antonio Spurs.

For most of the basketball fans at the AAA on Tuesday, the Heat's preseason opener likely just marked the unofficial start of a new NBA season. For Lykes and the Hurricanes, though, it was the opportunity to hopefully see two of their own play at the game's highest level.

In the Miami Heat's red and black, former Hurricanes guard Davon Reed. Suiing up for the San Antonio Spurs, former Hurricanes guard Lonnie Walker IV, the No. 18 pick in the 2018 NBA Draft and a former teammate of Lykes' at Miami.

For Lykes and the Hurricanes, that made an otherwise routine preseason game anything but.

"That's probably one of my best friends. To be able to him do what I want to do in my life one day, it's cool. I tried to get here right off the plane to support him," said Lykes, who sat with teammates Nysier Brooks, Harlond Beverly, Deng Gak, Filippos Gkogkos, Willie Herenton, Anthony Walker and Isaiah Wong. "These guys, most of them haven't even met Lonnie or Davon and they're still here supporting them. That shows you what the culture is at Miami."

That support and that Miami culture is part of what made Tuesday night's game memorable for both Walker and Reed themselves. Though the two did not play together at Miami, they built a relationship after Reed served as Walker's official host when the former McDonald's and Jordan Brand All-American visited Coral Gables during the recruiting process.

Since, both have been rooting for each other.

"He showed a lot this summer in Summer League. He's a great talent. I knew that when Coach [Jim Larrañaga] was recruiting him and I hosted him on his visit," Reed said. "I'm

glad that we got to see him put on that Miami Hurricanes uniform. ... I've got much love for him and he's got much love for me. But when we're between those lines, it's nothing but competition."

Said Walker, "That's the dream. I think this shows what type of players we produce at the University of Miami and what type of players Coach Larrañaga picks and how he produces them to become NBA players. Tonight is about showing what we've got."

Along with having played at Miami for Larrañaga, Walker and Reed share similar goals entering the season: both are looking to prove they're worthy of roster spots for their respective teams.

Walker tore the meniscus in his right knee during his first preseason game last year and spent part of his season with the Spurs' G League team in Austin where he averaged 16.6 points while learning the Spurs' system.

He eventually appeared in 17 NBA games last season, but now healthy, Walker wants to be a consistent part of the rotation for the five-time champion Spurs.

"He's made a big step forward through the summer. He gained an understanding in how to play, how to use his athleticism in a positive way and better decision-making, that sort of thing," San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said of Walker. "There's a lot of great athletes in this league, but those who figure out how to play and make their teams better are the ones you really value. So we are trying to get him down that path."

Reed, meanwhile, knows he faces a challenge to make the 15-man roster in Miami where he recently signed an Exhibit 10 contract with the Heat. His deal is limited to a \$50,000 guarantee if he were to play for Miami's G League affiliate in Sioux Falls this season, but Reed is hoping to show the Heat he's worthy of a two-way deal or even something more.

"I just feel like [the Heat and I] kind of share the same identity. Nothing's been given to me in my short career so far. I feel like I've kind of been counted out and I feel like they like the underdogs that are scrappy," said Reed, who was a second-round draft pick of the Phoenix Suns in 2017 and split last time last season between the Indiana Pacers and their G League affiliate, the Fort Wayne Mad Ants. "Despite what's happened to me so far, I'm not going to let that slow me down. I know what I can and will accomplish and what I'm capable of and I'm looking forward to being

here and finding my footing here."

Said Heat coach Erik Spoelstra of Reed, "He fits in very well. He has Heat DNA just in terms of his competitiveness, his drive, his want, his toughness. All of those things tend to play well with us. He just has to keep showing it every day. There are no guarantees, but our program, we feel, is a good one for people who embrace it and are able to be consistent and reliable, even as they go to Sioux Falls."

Whatever the season holds for both Reed and Walker, hopes are high, not only for them, but for the college program for which they once played and is looking to return to postseason form after a tough showing last year.

There's hope, too, the number of Hurricanes in the NBA will continue to grow.

"It's a testament to Coach L and his staff, the job they've been able to do in recruiting to get these good players, have them fit into the system and have them buy in to what Coach L preaches," Reed said. "I think he teaches some things we can all use when we hopefully become pros, especially on the defensive end. But he also teaches you how to play the right way and the score will take care of itself. I look forward to the next wave of players coming in and hopefully making it to the NBA. He's done a good job the last few years getting somebody drafted. It's been awesome and I look forward to that continuing."

Stone Comes Home

Alex Schwartz
HurricaneSports.com
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CORAL GABLES, Fla. – Keith Stone had a bevy of options to pick from when deciding where to spend his final year as a college basketball player.

After making the choice to transfer from the University of Florida, Stone considered programs such as Arizona, Arkansas, Maryland, Nevada and USC. Ultimately, though, the allure of playing close to home won out and he made the call to head to the University of Miami as a graduate transfer.

"It's a pretty funny story, Coach L has been in my corner since day one, ever since I was a kid," Stone said of Miami head coach Jim Larrañaga. "He always wanted me to go to the University of Miami. He [was at] almost all of my travel ball games when I was younger and the opportunity to come here just seemed right with the guys.

"The year they had [last season], I want to help them improve and teach the young guys like Anthony Walker," Stone continued about why he selected Miami. "But overall, I just came here for family because everyone can come see me play now."

A native of nearby Deerfield Beach, Fla., Stone graduated from Zion Lutheran High School as a consensus four-star, top-100 prospect. After redshirting at Florida as a freshman in 2015-16, he helped the Gators to 68 victories over the past three years, including five in the NCAA Tournament.

The 6-foot-8-inch redshirt senior forward averaged 6.2 points per game during his time at Florida, including 8.8 per outing in 2017-18, and started 39 contests.

His career as a Gator, however, came to a sudden halt Jan. 19 in a road game at Georgia. Stone was off to a nice start in the rivalry contest, tallying eight points in nine minutes, but when he went for a chase-down block, he landed awkwardly and tore his ACL, ending his season.

"The day it happened, I thought my career was over," Stone explained. "I thought the sport wasn't for me. 'I got hurt on my ACL, there's nothing coming back from this,' [was what went through my mind], but the more days I work at it, the confidence is growing again. I'm in a new area and new place with new coaches and I just feel a lot happier."

Fast-forward nine months and Stone is clos-

ing in on finishing the rehab process. While he still has work to do, he sees himself getting stronger, cutting and jumping better, as well as doing more lateral movement.

"It's been a grind," Stone said. "It [had] been a tough couple weeks [at first], but overall, it has been great to me because I'm losing weight. The coaches have been great, just pushing me to be really good."

Stone has spent a lot of time in the training room working with physical therapist Julia Rapicavoli and athletic trainer Cory Kaplan. Strength & conditioning coach Phil Baier, hired just a few weeks ago, has also gone straight to work on trying to get Stone back to full strength.

While the names and faces of the staff helping him may be fairly new to the first-year Hurricane, Stone is grateful for the support he has received during his rehabilitation.

"Cory has been a great help, he's helped me through a lot of things," Stone said. "Julia . . . has been great helping me with everything and I appreciate everything she's done for me out here, working me out and spending a lot of one-on-one time with me. [She is] just getting me back the proper way instead of the quickest way."

Stone is not yet ready to return to game action and he is not setting a timeline for himself of when he wants to back on the court in that capacity. Rather, he thinks he will have a feeling of when that time is right.

"I'm not going to push it and I'm not going to just sit there and baby it," Stone explained, "but I'll know in a practice when I'm ready to come back."

When that time does indeed come, the Hurricanes will welcome Stone's presence on the hardwood with open arms, while his family, of course, will be just a short drive away to come watch him play.

Brooks Brings Winning Ways to The U

Alex Schwartz
HurricaneSports.com
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CORAL GABLES, Fla. – In three years at the University of Cincinnati, Nysier Brooks was a part of 89 victories, including two AAC Tournament championships.

Few players in college basketball can boast the same type of winning pedigree as the 6-foot-11 center from Philadelphia. And now, after he decided to transfer to the University of Miami, it is the Hurricanes who will benefit from Brooks' experience.

"I feel like I can bring a winning culture and a winning leadership because I have been on teams that have had 28-plus wins each season my last three years. So, I just feel like me showing the younger fellas not what to do, but how to do it and how to go about certain things [is something I can add]," Brooks said. "When it's time to be serious, be serious. There are going to be times for fun and games, that's part of basketball, but I just really want to impact them on how hard they need to work, to let them know that playing hard is not something you can just turn on and off.

"You got to work hard in the weight room, you got to work hard in practice, you got to work hard in the training room and then you have to come in here and work hard by yourself," Brooks continued. "Because [you get better] when you come in the gym at night working hard, two or three hours a night, analyzing and dissecting your game and trying to overcome [your obstacles]."

After averaging 8.1 points, 6.3 rebounds and 1.5 blocks per game while starting 35 contests in 2018-19, Brooks had myriad choices when he elected to transfer following the season. One of those was the chance to follow his departed coach, Mick Cronin, to UCLA. Another was 2019 NCAA runner-up, Texas Tech, while other programs such as Baylor, Georgia, LSU, Virginia Tech and West Virginia were involved.

Brooks ended up making the choice to attend Miami. The connection he felt with Jim Larrañaga and his coaching staff during the recruiting process when he was a high school standout was still there and that meant a lot to the defensive stalwart.

"Miami was a place that was highly recruiting me before I committed to Cincinnati. We had a wonderful relationship coming into my commitment to Cincinnati," Brooks explained. "Even after I committed, they wished me the best of luck and just wished that I would con-

tinue being the person that I was even after the process of coming to Cincinnati.

"When I entered my name in the portal, a lot of schools were hitting me up. A lot of schools that I'm not going to mention were giving me some backlash, but Miami just showed that they were a respectful group. The coaches were well put together—class and commitment," Brooks added. "So, when I left Cincinnati, I was like, 'Okay, I'm going to see what options I have, who I like and who loves me' because you have to go with who loves you. I just felt like Miami had the same energy they had before and after I committed to Cincinnati, and when I put my name in the portal."

Ever since getting to Coral Gables, Brooks has taken on a vocal leadership role with his new teammates. While it can be difficult to lead while not playing—Brooks will sit out the 2019-20 season in accordance with NCAA transfer rules—and difficult to lead as a newcomer, neither has been an issue for the new Miami big man.

For Brooks, leadership is not about how long you have been around or whether you are on the court. Rather, it is about much more than that, including learning from those around you.

"There isn't one leader that is always liked . . . Some people love me, some people hate me; that's their decision," Brooks said. "I am going to be the same way with everybody and, of course, deliver a message to different people depending on the person because everyone receives a message differently and responds differently. To the people who see me as a newcomer and don't really want to follow my lead, that's up to them because it's not technically my lead. I'm leading the way the coaches want me to lead. I'm another attachment of the coaches, just in a player form.

"Yes, I'm not playing this year, but I'm just trying to impact the team, giving them the best knowledge I know about winning. It may seem a little different with me sitting on the sideline, but I'm a person who has played the game for a while and I hope they can take my advice into consideration because I'm not trying to steer them in the wrong way," Brooks continued. "I'm just trying to help out as best as I can. I'm always going to be here for them to learn something. And I can learn something; leaders are the best learners. I can learn something from the younger guys that I might not be able to see the first time, but they teach me something. So, it's a give and take thing; you give respect to get respect."

Although he is not playing this coming sea-

son, Brooks does have some goals he hopes to achieve during his time off. While they may not be quantifiable like averaging a certain number of points or reaching a particular blocked shots total, they are important nonetheless.

For Brooks, this year in residence is about improving so he can make an impact on the court when he does suit up in 2020-21, as well as making his mark off the floor.

"I'm just trying to make sure I learn the game a lot more because you can never learn the game enough. [I am trying to] get my body and mind stronger," Brooks said. "Something I'm actually looking forward to off the court is actually joining the [student-athlete advisory] committee to just help with rules and regulations on NCAA sports. So that's going to be fun, [as is] giving back to elementary schools around the community in Miami and just trying to help as best as I can."

Whether it is with his teammates or in the community, there is no doubt the Miami basketball program is better off with the addition of Nysier Brooks, not just for his physical talents, but for his leadership abilities that have been on display since day one in orange and green.

Canes Hoops: 2019-20 Season Preview

Austin Pert
State Of The U
Oct. 16, 2019

The Hurricanes are off a disappointing 2018-19 campaign, falling short of expectations and missing the NCAA Tournament. Key returnees and newcomers will hope to lead Miami to a bounce-back year.

The 2018-19 season was largely one of frustration, disappointment and confusion for the Miami Hurricanes. They were fresh off a heartbreaking loss to Loyola Chicago in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, but had at least made the big dance in each of the previous three seasons. UM had been picked to finish 10th in the preseason Atlantic Coast Conference media poll amid concerns surrounding an uncertain roster, but every one of Jim Larranaga's Miami teams had finished higher in the final league standings than predicted in the preseason.

What unfolded however, was one of the more disappointing seasons of Larranaga's tenure in Coral Gables. Junior Dewan Hernandez being ruled ineligible to play right as the season commenced was an omen that spelled trouble in the season ahead. By March, the Canes sat at just 14-18 overall and 5-13 in ACC action. 2018-19 was the first losing season under Larranaga, and was the worst overall season by record since 2006-07. Before former walk-on Willie Herenton earned a full scholarship late in the campaign, Miami had been down to just seven scholarship players.

In 2019-20, the Hurricanes are looking to bounce back from their first year without any postseason basketball since 2013-14, and just the second in Larranaga's UM career after three consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances. Primarily a younger squad, Miami will still look to its upperclassmen to lead the team to a bounce-back year.

Offseason Recap

After signing no recruits in the 2018 class due to an investigation into Miami's role in the Adidas corruption scandal, Larranaga and his staff recovered to sign three 2019 high school graduates in Harland Beverly, Isaiah Wong and Anthony Walker. The three have all enrolled at UM.

Larranaga was also able to pull a couple of transfers to Coral Gables through the ever-magical transfer portal. Graduate transfer Keith Stone should be an instrumental piece in the post to help the Canes rebuild much-needed depth down low. Nyzier Brooks also comes to Miami from Cincinnati, but will sit out the upcoming season and play in his final year of eligibility in 2020-21. Oklahoma transfer Kameron McGusty sat out the 2018-19 season after coming to Coral Gables and is set to play his first of his two remaining seasons of eligibility.

The highlight of the offseason was August's team trip to Italy. The Hurricanes played three games against European competition in Rome, Florence and Northern Italy, all resulting in wins. From both a basketball and team bonding perspective, the trip was a huge success.

By the Numbers

For the first time, the ACC has scheduled league games on opening night. Miami will open their season on November 5 at home when they take on the Louisville Cardinals.

Chris Lykes made the All-ACC second team. The point guard averaged 16.2 points in each of his 32 starts, to go along with 3.2 assists per game and a three-point field goal percentage of .318. Three freshman will sport orange and green this season, who together made up the ACC's No. 6 recruiting class in 2019, while ranking 30th nationally. Four-stars Beverly and Wong made up two of the nation's top-100 recruits accounting to 247.68 forward

Walker comes to Coral Gables from New Hampshire, where he'll be featured in a much deeper front court rotation.

Four key players from 2018-19 don't return for the upcoming season. Anthony Lawrence II graduated and finds himself as a free agent in professional basketball following a brief stint in the Israeli league. Zach Johnson also graduated after a single year with the Canes. Johnson came as a graduate transfer from Florida Gulf Coast. Anthony Mack left the program after his red-shirt freshman season with UM, while last year's center Ebuka Izundu has found a home with Real Betis in Spain after spending the summer in the Golden State Warriors' organization.

Larranaga will have to choose five players to make up the starting lineup. With so much in flux after losing several players from last year while also welcoming a handful of newcomers, the starting lineup has been a curiosity among fans.

Lykes, DJ Vasiljevic, and Sam Waardenburg are the only returning players with more than one start. McGusty was a spot starter with the Sooners in his two years with the program and will likely slide right into UM's starting lineup.

The biggest question will be who takes over at center. Izundu provided the team with a security blanket down low, and his absence leaves a void that will prove tough to replace. Rodney Miller and Deng Gek are the returning players from prior seasons in the low post, with Gek in the closing stages of injury rehab from last year before being back at full strength. Forwards Walker and Stone may also play with their backs to the basket at times this season, with the latter having experience starting.

Six full seasons have passed since the magical 2012-13 season, the best year in program history since reestablishment in 1985. 2013 was the only time the program won a conference tournament title, along with being a sole champion of a league regular season. Shane Larkin and Trey McKinney-Jones were leaders of that team, while Larranaga was that season's consensus national coach of the year. If there is a level that the Hurricanes are trying to reach, this year or any year after, this is it. Seven ACC teams made the NCAA Tournament a year ago. Virginia won the championship in a thrilling final over Texas Tech. Duke and their elite freshman class led by Zion Williamson was upset in the Elite Eight by Michigan State. North Carolina, Florida State and Virginia Tech made the Sweet 16, while Louisville and Syracuse were both defeated in the first round.

Miami lost eight games a season ago by seven points or less, representing just over half of their total losses (UM was 14-18 overall). Three consecutive close losses to Seton Hall, Rutgers, and Yale put a damper on the season not long after it started. An 88-85 OT loss at UNC on February 9 was especially tough to swallow after the Canes gave up a last minute lead in regulation. The Hurricanes were picked to finish ninth in the ACC in 2019-20, right between Syracuse in eighth and Pitt in 10th.

Larranaga's team will play 10 non-conference games this year, beginning with FAU on November 8. UM will travel to UCF on November 12, and will also be on the road for the Big Ten/ACC Challenge, taking on Illinois December 2. Another potential marquee non-conference game may fall on November 22 at the Charleston Classic in South Carolina, with the possibility of playing Florida in the tournament's second round. Such a matchup will be determined by the results of the first round of the event.

For the first time in conference history, the ACC expands their conference schedule to 20 games per team. This will provide a challenge for Miami and every other conference foe, faced with two additional games against teams in arguably the nation's toughest league.

Backcourt

The backcourt was the Canes' biggest strength a season ago.

Despite losing Lonnie Walker, Bruce Brown and JaiQuan Newton, Miami finished in the top half of the ACC in several shooting categories, including free throw percentage, three-point field goal percentage, and points per game. Lykes was also 10th in the conference in scoring. Vasiljevic should continue to be the team's primary three-point threat, who comes into his senior season eighth in program history in three-point field goals off a .367 shooting percentage from beyond the arc a season ago.

McGusty should make an instant impact in his first season as a Hurricane. In addition to averaging eight points per game as a sophomore, the Katy, TX native shot over 42% from the field and 33% from three-point range, improving to 40% from range in Big 12 action in his last season with the Sooners.

With Lawrence and Johnson gone, the Canes will be lacking a ton of depth at the guard positions, and may need freshman Wong, Beverly, or former walk-on Willie Herenton to step up in times of inevitable injury or foul trouble.

Frontcourt

When Miami was stripped to just seven rotational players last year, the lack of depth was felt especially down low, with just two to three natural post players available for much of the season. Hernandez's ineligibility combined with Gek's injury was a one-two punch that made life difficult for Larranaga. The biggest saving grace was Izundu's year in the paint, having quietly scored just under 11 points and pulling down over eight rebounds per game, and shooting 65.5% from the field, an all-time single-season program record and good second in the conference a season ago behind only Zion Williamson.

While Larranaga will have to get used to not having Izundu around anymore, he'll have a much deeper arsenal in the frontcourt. Sam Waardenburg returns for his redshirt junior season, having scored in double-figures five times and having shot over 35% from three-point range last year. The New Zealand native's athleticism may also allow him to stretch the floor and play small when needed.

Gek will look to have a breakout season as a redshirt sophomore, having recorded 2.5 points and 4.1 rebounds per game over his 11 appearances before being sidelined due to injury. Fans will get to see Miller's progression after taking last year off to continue developing.

Stone, who started in each of the previous two seasons at UF, is a factor when healthy. Before missing most of SEC play due to a knee injury, the incoming senior averaged around six points and four rebounds per game, and nearly nine points per game as a sophomore. Freshman Walker can also be a factor down low, potentially giving the Hurricanes a five-man rotation at the '4 and '5 positions. Brooks meanwhile will take a redshirt per NCAA regulations.

Bottom Line

Miami is coming off a disappointing season, one that was certainly their worst since the arrival of Jim Larranaga from George Mason. The Hurricanes lose several key contributors from that squad, making this season a bit of a rebuilding project by some accounts. But the combination of upperclassman leadership and fresh blood—of both youth and experience—can guide UM to a bounce back year. The Canes, pegged to finish ninth in the league, can put themselves in postseason contention by just meeting preseason expectations in the nation's hardest conference.

Upcoming season offers a unique test for Coach Larranaga

Todd Forrest
State Of The U
Oct. 17, 2019

Head coach Jim Larranaga and the University of Miami men's basketball program will venture into uncharted territory when the 2019-20 campaign officially tips off next month.

For the first time since Larranaga's arrival in 2011, the Hurricanes are coming off a losing season in 2018-19. Moreover, last year marked just the second time that Miami didn't qualify for a postseason tournament (2013-14) under Coach L.

Needless to say, this coming season will present Larranaga with one of the toughest assignments of a coaching career that's on the doorstep of its sixth decade. Miami's disappointing 2018-19 season marked Coach L's first losing record since going 9-18 in year one at George Mason in 1997-98. In year two, Larranaga's Patriots rebounded with a 19-11 mark, a conference title and an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament.

Unfortunately, bouncing back to the tune of 10-plus wins in a talent-laden Atlantic Coast Conference will pose a challenge that Larranaga didn't face in the Colonial Athletic Association.

And for the most part, the media agrees.

The Canes were picked to finish ninth in the ACC – which is an improvement of two spots from its 11th place finish a year ago – but that will likely leave them as one of the “first-out” among the NCAA Tournament's bubble teams. Last year, seven ACC teams reached the Big Dance, with nine teams going dancing in each of the previous two seasons. Prior to its record number of nine selections in 2017 and 2018, the previous high-water mark for the conference was seven selections in 2007, 2009 and 2016.

Still, the reputation of Larranaga has many believing in a slight turnaround from a 2018-19 season that was hampered by the early suspension, and eventual ineligibility, of star big man Dewan Hernandez.

This year, Miami must replace the loss of three-year starter Anthony Lawrence (13 ppg, 7 rpg), along with Ebuka Izundu (12 ppg, 8 rpg) and Zach Johnson (12 ppg). But still, Coach L returns a solid backcourt to surround preseason Second Team All-ACC selection Chris Lykes (16 ppg, 3 apg).

Lykes, a 5-foot-7 guard from Maryland started all 32 games for Miami last season and is the ACC's second-highest returning scorer behind Louisville's Jordan Nwora. Playing alongside Miami's spark plug point guard is the sharpshooting Australian, DJ Vasiljevic (12 ppg), who shot 37-per-

cent from long distance last season.

Joining Lykes and Vasiljevic in the backcourt is Kam McGusty, an Oklahoma transfer who is eligible this season after starting 25 games in Norman as a sophomore, two seasons ago. Another transfer guard is Keith Stone, a former Gator that is coming off an ACL injury in January. A graduate transfer, Stone (6 ppg, 4 rpg last year) is eligible immediately and should make an impact as soon as the Deerfield Beach native is healthy.

Despite the losses of Lawrence and Izundu, the Canes' frontcourt has experience with junior Sam Waardenburg, who made 11 starts and averaged 25 minutes a game last season. The 6-10 New Zealander provides Miami with an inside-outside threat, hitting 38-percent of his threes and 77-percent of his free throws.

Also returning are centers Deng Gak and Rodney Miller, who should both see increased minutes. The 6-10 Gak was the 16th rated power forward in his class but was redshirted in 2017-18, then suffered a season-ending knee injury on Dec. 1 of last year. Prior to going down, Gak was averaging 15 minutes-per with one start.

Meanwhile, the 7-foot Miller was redshirted last year after playing 15 games as a sophomore in 2017-18. A 4-star recruit out of high school, Miller participated in the 2014 Nike Elite 100.

As for the Hurricanes fresh out of high school, Larranaga will have a solid crop of freshmen at his disposal this winter.

Highlighting the recent recruiting class is 6-4 combo guard Harlond Beverly. Out of Montverde Academy, Beverly was a 4-star recruit and the ninth ranked combo guard in America. Originally from Michigan, Beverly transferred to Florida's Montverde Academy, the former stomping grounds of D'Angelo Russell, Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons.

Another highly touted combo guard in the class is 6-3 Isaiah Wong. The 4-star recruit was ranked as the No. 12 point guard by Rivals and the No. 16 shooting guard by ESPN.

Rounding out the class is 6-9 forward Anthony Walker out of Brewster, New Hampshire - the same school that produced Donovan Mitchell. A 4-star prospect by ESPN and the No. 33 power forward in the nation, Walker chose Miami over Kansas, Maryland and Pittsburgh, among others.

Additionally, Larranaga's Canes added Cincinnati transfer Nysier Brooks (8 ppg, 6 rpg), who will sit out this season per NCAA transfer rules.

The returning experience in the backcourt, combined with the injection of youth should provide

Larranaga with enough ammo to keep Miami near the top-eight in the ACC, and in contention for an NCAA berth. The biggest question mark, however, could be depth as an injury at an inopportune moment could easily derail the season.

ACC Outlook

With six ACC players selected in last summer's NBA Draft lottery, there could be room for an outsider to crash the three-team party (Duke, UNC, UVA) that's sat atop the conference in recent years. Unfortunately for Canes fans, many feel that team will be Louisville. And with Florida State and NC State on the rise, the Canes are likely more than a year away from contending for one of the four double-byes in the conference tournament.

With road games at Clemson, Georgia Tech and Virginia Tech the Canes should pick up the ACC road win that eluded them last season. The biggest remaining question mark is tightening up a defense that allowed the most points (71.1) during Larranaga's tenure in Coral Gables.

It's a safe bet to assume Miami will improve on its winless road record inside the ACC. One can also guarantee that Larranaga will place an emphasis on boosting his team's defensive effort, as well.

“It's all about guys working together, identifying your role, and making a great contribution to the team effort,” Larranaga said at Operation Basketball Media Day, earlier this month. “Whether you are a veteran player like DJ and Chris, who really know their role because they've been doing it for a long time, or a freshman who comes in and has to learn what his role is going to be, it's all about teamwork.”

The good news: Larranaga has not suffered consecutive losing seasons since 1991-92 and 1992-93, during his days at Bowling Green.

The bad: The Canes are still probably two years away. The last time one of Larranaga's Miami squads didn't reach the NCAA Tournament, they failed to qualify the following year, despite advancing to the finals of the 2015 NIT.

In 2016, they went on two win 27 games and reach the Sweet 16.

NCAA Tournament, NIT or neither? We will see when Miami's season gets underway on Oct. 30 with an exhibition vs Flagler. The first official game is Nov. 5 vs the previously mentioned Louisville at the Watsco Center in Coral Gables. While Louisville is a conference game, the ACC gauntlet won't get underway until a New Year's Eve showdown at Clemson.

Canes Hoops: Chris Lykes Looks to Leap into his Junior Season

Austin Pert
State Of The U
Oct. 22, 2019

Lykes was arguably Miami's best overall player a season ago. In spite of the point guard's small stature, he'll continue to have a big role in 2019-20.

"If he were 6-5 or 6-6, he'd be Michael Jordan," said coach Jim Larrañaga two seasons ago. But Larrañaga wasn't referring to either of his two future NBA draftees in Lonnie Walker or Bruce Brown. Nor was he referencing any of his past players who have gone on to play professional basketball.

The player he was talking about was none other than Chris Lykes, all five feet and seven inches of him, then just a freshman and playing behind then-PG Ja'Quan Newton.

"It doesn't matter your height," Larrañaga continued, a month into the 2017-18 season. "What matters is the size of your heart."

But it's been about far more than heart for the Mitchellville, Maryland native. Even in an otherwise disappointing season last year, Lykes' numbers were beyond impressive, ranking sixth in the Atlantic Coast Conference in points per game, with 16.2. He scored in double-figures in all but five games a season ago. The guard also scored 20 or more points in 10 games, including a career-high 28 points on January 3 against North Carolina State.

But for Lykes, it's now about more than just stats.

"Proving that I do belong in the ACC," said Lykes about what last year meant for him. With a thin roster a season ago, "It was tough playing with seven guys, but I feel like we were in every game. I scored pretty well, but I could do a little better with efficiency, but I think that was the biggest jump."

When it comes to fear, Lykes prefers to turn what casual observers may believe to be is a negative into a positive.

When asked about his size being a positive instead of a liability, the point guard concurred with the assessment. "I always think [like] that. At my size, even if I don't believe that [on a given night], it's good mentally to believe that. Coach [Larrañaga] was the first major coach to tell me it was an advantage."

In terms of role, better depth of the post positions can play into the hands of Lykes at the top of the lineup, so long as the bigs do their job.

"Coach [Larrañaga] has made it an emphasis, he wants us to get in the paint, and kick out to find shooters," Lykes said prior in the offseason. "That's the best and easiest shot... now we have a lot of guys that can do that."

As a sophomore, the guard averaged over 16 points across every game all of last season. With another offseason of development and a roster upgrade, things are looking up for Lykes in Coral Gables.

Miami has blend of “youthful enthusiasm and veteran experience”

Christopher Stock
247Sports - InsideTheU
Oct. 22, 2019

CORAL GABLES, Fla. – The Miami Hurricanes held their annual media day on Tuesday, which was the first time head coach Jim Larranaga and players were made available to the local media.

Returning players discussed their desire to put last year's 14-18 season—the worst since 2006-07—behind them. Not only was it the worst record in Larranaga's eight seasons at Miami, but it broke a string of three consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances for only the second time in school history.

The Hurricanes, pegged to finish ninth in the ACC, are looking to get back to the postseason this year behind a combination of key returners and talented newcomers with the season starting in two weeks on Nov. 5 against Louisville, a projected top-10 team when the preseason AP Poll is released.

“We're trying to improve, we have a lot of improving to do to have the season that we'd like to have,” Larranaga said. “We have a good group of guys who are working very hard to make that happen, but we also have one of the most challenging schedules—not only in Miami basketball history, but in the history of the ACC and I say that very honestly without exaggerating. The schedule is ridiculous because this year we have jumped to 20 ACC games and we open up the season at home against Louisville, who is projected to be top 5 in the country and ESPN has them as a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament. We certainly have our challenges, but as any competitors would tell you they love the challenge and competing against the best and that's what we do every night in the ACC.”

Junior point guard Chris Lykes is Miami's leading returning scorer after averaging 16.2 points a game, which was ninth in the ACC. He was a preseason All-ACC Second Team pick as the league's second-highest returning scorer.

It looks like Miami will open the season with a starting lineup consisting of Lykes, senior shooting guard Dejan Vasiljevic, junior shooting guard Kameron McGusty, junior power forward Sam Waardenburg, and junior center Rodney Miller.

The reserves look to be freshmen guards Isaiah Wong and Harlond Beverly, who were both top-100 recruits, sophomore power forward Deng Gak, and freshman power forward Anthony Walker. Graduate transfer forward

Keith Stone is not expected to be ready to start the season due to a knee injury sustained in January while at Florida.

“We kind of have a unique blend,” Larranaga said. “We have five veteran players who have been practicing a lot together because they know most everything we do and then we have a core group of three freshmen and Deng Gak and Keith Stone. Deng has been here, but has been injured and hasn't played a lot of minutes and then Keith and the freshmen are brand new to the program and are learning. We've got a good blend of youthful enthusiasm and veteran experience.”

Wong and Beverly have been developing a bond since their arrivals and the two talented guards are often paired up together in practices.

“Ever since we went to Italy, me and him were struggling together, but I feel we overcame that and we both are going to do good together,” Wong said.

Lykes has been pleased with how the team has united in the offseason, which included playing three exhibition games in Italy in August.

“Usually it takes a while to gel together and be really chemistry-oriented, but this team has been one of the quicker teams I have seen gel together,” Lykes said. “I think the freshmen are close and the older guys are allowing them to learn the culture. They just fit in perfectly and I feel they picked the right school. It's going to be good and I'm excited.”

While the most experienced five project as starters, Larranaga stressed there is competition for playing time.

“There's competition every single day,” Larranaga said. “There is nothing that is guaranteed. You've got to earn everything you get—your playing time, your success doesn't come from something you did in the past whether you did it in high school or you did it in practice or you did it in the last game. You've got to continue to perform very, very well because there's always someone ready to take your place—except last year when we didn't have anybody. We just didn't have enough guys.”

Facing Louisville in the opener is something Lykes is looking forward to although he wants the team to understand the importance of every game.

“I like it, I like tough games,” Lykes said. “I like being a part of tough games. It makes it feel so much better when you win. We're just

getting to the point where we need to understand that every game matters—that's what we want the younger guys to understand too. Not let up when the competition isn't stacked up as much as we are.”

UM basketball coaches offer cooking tips, previews of their teams. This is what they said.

Michelle Kaufman
Miami Herald
Oct. 22, 2019

The 2019-20 University of Miami basketball season began with a cooking lesson from women's coach Katie Meier and men's coach Jim Larranaga.

Meier greeted her five freshmen Tuesday morning with the following question: "Are you an ice cube? Are you a potato? Or are you an egg?"

They weren't sure what to make of the odd question, so she explained.

"I said, 'It's time. You're ready. I boiled the water this morning. What happens to an ice cube? It melts. Well, are you an ice cube? What happens to a potato? It gets soft. Are you a potato? What happens to an egg? It gets hard. Be an egg! That was my speech.'"

Meier said she won't tolerate any ice cubes on her team.

The coach shared the story with reporters during Media Day at the Watsco Center. Larranaga followed Meier at the microphone, and added his version of the allegory.

He told of a coach who was trying to motivate his team, so he boiled water in three pots. In one pot, he put carrots. In another, he put eggs. In the third, coffee beans. He asked them, "What happened to carrots? They went in hard but came out soft. Eggs went in soft, came out hard. The coffee beans, they changed the water and made it delicious, a cup of coffee." The idea is are we going to be soft, hard or make things better?"

Both Hurricanes teams are eager to make things better this season.

The women went 25-9, were seeded fourth in the NCAA Tournament, but lost at home to Arizona State in the Round of 32 when they flubbed an inbound play in the closing minutes. The men, with a roster of seven healthy players most nights, finished 14-18 overall, 5-13 in the Atlantic Coast Conference and failed to make the post-season for the first time in six years.

Meier's team, led by ACC Preseason Player of the Year Beatrice Mompremier, has high hopes again. The Canes were picked to finish fourth in the ACC by league coaches, and Mompremier, a 6-4 center, chose to forego the WNBA Draft and stay in school for her final season.

"I'm particularly excited about this year's team with the return of Beatrice Mompremier, and 'premier' is a really good hashtag for her because I really do believe she's the best post player in the country and one of the best players in the country," said Meier. "We're fortunate to have her, and she is very determined on expanding her game and making sure the team is successful.

"A lot of times you're in the situation with her with all the hype, accolades and pressure that you worry about yourself. But I've actually seen the most unselfish Beatrice this year than the three years that I've coached her. She's going to play with a tremendous amount of pressure on her this year and part of my job is to make sure that pressure stays, but doesn't turn into stress."

Mompremier, a Miami High grad, gained valuable experience representing the United States in the Pan Am Games and training with the U.S. national team over the summer. She shrugged off the preseason awards.

"It's great recognition to get, but I don't think it really matters at this point," she said. "You still have to come out and play your hardest every night."

UM athletic director Blake James said of Mompremier: "Credit to Katie for bringing such a talented young woman into our program and continuing to develop her as a player. The recognition by the league is them realizing the great things she accomplished last year and the opportunities for even better things this year."

Junior guard Mykea Gray also trained with Team USA and got tips from guards Diana Taurasi, Sue Bird and Skylar Diggins. "They talked to her the entire time about how to be a point guard, how to lead, what things to say," Meier said. "She is playing a bigger role this season. It's her time."

The men's team returns two starters — guards Chris Lykes and DJ Vasiljevic — and added freshmen Harlond Beverly, Anthony Walker and Isaiah Wong. Grad transfer Keith Stone from the University of Florida is rehabbing after knee surgery. One of the biggest stories is the transformation of 7-foot center Rodney Miller, who redshirted last year while he slimmed down 45 pounds.

"If he can stay healthy, he may be the most improved player in the ACC," Larranaga said.

Miller changed his eating habits, and battled his weight all last season. "There were days I'd get on the scale and nothing changed, so

that was hard," he said. "I used to feel sluggish on the court, and now I have energy, don't feel the time go by. I am quicker, can guard ball screens. It feels great."

The men play an exhibition Oct. 30 against Flagler and open the regular season at home against powerhouse Louisville. The women's exhibition is Oct. 29 against Nova and they play Jackson State Nov. 10.

Freshman SG Harlond Beverly brings plenty of excitement to Miami

David Luke
247Sports - InsideTheU
Oct. 27, 2019

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — It probably won't take long for Miami Hurricanes basketball fans to take a liking to freshman guard Harlond Beverly.

That's because Beverly (6-4, 185) is a high flying dunker that can jump 42 inches and has a consistent three point stroke.

"I view myself as a big, athletic guard that can play point guard, shooting guard, or small forward," Beverly said of his game. "I feel like I can pass pretty good, play pick and roll, and defend."

Beverly is probably UM's best leaper and he shared what type of dunks he likes to pull off when he is having fun by himself in the gym.

"I can do some through the legs or some 360 dunks when I am messing around," Beverly said.

Beverly says he understands that he will need to be a consistent three point shooter as he takes the jump up to the college level. He's pleased with the consistency he has shown in that regard since UM started practicing this preseason.

"I have been shooting really well from three since we have been practicing," Beverly said. "That has been a big focus for me."

Beverly also doesn't lack any confidence. He feels like he's made a smooth transition from the high school level to college.

"There isn't anything that I feel like I'm absolutely struggling on," Beverly said. "The coaches will tell me what I've done wrong and I will fix it and then we move on from there."

It hasn't taken Beverly long to make a strong impression on his UM teammates.

"Harlond is a guy that makes good reads out of the pick-and-roll," Kameron McGusty said. "He is a good passer and a good shooter. He is very athletic. He has a 40 inch vertical and it shows on the court."

Beverly is from Detroit, Michigan, but played his senior season at Montverde Academy in the Orlando area.

Beverly averaged 14.0 points per game at Montverde and helped lead the team to a 22-3 record and a No. 4 spot in the USA Today Super 25 national rankings.

As a junior at Southfield (Mich.) Christian, Beverly averaged 16 points, six rebounds, six assists, and three steals while leading his team to a Class D State Championship.

According to 247Sports, Beverly ranked as the No. 69 overall player in the country in the 2019 recruiting class.

Beverly was joined in Miami's 2019 recruiting class by talented guard Isaiah Wong, who ranked as the No. 87 overall player in the country according to 247Sports, and Anthony Walker, who ranked as a three star prospect by 247Sports.

He's enjoyed getting to know his fellow freshmen since arriving at UM.

"I like both of those guys," Beverly said. "We hang out a lot and our dorms are right by each other. I didn't know them at all before I got here, but they are great guys to be around and I look forward to playing with them in the future."

Beverly shared his thoughts on both Wong and Walker as players.

1 COMMENTS

"With Isaiah, I have never seen somebody of his age that can score like he can," Beverly said. "I have played against a lot of good players and he can really, really score. He can make threes, mid-range pull-ups, dunks, lay-ups—you name it and he has got it. Anthony Walker plays hard. He is a really good athlete that is a lot more skilled than he gets credit for. I think he can put it on the ground and shoot threes."

Miami will hold their exhibition game against Flagler on Wednesday, October 30th. The Hurricanes will tip-off their regular season by hosting No. 5 Louisville on November 5th at 6:30 p.m.

No longer undermanned, Miami Hurricanes men's basketball looking for bounce-back season

David Furones
South Florida Sun Sentinel
Oct. 22, 2019

Miami Hurricanes men's basketball coach Jim Larrañaga was giving an inspired response to a simple question a reporter asked about the positions where he still sees competition for playing time heading into the season.

"There's competition every single day," said Larrañaga at UM basketball's media day on Tuesday afternoon. "There's nothing guaranteed in this world. You've got to earn everything you get. Your playing time, your success doesn't come from something you did in the past, whether you did it in high school or you did it in practice or you did it in the last game.

"You've got to continue to perform very, very well because there's always someone ready to take your place."

Then it hit him. That wasn't something he could've said last year when the Hurricanes often had to clash with the elites in the Atlantic Coast Conference with a significantly undermanned roster.

"Except last year when we didn't have anybody," said Larrañaga, to laughs from media members on hand. "We just didn't have enough guys."

Miami only had seven recruited scholarship players available much of last season as the team went 14-18, and 5-13 in the ACC and without a postseason appearance to show for it. It was the result of a few factors.

There was the lack of a 2018 recruiting class with UM in the middle of the indictment in the FBI college basketball trial involving adidas — the program was later redacted from it. Sophomore Bruce Brown and freshman Lonnie Walker IV made the decision to go pro after the 2018 season. Forward Dewan Hernandez was ruled ineligible by the NCAA. Forward Deng Gak went down with a knee injury early in non-conference play. Center Rodney Miller was taking a non-medical red-shirt season to better condition himself and develop his game.

The Hurricanes now have some manpower to accompany returning guards in junior Chris Lykes and senior DJ Vasiljevic, who had to endure last season where, although often fighting, they were simply too worn out to compete down the stretch of games.

"I think a lot of the guys just want to forget about last year," Vasiljevic said. "Me and Chris have said this before, that if college basket-

ball games were 35 minutes, we would've won most of our games because the last five minutes is where we just lost gas."

Said Lykes, "These guys, I know they'll come to war with me every time. They're not afraid. They came to this school for a reason, to play in the ACC."

Lykes led UM with 16.2 points per game last year and this season was tabbed as a pre-season All-ACC second-team selection.

Miller lost 45 pounds, and Larrañaga feels he will be a most improved player candidate in the ACC. A key addition comes in redshirt junior guard Kameron McGusty, who last year sat out due to NCAA transfer rules as he came over from Oklahoma. Redshirt senior forward Keith Stone, a Deerfield Beach native, Zion Lutheran High grad and Florida transfer, is rehabbing from February surgery on a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his knee and is aiming to contribute once available.

Miami also got right back to recruiting well with its 2019 class and welcomes a pair of freshman guards who were given four-star ratings by 247 Sports out of high school in Isaiah Wong and Harlond Beverly.

The Hurricanes, who open the regular season at home on Nov. 5 with a conference game against Louisville, are projected to finish ninth in the ACC.

Mompremier to lead women's team

At the heart of the Miami women's basketball team's efforts to make a deeper run than the second-round NCAA Tournament appearance of a year ago is redshirt senior forward Beatrice Mompremier.

Mompremier was recognized as the ACC Preseason Player of the Year, but she would much rather have the award that comes after the games are played.

"It's a great recognition. I'm excited about it, but I feel like it really doesn't matter until the end of the season and I actually get it," Mompremier said.

Miami women's coach Katie Meier said Tuesday that Mompremier is "the best post player in the country" and one of the best overall, especially when she lets her competitiveness out.

"She wants to be in the pressure," Meier said. "There's sometimes in practice where you're like, 'Is that really the ACC Player of the Year?' Then you say, 'Okay, losers run' and you make it competitive, and she is the best

player in the nation in those moments."

UM men's basketball team opens regular season with huge test against Top-5 ACC rival

Michelle Kaufman
Miami Herald
Oct. 29, 2019

preseason AP Top 25. Beatrice Mompremier, the ACC Preseason Player of the Year, had a double-double in 15 minutes against Nova -- 16 points, 11 rebounds. Freshman Brianna Jackson had 11 points and 11 rebounds.

The University of Miami men's basketball team will have almost no time to ease into the 2019-20 season. The Hurricanes play one home exhibition game Wednesday night against Flagler College and then return to the Watsco Center Nov. 5 for their regular-season opener against No. 5-ranked Louisville.

Miami is coming off a disappointing 14-18 season in which it won just five of its 18 Atlantic Coast Conference games. Things are even more difficult this season. UM will play 20 ACC games, including 11 against teams that reached the 2019 NCAA Tournament.

"We have one of the most challenging schedules, not only in Miami basketball history, but in the history of the ACC and I say that very honestly without exaggerating," said UM coach Jim Larranaga. "The schedule is ridiculous ... We open up the seasons against Louisville, who is projected to be in the top five in the country and ESPN has them as a No 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament. We certainly have our challenges."

UM returns a pair of double-digit scorers in junior guard Chris Lykes and senior guard DJ Vasiljevic. Lykes, a preseason second-team All-ACC pick, is the second-leading returning scorer in the league with 16.2 points per game.

Two other players expected to play big roles are junior guard Kam McGusty, who sat out last season after transferring from Oklahoma, and redshirt junior center Rodney Miller, who lost 45 pounds and brings newfound energy to the post game.

Redshirt sophomore forward Deng Gak is back after missing the final 24 games last season due to injury. Three freshmen join the team — guard Harlond Beverly, forward Anthony Walker and guard Isaiah Wong.

"We have a lot of improving to do," Larranaga said. "We have a good blend of youthful enthusiasm and veteran experience."

Flagler, which finished 8-20 (5-17 PBC) during the 2018-19 season, is led by Gedi Juozapaitis. The sophomore guard/forward is the Saints' leading returning scorer (14.3 points per game) and rebounder (8.2).

The UM women opened their season Tuesday with a 90-46 win over Nova Southeastern. The Canes, who finished last season 25-9 (12-4 ACC), are ranked No. 18 in the

Fifth-ranked Louisville dominated Miami 87-74 in season opener. Here's what happened

Michelle Kaufman
Miami Herald
Nov. 5, 2019

The first sign that Tuesday was no ordinary season-opening night for the University of Miami men's basketball team: 18 NBA scouts requested seats.

The second clue: There was a traffic jam outside the Watsco Center, the student section was full, and nearly one-quarter of the crowd of 7,000-plus was occupied by opposing fans.

Fifth-ranked Louisville was in town for the toughest home-opener in Miami program history, and the Hurricanes found out in a hurry that they are not yet ready to compete with the elite teams of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

The Cardinals dominated both ends of the court, made Miami pay for every mistake, and cruised to an 87-74 victory that was more lopsided than the score.

The loudest, happiest fans in the arena were the red-clad Louisville fans, including actor Bill Murray, whose son, Luke, is a Cardinals assistant coach. Some of those fans plan to stick around for Louisville's volleyball game against UM on Friday, and the football game on Saturday.

Louisville forward Jordan Nwora, a Preseason All-American and Preseason ACC Player of the Year, led all scorers with 23 points on 8-of-16 shooting. He also had 12 rebounds, 10 on the defensive end, two assists, two steals, and three blocks. Nwora was one of five Cardinals in double figures, along with Dwayne Sutton (16), Ryan McMahon (16), Samuel Williamson (13), and Steven Enoch (11 points, 12 rebounds).

Other than a two-minute stretch during which three UM freshmen came off the bench to give the Canes a spark and a 16-9 lead, the game belonged to the Cardinals. Louisville answered Miami's early lead with a trio of McMahon three-pointers and a 17-0 run. By halftime, the Hurricanes were trailing 45-26 and frustrated.

"Our whole team struggled on the offensive end, we turned the ball over," said UM coach Jim Larranaga. "First game, great opponent, we were forcing things. That happens. You really want to play well. We lost a little bit of our patience and tried to do things we couldn't do."

The Cardinals outshot Miami 53% to 35% in the first half, scored at will in the paint, and

showed why they are considered among the nation's top teams. Miami, meanwhile, turned the ball over nine times before intermission and had only four assists.

Louisville opened up a 72-40 lead midway through the second half before the Canes went on a late run to make the final score respectable.

"Louisville played very good start to finish, they're a Top 5 team, and played like that," Larranaga said. "Our guys played the first 10 minutes like we wanted to, but we turned the ball over and gave them easy opportunities. We played much better late in the game."

UM point guard Chris Lykes, one of the team's bright lights in an otherwise forgettable 2018-19 season, struggled much of the night before finding his shot in the final five minutes. His left leg wrapped to protect a knee contusion, Lykes was outmanned and forced into ill-advised shots in the first half. He missed seven of his first nine shots before making six in a row late to finish with a team-high 18 points and five assists.

"Nerves, big game," Lykes said of his sloppy start. "We got down on ourselves, but I'm proud that we fought back in the end."

DJ Vasiljevic, who had 16 points, said: "We could have lost by 30-plus, but we didn't give up and only lost by 13."

Oklahoma transfer Kam McGusty added 12. The freshmen played with a lot of energy, but had mixed results. Harlond Beverly had nine points, Isaiah Wong went 1-for-6 for two points, and Anthony Walker had nine points and five rebounds in 17 minutes.

Larranaga said he expects all three freshmen will improve as the season progresses, and he has high hopes for them.

"I was pleased for 32 minutes," said Louisville coach Chris Mack. "The last eight minutes, give Miami credit, they hit some shots, but we weren't the same team in the last eight minutes...We didn't play with the same gusto the last eight minutes."

Normally, at this time of year, the Hurricanes are easing their way into the season with non-conference games against mid-majors and hyphenated teams. This year, they were thrown into the fire on opening night as the new ACC Network wanted league games on opening night.

Asked how he felt about opening with such a strong conference opponent, Larranaga said:

"That wouldn't be my choice. I'd like to play someone we beat by 20. Hey, this is a top five team. Question is can we improve enough that we are with them at the end?"

The Hurricanes are back home Friday night against Florida Atlantic University.