

Sports Comment: DeChellis pleased with 2017 Veterans Classic lineup

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | April 26, 2017

Navy head coach Ed DeChellis is quite pleased with the lineup for the 2017 Veterans Classic, which will once again kick off the college basketball season on Friday, Nov. 10 at Alumni Hall.

DeChellis, who does a lot of the organizational legwork for the event himself, has landed Alabama, Memphis and Pittsburgh for the fourth annual installment.

"I think it's a really good field. We're going to have good exciting basketball featuring high-level athletes," DeChellis said in a telephone interview last week.

Alabama will meet Memphis in the opening game (6:30 p.m.) while Navy will take on Pittsburgh in the nightcap (9 p.m.). There is an interesting theme with this year's Veterans Classic as all three visiting programs are rebuilding under high-profile coaches.

Avery Johnson is entering his third season at the helm of Alabama, which placed sixth in the ultra-competitive Southeastern Conference in 2016-2017. The Crimson Tide finished 19-15 overall after losing in the first round of the National Invitational Tournament.

Alabama is expected to be much improved next season as Johnson has signed a five-man recruiting class that is ranked fourth nationally by Rivals.com and sixth by ESPN.com. Guard John Petty, a five-star prospect and Alabama's Mr. Basketball, is the jewel of the class. Collin Sexton, another guard, played in the McDonald's All-American game.

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Alabama is hoping to retain Braxton Key, an SEC All-Freshman team selection who has declared for the NBA Draft, but has not hired an agent. The 6-foot-8, 225-pound forward led the Crimson Tide in scoring last season.

Johnson played 16 seasons in the NBA and was the starting point guard for San Antonio when it captured the 1999 championship. He spent three seasons as head coach of the Dallas Mavericks and directed the first Western Conference championship club in franchise history.

Tubby Smith is beginning his second year as head coach at Memphis, which went 19-13 and

did not play in the postseason in 2016-2017. The Tigers recently suffered a blow when brothers Dedric and K.J. Lawson transferred to Kansas.

The Lawson brothers had originally committed to Memphis during the tenure of head coach Josh Pastner, who had hired their father as an assistant coach. Smith demoted Keelon Lawson to director of player development, a move that directly led to the his sons' decision to transfer.

Dedric Lawson was a first team All-American Athletic Conference selection while K.J. Lawson made the All-Rookie squad. Memphis also lost junior guard Markel Crawford, who has transferred to Mississippi.

Memphis also has a strong recruiting class led by Kareem Brewton and Kyvon Davenport, both of whom were named first team All-Americans by the National Junior College Athletic Association. Davenport, a 6-foot-8 forward, is a transfer from Georgia Highlands College while Brewton, a 6-4 guard, comes in from Eastern Florida State College.

Smith is also bringing in three true freshmen with combination guard Jamal Johnson the highest-touted. He is the son of former NBA standout Buck Johnson.

Smith is an iconic figure in college basketball, having compiled a 595-302 record in 27 seasons as a head coach. Smith guided Kentucky to the 1998 NCAA championship and is a three-time National Coach of the Year. He is the sixth of 17 children who grew up in the town of Scotland in Southern Maryland.

Kevin Stallings is another second-year head coach, having replaced Jamie Dixon (Texas Christian) at Pittsburgh. Stallings enjoyed tremendous success during a 17-year run at Vanderbilt and boasts a 496-300 career record.

Pitt struggled to a 16-17 record in its first season under Stallings, who dismissed one player (Justice Kithcart) from the team and had three others (Corey Manigault, Crisshawn Clark and Cameron Johnson) transfer at season's end.

Those departures cleared room for a talented four-man recruiting class that is anchored by 6-foot-10 center Peace Ilegomah.

"You are talking about three veteran coaches that have a great understanding of how to put programs together," DeChellis said of Johnson, Smith and Stallings.

In developing the 2017 Veterans Classic, DeChellis initially contacted Stallings to gauge Pittsburgh's interest in participating. Stallings was responsible for Vanderbilt playing in the 2016 edition, but departed for Pitt and did not attend himself.

"Kevin originally signed the contract when he was at Vanderbilt so I knew he had an interest in the event," DeChellis said. "So I went back to Kevin and he agreed to come and play."

Navy athletic officials are hopeful the Pittsburgh basketball fans will make the roughly four-hour trek to Annapolis to attend the Veterans Classic. "We think the Pittsburgh people will travel and generate some excitement for the event," DeChellis said.

DeChellis then approached Alabama through assistant coach John Pelfrey, who is a close friend. DeChellis had Jerry Pelfrey as an assistant while at East Tennessee State and has known his younger brother for years.

"Avery Johnson has built a really good program at Alabama. They are getting close to having an NCAA Tournament team," DeChellis said. "Avery has some outstanding freshmen coming in so we thought Alabama would be an exciting addition."

CBS Television, which partners with Navy on the Veterans Classic, helped lure Memphis. CBS broadcasts American Athletic Conference basketball and that is the connection there.

"We were able to get Memphis through CBS and that worked out pretty well because Tubby is originally from Maryland so this will be sort of a homecoming for him. He is excited to come back to the area," DeChellis said.

DeChellis has been a college basketball coach for more than three decades and has developed a slew of friendships. His ability to pick up the phone and call a prominent head coach or athletic director has been crucial to creating quality matchups for the Veterans Classic. A pair of legendary head coaches — Tom Izzo and Roy Williams — brought Michigan State and North Carolina to the 2014 and 2015

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Veterans Classic, respectively.

“You get the ball rolling with relationships. If you can call a friend in the business and get an opportunity to explain what the Veterans Classic is all about, that’s the starting point,” DeChellis said. “I sell this event as a unique 48-hour experience. I tell the head coaches that their players are going to experience things they can’t experience anywhere else.”

Every coach who has participated in the Veterans Classic has raved about the day spent touring the Naval Academy. Players from the three visiting schools get an inside look at the institution while getting an opportunity to climb aboard a Yard Patrol vessel, operate a ship simulator and walk through Bancroft Hall.

Ernie Nestor left mark at Wake Forest and everywhere he coached

Dan Collins | Winston-Salem Journal | April 10, 2017

For 41 basketball seasons, coach Ernie Nestor did what anyone who ever met him could see he was meant to do.

And now he's done.

For now.

Nestor, the only man to serve as an assistant coach at Wake Forest on two separate occasions, retired recently from his position as assistant coach at Navy. He and his wife Janet have settled at Hampstead, N.C., along the coast.

"I don't think it's over for him," Dave Odom said. "He'll have a future in basketball.

"It'll be different."

Odom is only one of dozens of coaches who learned to value and appreciate Nestor during a career that led him to 10 different programs — two as a head coach. A native of Phillippi, W. Va., who graduated from Anderson-Broadus University, Nestor was an assistant to Carl Tacy at Wake Forest from 1979-85 and returned as an assistant to Odom from 1993 through 2001.

So he was one seat down on the bench during some of the finest hours of Wake Forest basketball, most notably the drive by the 1984 team to "retire" coach Ray Meyer of DePaul on its run to the Final Eight matchup against Houston and Hakeem Olajuwon and the Deacons' unforgettable back-to-back ACC championships of 1995 and 1996.

"I have nothing but great memories of the Wake Forest basketball program," Nestor said. "Basketball was such an important part of the fabric of the university. It allowed a small little Baptist school to reach out and be a part of the national fabric of college basketball."

Nestor's knowledge of the game has never been questioned. He was head coach at George Mason, where he coached the program to its first NCAA Tournament appearance in 1989, and at Elon, where helped the program's transition to Division I and was named Southern Conference Coach of the Year in 2006.

He was best known as a bench coach, the assistant charged with helping the head coach keep the X's straight from the O's. He served

that role with noted distinction for Odom at Wake Forest and South Carolina, for Frank Haith at Missouri and for Ed DeChelis at Penn State and Navy.

"I've been very fortunate, very fortunate," Nestor said. "I'm very blessed and very appreciative of all the good people that I've met along the way."

But as anyone who stopped by Nestor's office for a 5-minute chat that ended 45 minutes later will attest, Nestor made his deepest mark not as a coach. The hundreds of players who played for him since he took his first job with Bassett (Va.) High School in 1970 — many of whom remain in touch — remember him best for his grounded outlook on life and unimpeachable words of wisdom.

"Ernie is old-school in everything he does, and I mean that in the most positive way," Odom said. "His conversation is all down to earth. He prefers to be in the shadow instead of the lime-light. He appreciates things that lead to winning — the importance of dribbling and passing and shooting, ball control, team play.

"When he transcends the basketball into life, it's the tangible things of life that make people successful, all of which he appreciates — trust, love, loyalty, compassion, understanding and fellowship. I mean he appreciates and embodies all of those things.

"As it relates to Ernie as a friend, I don't know if I've ever had a better one."

Nestor said he and Janet will let the dust settle before they decide on their next chapter of life, but Odom is not the only person to expect Nestor to be involved in basketball in some capacity. To coach any sport is to know people, and few know people as well as Ernie Nestor.

"It's been fun," Nestor said. "I've been very, very fortunate. It's been great.

"As you go through this, it's hard for me to believe the time has passed as quickly. I still have relationships and hear from kids I coached in high school.

"I never got into coaching to make a lot of money, and my wife tells me it's one of the few goals I actually achieved. But my life is rich

beyond any means."

Navy comeback falls short against Bucknell in tournament semifinal

Kurt Ritzman | Annapolis Capital | March 6, 2017

LEWISBURG, Pa. — After getting off to a nightmarish start a little more than a week ago in its regular-season finale at Bucknell, the Navy men's basketball team might have had a sense of déjà vu Sunday in a Patriot League semifinal.

Bucknell scored the first nine points of the game, but this time Navy battled back and turned the game into a nail-biter before ultimately falling, 70-65, to the top-seeded Bison.

"We didn't start off very well," Navy coach Ed DeChellis said. "But we shook that bad start off and got our legs back and played pretty well the rest of the game.

"We got waxed here last week. We came in with a different mentality and different attitude and played pretty good."

Bucknell went on an early 30-1 run in the regular-season finale and cruised to a 22-point victory. This time, the Midshipmen got themselves back into the game.

"We just remained calm, stuck together and stuck to coach's gameplan," Navy junior Shawn Anderson said. "Teams are going to make runs. Hats off to them. They made a great run again to start the game, but you have to keep battling. Basketball is a game of ups and downs. We kept fighting and eventually got ourselves back into the game."

Navy got back into the game with a big run of its own. Trailing 17-6 with 13:32 to play in the first half, the Midshipmen tallied 15 of the next 19 points to tie the game at 21, getting points from seven different players during the run.

The game was close throughout after that.

"I wanted them to have a tight shirt today," DeChellis said. "When you're up 10, 12, 13 the shots are a heck of a lot easier than when it's a four-, five-, six-point game. We kept talking about trying to make them play with a tight shirt, trying to shrink the rim for them. Our kids did a good job."

A floater by John Azzinaro put the Bison ahead 62-56 with 4:05 left. Anderson made a pair of free throws and George Kiernan added one before Hasan Abdullah made a tough layup through contact and a free throw to tie the game.

Bucknell scored four of the next five points to go ahead 66-63. Anderson pulled the Midshipmen within one after converting a layup in traffic for two of his team-high 21 points.

"Guys were penetrating," Anderson said. "We played very unselfishly and we got the ball inside."

DeChellis said: "Our plan was to drive the ball and attack them."

The Bison again had an answer. Kimbal Mackenzie drilled a 3-pointer from the corner with 40 seconds left to put Bucknell ahead by four. Mackenzie was zero-for-4 behind the arc before that shot. After a steal, Zach Thomas made one free throw to extend the lead to five. The Midshipmen missed three good looks at 3-point shots in the final 15 seconds.

"College basketball is about making a big shot and Kimbal Mackenzie made a big shot," DeChellis said. "We had three cracks at it and couldn't make a shot. Sometimes the basketball gods say, 'That's enough. You're going home.' That's the way it goes."

Navy shot only 21-of-65 from the field and went 21-of-30 from the line. Bucknell shot 22-of-45 from the field and 22-of-27 from the line.

"They did a very good job on the offensive glass," Bucknell coach Nathan Davis said. "We were lucky. Let's be honest, we're lucky. Any time a team gets 20 more shots than you and takes more free throws than you, you're probably in trouble."

Navy only led for a small portion of the game, but the Midshipmen did hold the lead at halftime after Anderson made a layup off an inbound play with three seconds to put his team ahead, 32-31.

But Thomas and Nana Foulland had an answer. The pair, which combined for 40 points, scored the first five points of the second half and Navy never regained the lead.

Bryce Dulin added 15 points for the Midshipmen as only four players reached double figures in the game.

"For them to have had the year that they had with what was expected of them says a

lot about (DeChellis) and his staff and their ability to coach his team and about his players' ability to compete and to strive to be the best they can be," Davis said. "They clearly gave us everything we could handle today, as we expected."

Past history means nothing as Navy seeks upset of top-seeded Bucknell

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | March 4, 2017

Head coach Ed DeChellis knows the odds are stacked against Navy going into Sunday afternoon's Patriot League Tournament semifinal at top-seeded Bucknell.

Bucknell (23-8, 15-3) has been the class of the Patriot League all season, finishing three games ahead of Boston University and Lehigh (both 12-6) in the standings. The Bison lost just one conference contest at home.

Navy has lost nine straight games at Sojka Pavilion, last beating Bucknell on its home court in 2010. The Bison have won seven in a row in the series after sweeping the Midshipmen again this season.

In the last meeting at Sojka Pavilion, held just one week ago, Bucknell blew out Navy by 22 points.

"What's happened in the past doesn't matter at this point," DeChellis said. "We only need to beat them one time. We don't have to play a five-game series. We just need to go in there and play well for one game."

That is the beauty of postseason basketball and why it's called March Madness. Top seeds like Bucknell get toppled all the time in tournaments. That is why head coach Nathan Davis is worried because the Bison are expected to win while the Midshipmen will come in with nothing to lose.

"I fully expect them to play well and hit us with their best punch. It's our job to show up and play our best basketball," Davis said. "Navy is a very capable club. They play great defense and are very physical. They make you earn every basket."

Bucknell had four of five starters named to the All-Patriot League team, led by Player of the Year Nana Foulland. The 6-foot-9, 230-pound junior center averages 14.8 points and 8.0 rebounds per game while leading the league in blocked shots (58).

"It's hard to quantify with statistics the impact Nana makes on the game. He is such a presence in so many facets," said Davis, a former Navy assistant in his second season at Bucknell.

Foulland is a strong post player and shoots 62 percent from the field. He does a tremen-

dous job of defending ball screens and is the consummate rim protector.

"Foulland has become much more effective on offense this season. He's an outstanding passer out of the post, which gets other guys good shots," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "He is a very dangerous shot blocker, often coming from other areas to block or alter shots. He is very strong, really quick and can really post you up."

DeChellis said No. 4 Navy will rotate defenders on Foulland with senior center Edward Alade (6-9, 235) and junior forward Tom Lacey (6-7, 235) likely getting most of the work.

Davis believes junior forward Zach Thomas could easily have been Player of the Year. The 6-foot-7, 228-pound product of Oakdale High in Frederick County earned first team All-Patriot League honors after leading Bucknell in scoring (15.8) and ranking second in both rebounding (6.6) and assists (10.6).

"I think Zach Thomas had a great year. He can score in a variety of ways and is a really good passer," DeChellis said.

Junior point guard Stephen Brown, a second team All-Patriot League pick, has provided outstanding floor leadership and playmaking. The 5-foot-11 speedster, who hails from Manassas, Virginia, is averaging 11.1 points and ranks second in the conference with 4.8 assists.

"Stephen has a great feel for what we want to do," Davis said. "He is so fast and really pushes the ball from end-to-end. He makes great decisions on the offensive end and can really harass the opposing point guard on the defensive end."

Sophomore guard Kimbal Mackenzie received third team all-conference honors after averaging 11.5 points and leading the Bison with 55 3-pointers.

"I think Bucknell is very, very good basketball team. They have five starters that can score and bring guys off the bench that can score," DeChellis said. "Bucknell is also very good defensively. They hold teams to a low shooting percentage. So you are talking about a team that is the complete package, a very dynamic team on both ends of the floor."

Bucknell leads the Patriot League in scoring at almost 80 points per game. Meanwhile, Navy stands second in scoring defense, holding opponents to an average of 64.8 points.

"They have great chemistry and really share the basketball. They can score from every spot," DeChellis said of the Bison. "When you have a really good point guard and a great big man inside, that's a great start. They are very efficient offensively. They don't waste motion or get hurried. This is going to be a great challenge for our defense. We certainly can't allow them to score 82 points like the last time."

Navy won a low-scoring affair with Holy Cross, 49-42, in Thursday night's quarterfinals. That contest could be characterized as either an offensive struggle or a defensive battle depending on the perspective. The Midshipmen, who rank eighth in the 10-team Patriot League in scoring offense with 65.4 points per game, will probably need to surpass 70 to beat the Bison.

"We'll need to score some baskets in order to stay in this game. Bucknell is just too good of a shooting team," DeChellis admitted. "It's going to be a great task to stick with them on the scoreboard and we'll have to play really, really well offensively in order to do so. We'll need to make some threes, some perimeter jumpers or else they're going to pack it in and prevent us from driving the ball."

Sophomore forward George Kiernan, with 18 points, was the only Navy player in double figures in the Holy Cross win. Junior swingman Shawn Anderson and junior guard Bryce Dulin, the team's top scorers at 11.9 and 9.1 points per game, will need to step up as the Midshipmen will likely need to put three or four players in double digits versus the Bison.

Bucknell did not suffer many slip-ups this season, but one came recently when it fell behind by 15 points and had a furious rally come up short in a 78-77 loss to Loyola.

"We learned a valuable lesson against Loyola. We need to play every possession like we're down by 15 points," said Davis, whose squad has won its last four games by an average of 22 points. "We've been very focused and played with a high level of intensity since then."

Kiernan 3-pointer sends Navy past Holy Cross, 49-42

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | March 3, 2017

With about five minutes remaining in the first half, Navy forward George Kiernan got tangled up with a Holy Cross player and fell hard to the floor.

Kiernan laid on the court for a few moments before slowly getting up while rubbing his left shoulder. The 6-foot-7 sophomore left the game and headed to the locker room for treatment.

Kiernan had the shoulder wrapped when he returned to the floor. He reentered the game a few minutes later and threw down an emphatic dunk to close out the first half, reassuring the Navy coaching staff that he was OK.

It was a good thing that Kiernan was able to play through the injury because he proved the difference-maker for Navy in the quarterfinals of the Patriot League Tournament on Thursday night.

Kiernan scored a career-high 18 points and drained a clutch 3-pointer with 30 seconds remaining as Navy pulled out a 49-42 victory over Holy Cross before a sparse crowd of 988 at Alumni Hall. Kiernan came off a screen, took a pass from point guard Hasan Abdullah and calmly swished a three from the left wing to give the Midshipmen their first quarterfinal win since 2001.

"We had a play drawn up and Hasan did a great job of pulling the guard away from my side of the floor," Kiernan said. "Hasan kicked the ball back to me and I just stepped in and let it fly."

Kiernan played in just two varsity games as a freshman and was making his Patriot League Tournament debut. However, head coach Ed DeChellis did not hesitate to call the Illinois native's number at crunch time.

"You're looking out there and wondering who can make a shot. We decided to get George a shot," DeChellis said. "It was a big game, a big stage and George made a big shot. He grew up tonight. He played really well and gave us a lift."

Kiernan said the same shoulder had popped out a couple times during practice and he needed ice to stop the swelling and dull the pain. There was no time for that type of treatment during the heat of battle on Thursday night.

"I knew I could play through it. I just slapped on the brace and went back out there," Kiernan said. "If I was feel any pain, I just needed to look at the seniors. I didn't want their season to end tonight. It's all mental."

Junior guard Bryce Dulin scored nine points for Navy (16-15), which will play top-seeded Bucknell (24-8) in Sunday's semifinals. Junior forward Tom Lacey contributed eight points and five rebounds for the Mids, who held on after giving up seven-point leads on three occasions.

"Give our kids a lot of credit. There's a minute to go and the game is on the line and we found a way to win," DeChellis said.

Senior guard Robert Campion scored 13 points to lead Holy Cross (15-17), the defending Patriot League Tournament champion. Senior forward Malachi Alexander and sophomore forward Karl Charles added 11 and 10 points for the Crusaders, who shot just 32.6 percent (14-for-43) from the field for the game.

Navy also made big plays on the defensive end down the stretch. After Kiernan made the go-ahead bucket, Lacey rose high to alter a layup attempt by Holy Cross guard Patrick Benzan. The Crusaders grabbed the offensive rebound, but Alexander missed everything on a 3-point attempt that would have tied the game.

Kiernan made two free throws to increase the lead to five points and junior swingman Shawn Anderson followed with a steal. Anderson then made two from the charity stripe as the Mids closed the contest on a 7-0 run.

"This is a big step for us. Now we're in the semifinals and anything can happen," said DeChellis, whose squad snapped a four-game losing streak. "We've had a tough two weeks. We haven't played well and the kids have been down. We had three good days of practice this week and I thought we got better."

Navy grabbed 20 offensive rebounds and converted them into 15 second-chance points, which Holy Cross head coach Bill Carmody thought was key.

"We didn't rebound. They killed us on the offensive boards. It was unbelievable," Carmody said. "There were three straight possessions when they missed a shot, got the rebound and scored. I just thought that was the theme tonight."

Navy had its own offensive struggles, shooting just 34.8 percent (16-46) and committing 16 turnovers. The Midshipmen continued to misfire from 3-point range, making just 3 of 21 attempts from beyond the arc.

Kiernan came off the bench to score six points in the final six minutes as Navy took a 19-12 halftime lead. Kiernan made a layup in transition to snap a 10-10 tie then hit a pair of free throws.

Navy closed the half on a 5-0 to take its largest lead. Head coach Ed DeChellis called timeout with 19 seconds left and set up a play that saw Abdullah split a double-team, drive the lane and dish to Kiernan on the baseline for a two-hand dunk at the buzzer to give . That gave Navy its largest lead

It was a sloppy first half that saw the teams combined to make just 10 field goals and commit 15 turnovers. Holy Cross hit just 4 of 19 shots (21 percent) while Navy (6-for-21) wasn't much better.

Holy Cross opened the second half with six straight points to cut the deficit to one, prompting DeChellis to call an early timeout to light into his troops. Navy responded with a 6-0 run of its own with senior center Edward Alade throwing down two-hand dunks on consecutive possessions to push the lead back to 25-18 at the 15:31 mark.

It would go back-and-forth that way for the next seven minutes with Navy taking a seven-point lead twice more and quickly giving it up. Campion converted a three-point play and scored off a post move to spark a 10-3 lead that produced the only tie of the second half.

Guard Patrick Benzan went coast-to-coast for a layup that got Holy Cross even at 34. Charles then made four straight free throws as the Cru-

Kiernan 3-pointer sends Navy past Holy Cross, 49-42 (cont...)

saders took a 39-36 lead with 4:24 remaining.

Dulin scored off an offensive rebound and Kiernan made two foul shots as the Mids regained the lead, 40-39, with 2:56 to go. A driving layup by Dulin upped the home team's advantage to three, but Charles calmly swished a long 3-pointer from the wing to tie the score at 42 with 1:35 left.

It was still tied when Navy regained possession in the final minute and DeChellis called timeout with 39.7 seconds on the clock. The Midshipmen worked the ball around the perimeter and Kiernan came open on the left wing for the 3-pointer that proved decisive.

"We're going to feel good about this one tonight, but tomorrow is a new day and a new challenge," Kiernan said. "Bucknell is a great team. We need to get focused for the next game and give Bucknell a great effort."

Navy men's basketball looks to flip script in Patriot League tourney

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | March 2, 2017

There was a time this season when Navy basketball players spoke confidently about capturing the Patriot League championship. Now the Midshipmen are just trying to win a game.

Navy went from the hottest team in the Patriot League to the coldest, seemingly overnight. The Midshipmen reeled off eight consecutive conference victories then closed the regular season on a four-game losing streak.

Head coach Ed DeChellis is hoping Navy can rediscover the winning touch on Thursday when it hosts Holy Cross in the quarterfinals of the Patriot League Tournament. The fourth-seeded Midshipmen split with the fifth-seeded Crusaders during the regular season.

"Basketball is a game of momentum. Things can flip very quickly. Just like it suddenly flipped bad, we can flip it back to good," DeChellis said.

Navy's players are certainly thankful for the clean slate the postseason provides. The Midshipmen are hosting a quarterfinal game for the first time since 2009 and will be looking for a lift from a raucous crowd at Alumni Hall.

"Coach D talks about having three seasons within a season. We're now in a new season. It's playoff season. We have a fresh start," Navy junior forward Tom Lacey said. "We've got a home game to start the tournament so the basketball gods blessed us a bit. We're really excited. We think we have an opportunity to come into the Patriot League Tournament and do something special."

Navy comes into the tournament following consecutive blowout losses — 82-60 at Bucknell and 74-58 at home against American. Poor shooting and listless defense have been the root of the current four-game slump, which began with a 19-point loss at Lehigh on February 15 and included a defeat at the hands of archrival Army in which Navy blew a 25-point second-half lead.

"We've kind of hit a wall where everyone is not playing well at the same time," DeChellis said. "We haven't been making any shots, and it seems like it's been everyone at the same time.

You can overcome one or two guys not shoot-

ing well, but we have five or six."

The Midshipmen shot a woeful 29.5 percent (18-for-61) on Saturday versus the Bison and 31.3 percent (21-67) the previous Wednesday against the Eagles.

"We're getting open shots and just not making them. We missed 14 layups against Bucknell. It comes down to focus, concentration and confidence," DeChellis said. "Our best attribute and our worst enemy are the same thing — it's the mind. You need to have a shooter's mentality and believe the next one is going in."

Aggressive, tenacious defense provided the foundation for the eight-game winning streak and the coaching staff has also been disappointed with the team's performance on that end of the floor of late.

"Our players have been so consumed with the offensive struggles that it's carrying over to other areas. We've let our offense affect our defense, which is something you just cannot do," DeChellis said. "So a real focus in practice this week has been getting back to basics as far as transition defense and half-court defense, making sure we're pressuring the ball and rotating properly."

Lacey admitted the basket can become smaller when players are struggling with their shooting. The emotional leader of the Mids said there is no excuse for not giving maximum effort on defense.

"It's about being a mature team and knowing that when the shots aren't falling we can still play tough defense," he said.

On the bright side, Navy knows it can easily get on a roll and reel off three straight wins to earn the tournament title, which comes with an automatic berth into the NCAA Tournament. The Midshipmen have beaten eight of the nine schools in the Patriot League this season, only getting swept by the regular season champion Bison.

"To win eight straight conference games is a real feat for any college basketball team. It shows what this team is capable of accomplishing," DeChellis said. "If you had told me before the season that we were going to win 10 games in the league, finish in fourth place and have a home game to start the tourna-

ment, I would be pretty happy about that. We raised expectations on our season by winning a bunch of games in a row. Now we have to be able to fulfill those expectations."

Navy is 11-2 all-time in Patriot League Tournament quarterfinals played in Annapolis. Unfortunately, the Midshipmen have been on the road in that round far too often since Y2K and are seeking their first quarterfinal win since 2001.

Navy (15-15, 10-8) is led by junior swingman Shawn Anderson, a second team All-Patriot League selection who topped the team in scoring (12.1 points per game) for the second straight season. The 6-foot-4, 220-pounder is second on the squad in rebounding (4.5), assists (3.0) and steals (1.2).

Junior guard Bryce Dulin made the Patriot League All-Defensive team and also emerged as a scoring threat, tying sophomore Hasan Abdullah as Navy's second-leading scorer (9.1 points apiece). Dulin ranks second in the Patriot League in 3-point field goal percentage shooting (.429).

Lacey leads Navy and stands third in the Patriot League with a 7.8 rebounding average. The 6-foot-7, 235-pounder's 93 offensive rebounds rank as the fourth-best single-season total in school history.

After taking off on Sunday, Navy spent Monday and Tuesday focusing largely on itself before getting heavy into the Holy Cross gameplan.

"These three days of practice are something we really needed. It's been good to have some time to work on ourselves," Lacey said. "What's most important to know is that it's all about us. It's not so much what the other team does. If we play the way we're capable, we're going to win games. We're grinders and scrappers. When we play that way we're a hard team to beat."

Holy Cross, which would have secured the fourth seed and hosted Navy had it beaten Boston University in the regular season finale, is the defending Patriot League Tournament champion. The Crusaders came into last year's tourney as the ninth seed and proceeded to win four games on the road to take the title.

Senior forward Malachi Alexander was named

Navy men's basketball looks to flip script in Patriot League tourney (cont...)

second team All-Patriot League after leading Holy Cross in rebounding (5.1) and steals (5.5) while ranking second in scoring (13.4). The 6-foot-7, 217-pound Bowie native was also named to the All-Defensive team.

Senior guard Robert Champion led the Crusaders in scoring (13.5) while sophomore forward Karl Charles showed versatility by averaging 9.4 points, 3.3 rebounds and a team-high 3.6 assists.

Second-year Holy Cross head coach Bill Carmody did not mince words when asked where his club is at heading into the tournament.

"The same place it's been all season. We're a .500 club. Win a few, lose a few," said Carmody, who previously served as head coach at Princeton and Northwestern. "Sometimes we play well for 25 or 30 minutes, but we haven't put that many complete games together, which is a little discouraging. At this time of the year you want to be playing really well and sort of peaking, and I don't know if we are."

DeChellis said the Midshipmen will need to find their shooting strokes on Thursday night since the Crusaders will stay in a zone defense the entire game.

"Holy Cross plays a 1-3-1 zone and a 3-2 matchup zone so we're not going to be able to drive the ball to the basket all night long," he said. "We're going to have to make some perimeter jump shots."

Navy men's basketball gasping for air

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | February 23, 2017

Navy stumbled down the stretch last season, losing five of its last six games. The Midshipmen dropped four straight to close the regular season then fell in the quarterfinals of the Patriot League Tournament.

That disappointing finish spoiled an otherwise positive campaign that saw the Mids win 19 games, most since 2008-2009.

Navy is in danger of having a repeat scenario this season. The Midshipmen have once again picked the wrong time to struggle and have gone from fighting for the Patriot League championship to needing to win their final regular season game in order to avoid going on the road to start the Patriot League Tournament.

Freshman guard Sa'eed Nelson scored 19 points to spark a balanced attack as American led from start to finish in beating Navy, 74-58, ruining Senior Night at Alumni Hall. Freshman center Mark Gasperini added 13 points for the Eagles, who jumped out to an early seven-point lead and controlled play the rest of the way.

Senior wing Charlie Jones and junior forward Mark Cimino scored 12 points apiece for American (7-21, 4-13), which shot a season-best 61 percent from the field for the game. The Eagles came in shooting 30 percent from 3-point range this season, but drained 6 of 11 attempts on Wednesday night.

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson scored 17 points to lead Navy (15-14, 10-7), which suffered its third straight loss. Junior forward Tom Lacey notched a double-double with 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Midshipmen, who never found any sort of offensive rhythm and made just 21 of 67 field goals.

"Every shot seems like life or death right now. We couldn't make a basket and that's because we aren't relaxed on the floor. We're playing really tight," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "As I told the team in the locker room, we need to slow down, relax and take a breath of fresh air."

Senior center Edward Alade had nine points and five rebounds for Navy, which was run off its own floor by a team it had beaten by 18 points earlier this season and which came in having lost eight of its last nine contests.

Navy must now beat league-leading Bucknell on the road this Saturday afternoon to avoid closing the regular season on a four-game losing streak for the second straight year. The Midshipmen have not beaten the Bison in Lewisburg since 2010.

Navy, which has already clinched a first-round bye, needs a win or a Holy Cross loss in order to earn a home game in the tournament quarterfinals.

"I feel like there is still a chapter to be written about this team," DeChellis said.

Navy endured a defensive collapse over the final 13 minutes of Saturday's disappointing loss to Army, which rallied from a 25-point deficit. The Midshipmen had more defensive breakdowns against the Eagles, who scored 34 points in the paint with most coming off uncontested layups.

"We can't let this team score 74 points," DeChellis said of American, which is second-to-last in the Patriot League in scoring offense with 61 points per game. "We played really hard on the perimeter and pushed out trying to pressure the ball. They were driving and cutting past us. They just chopped us up offensively and got way too many layups."

Anderson drained a pair of 3-pointers while junior guard Bryce Dulin also connected from long range as Navy pulled within one, 37-36, at the 16:34 mark of the second half. Gasperini answered with a three-point play and a power move to start a 7-0 run that pushed American's lead back to eight.

Every subsequent Midshipmen run was quickly rebuffed and the Eagles took their largest lead of 14 points with 4:05 remaining.

Navy grabbed a season-high 23 offensive rebounds, but converted those into just 15 second-chance points. The Midshipmen were particularly cold from 3-point range, making just 5 of 28 attempts.

"We have guys not shooting the ball very well, and when you're not shooting the ball well it affects your defense," DeChellis said.

Navy's five seniors were honored in an emotional pregame ceremony then started the game together. DeChellis has rewarded his

seniors in that manner throughout his 21-year head coaching career.

Alade is the only one of the seniors who is normally a starter. Grant Vermeer, who has appeared in just seven games this season, played out of position at point guard. It was the first time this season the five seniors have been on the court together.

Not surprisingly, the unit was out of sync and fell behind 9-2 after missing three shots and committing turnover on five possessions. Meanwhile, American came out hot by hitting three straight 3-pointers — two by Cimino.

DeChellis inserted his other four usual starters at the 16:48 mark and Navy played catch-up for the rest of the first half.

Jones drained a pair of threes and scored 10 points as American took a 33-27 halftime lead. Cimino had eight points by intermission for the Eagles, who shot a sizzling 59 percent (13-22) from the field.

Anderson came off the bench to score eight points for Navy, which shot 31 percent (10-32) from the field and trailed by as much as 10 points.

"We played really well offensively and I thought our zone defense was helpful," American head coach Mike Brennan said. "We were getting good quality shots from outside and inside. I thought Navy missed a lot of shots they normally make."

Navy men's basketball to honor senior class

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | February 22, 2017

Zach Fong played in 29 of 30 games and averaged almost 17 minutes as a freshman with the Navy men's basketball team. As a senior, Fong has seen his playing time dwindle to just under eight minutes and there have been nine games that he didn't even get into.

"My first few seasons were pretty successful for me. This season has been a different role, but I've embraced it and it's still been a fun time," Fong said.

It's a similar scenario for Grant Vermeer, who played in 22 games with one start as a plebe and has appeared in just seven contests as a senior.

"Obviously, roles have changed over four years, but along the way I've learned some great life lessons. I wouldn't trade the experience I've had here at the academy for anything," Vermeer said.

That selfless attitude expressed by Fong and Vermeer is why the current senior class will always hold a special place in the heart of head coach Ed DeChellis. The Class of 2017, which also includes Edward Alade, Tim Abruzzo and James Hemphill, has helped change the fortunes of Navy men's basketball.

"It has been a very good class on a lot of levels. Individually, they've each had great moments basketball-wise. Collectively, they just have a great fiber to them," DeChellis said. "They've all been outstanding academically, they've been leaders on campus, they haven't gotten into any trouble in the hall. I am very proud of this group of seniors. They have set a really high standard."

Navy suffered through a dismal 9-21 campaign in 2013-2014 and the overall lack of talent is why DeChellis chose to give so many of the freshmen a shot. Abruzzo remembers being thrust into the rotation toward the end of his rookie season and averaging 13 minutes over the final 13 games.

"The reason I played my freshman year was because the team wasn't really that good and the coaching staff was searching for answers," Abruzzo admitted. "Every one of the seniors has played an important role at different stages of the program. We all feel like we had a big part in the development of the program at one time period or another."

Navy has increased its victory total, both overall and in the Patriot League, every season during the DeChellis era. A year ago, the Midshipmen posted their first winning record since 2008-2009. This year, Navy (15-13, 10-6) finds itself in the thick of the Patriot League race.

"I think our senior class takes a ton of pride in changing the culture of Navy basketball into a winning one – just by demanding that everyone give everything they have to this team and to each other," Vermeer said. "It's been very rewarding to see the program's development and knowing we played a big part in it."

Navy has significantly improved its overall talent level over the past four years, which is why several of the seniors have seen their roles reduced this season. DeChellis cites the strong leadership of the seniors for the Midshipmen's success this season.

"Every one of those seniors is a great competitor in practice. They show the way for the younger guys by coming early and staying late, by always giving great effort," DeChellis said. "Our seniors provide a tremendous example for how a Navy basketball player should conduct himself."

Abruzzo and Alade were actually members of the first recruiting class brought in by DeChellis, who took over as head coach in May, 2011. Both attended the Naval Academy Prep School before arriving in Annapolis and joining with direct-entry recruits Fong, Hemphill and Vermeer.

Alade acknowledges he did not truly understand the magnitude of attending a service academy as a senior at Kempner High in Houston, Texas

"At the beginning I didn't see the big picture like I do now. It was a leap of faith. I didn't really know what I was getting myself into," Alade said. "Now, looking back at the last five years, I've grown up so much and learned so many lessons and made a bunch of lifelong friends. I'm so glad to get this opportunity and I've tried to make the most out of it."

Alade was extremely raw as a plebe and has improved his basketball skills each year. The 6-foot-9, 235-pounder has played in 116 games with 38 starts over the course of his career.

"It's been a learning process. I feel more comfortable on the court and with what I need to contribute to the team. I'm much more focused and I've developed a lot physically," said Alade, who is averaging 4.6 points and 3.4 rebounds this season.

Abruzzo described Alade as friendly and outgoing with a great sense of humor.

"Ed is probably the funniest and most popular person in the City of Annapolis. If you walk around Bancroft with Ed, everyone knows him," Abruzzo said of his best friend.

Alade called Abruzzo a "real hustler" who will dive on the floor for loose balls and battle bigger opponents for rebounds. The 6-foot-5, 185-pound shooting guard graduated Pennridge High in Pennsylvania as the all-time leading scorer. He sat out the entire 2014-2015 season after undergoing knee surgery, but came back to play in 30 games and average 6.6, 3.3 rebounds and team-best 1.2 steals as a junior.

"It means a lot that we're contending for a Patriot League championship this year. We've come a long way and I think we've earned the respect of the other schools in the league," Abruzzo said.

Abruzzo and Alade plan to live together in the Norfolk area while serving as surface warfare officers on the USS Arlington and USS Oak Hill, respectively.

Fong came from Gar-Field High in northern Virginia with a reputation as an accurate perimeter shooter. That ability to put the ball in the basket from long range is why the Woodbrige resident saw so much early in his career. The 6-foot, 195-pounder launched 296 shots as a freshman and sophomore and 80 percent of them were 3-pointers.

Fong set a Navy freshman record by draining seven 3-pointers against Bryant and drained five from beyond the arc in scoring a career-high 24 points against Army as a sophomore.

"Zach is a very good 3-point shooter and there have been times when he got hot and carried us for stretches of games," DeChellis said.

Navy men's basketball to honor senior class (Cont...)

Fong now finds himself a little lower on the depth chart at wing guard, playing behind starter Bryce Dulin and Abruzzo. The political science major will head to Pensacola in September to begin training to become a Naval flight officer.

"These four years have definitely gone by very fast. You always hear from previous seniors to enjoy your time here because it goes by very quick, and I'm just now realizing that is true," Fong said. "When this class came in, the program was struggling. Navy basketball has progressed a lot over the last four years. As a group, we've been dedicated to turning around this program."

Hemphill hails from Raleigh, North Carolina and helped lead Broughton High to the Class 4A state championship game as a senior. The 6-foot-7, 220-pound power forward made five starts as a sophomore and has appeared in 72 games overall.

"James is a tough, physical kid who can rebound the basketball and score around the basket," DeChellis said.

Alade described Hemphill as an extremely nice, sincere individual and stated that "everything he says and does comes from the heart." Nobody involved with Navy basketball was surprised when Hemphill selected Marine Corps Ground as a service assignment.

"This group of seniors has been through so much together. We've all had our ups and downs and grown so much as both basketball players and midshipmen," said Hemphill, who will report to Quantico, Virginia in October to begin The Basic School. "We've seen how things are supposed to be done and what a senior is supposed to be as far as leadership."

Vermeer, a product of Bellarmine Prep in Mountain View, California, has excelled in all facets of the Naval Academy. The 6-foot-2, 195-pound guard has been named to the Commandant's List seven times and served as Regimental Commander for 2016 plebe summer.

That is the highest leadership position within the Brigade of Midshipmen at the time and Fong filled a key role for his teammate by working as a detailer.

"Grant will probably tell you he wants to get out of the Navy after five years and move on with becoming the president of the United States, but I know once he starts moving up in rank he'll be the superintendent of this place before too long," Abruzzo said.

Vermeer majored in cyber operations and is one of only six members of the 2017 graduating class chosen to serve in the cryptological warfare community. He will be stationed at Navy Intelligence Operations Command, which is located on base at Fort Meade and works in tandem with the National Security Agency.

"It's definitely crazy that basketball is coming to an end. It's been an unbelievable experience and I've grown so much as a player and a person," said Vermeer, a fixture on the Patriot League Academic Honor Roll. "I've enjoyed every aspect of being part of this program and am extremely grateful for the opportunity."

Vermeer has become the leader of the scout team, which must prepare the regulars for the upcoming opponent. He takes great pride in making sure the scout team does its job.

"My role more than anything is to bring energy and make sure guys are always ready to go.

That means providing the best representation of the opposing team that we can, watching film so we are spot-on about the tendencies of the player we are mimicking and going as hard as you can all the time," Vermeer said. "I do everything I can every day to make Shawn Anderson a better player so he's prepared for the next game."

Alade is the only starter among the seniors, but DeChellis said he will put all five on the court to start the American game on Wednesday night. The sixth-year head coach believes players that have dedicated four years to a program have earned that right.

"I have done that my whole career," DeChellis said of starting the seniors. "This is their moment. They deserve to hear their names announced as a starter one last time at Alumni Hall. I am confident they will all go out and give great effort."

It will mark the first time in four years the five classmates have all started the same game.

"We're a really close-knit class so it means a lot that we'll all be starting together on Senior Night," Abruzzo said. "It will be cool for all five of us to be on the court together because I don't think that's ever happened before. It will be great to have all our families here to share that moment with us."

Whether it's football or basketball, Army-Navy is always intense

Chase Cook | Annapolis Capital | February 19, 2017

The Navy Midshipmen men's basketball team rolls out to a 7-0 lead over the Army Black Knights.

Sitting in her usual courtside seat, Annapolis resident Katie Ratigan, otherwise known as "U.S. Navy's Italian Godmother from New Jersey," cheers on one of her favorite sports teams among a sold-out crowd in Alumni Hall.

The self-proclaimed sports nut and ardent U.S. Naval Academy superfan sits close to the action, where all the referees know her and players stop by for a hug.

It's Saturday, and the Navy men's and women's basketball teams are competing in a double-header against the Army West Point Black Knights, the longtime sports rival of the Midshipmen. While there aren't any parades and big tailgating events like the lead-up to the football game, the rivalry between the two teams is just as intense.

"The electricity is 10 times greater for the Army-Navy game," Ratigan said. "But during the national anthem you can hear a pin drop, there is so much respect for the flag and the people in uniform."

The Midshipmen build to a 15-point lead over Army as Hasan Abdullah crosses over his defender and scores with a deft layup — 39-24 Navy.

Isaiah Burnett is heading into the arena with three of his friends from Howard County. Burnett said he is set to attend the Naval Academy next year, where he plans to play basketball.

He got an offer for tickets and didn't want to miss the big Army-Navy game, otherwise known as the Star game.

It doesn't matter what sport it is, Burnett said — if Army is coming to town, it's all about "Go Navy, Beat Army."

"You gotta have the same level of hype whether it's football or basketball," Burnett said.

The crowd roars as Navy takes a 23-point lead and Army is lagging with almost 12 minutes to play.

The basketball rendition of Army-Navy is nowhere near as extravagant as the football

version of the rivalry. The football game sells out and is often played in National Football League stadiums that seat 69,000 or more.

While Saturday's basketball games were sold out, both men's and women's, it amounts to an attendance of 5,710 for each game. And the Star game is one of the few times in the year when the basketball games are sold out.

The atmosphere during the Star game is very different — it's a different experience, and the intensity of the game matches the rivalry on the floor, said Kevin Callahan, Navy Academy alumnus and president of the Class of 1973.

Callahan enjoys the games with his friend and counterpart Craig Harrison, who is the president of the Army West Point Class of 1973.

One of the best parts of this rivalry is the respect the two institutions have for each other, Harrison said.

"At the end of the game, they play both alma mater songs, with the loser's played first," he said. "It's so intense, you never know who is going to win with Army-Navy."

Army has fought back into the game, cutting the lead to 67-66 with a barrage of layups, 3-pointers and foul shots. A lone man in the crowd yells "Let's go Army!" between Army baskets.

Arnold residents Linda and Phil Ferrara have been attending Navy basketball games for almost two decades, enjoying both the less-attended, more "relaxed" games, and the intensity and excitement that comes with the sold-out crowds during the Army-Navy game.

That rivalry dates back 100-plus years, and each time the teams meet on the floor the outcome isn't guaranteed, no matter how good or bad the teams are, Phil Ferrara said.

"It has a good spirit, camaraderie and competitiveness," Ferrara said. "It's always a contest to the end. Just like today's games. It makes for a lot of excitement."

With only about 2 seconds left, Army has the lead over Navy, 71-68. Navy heaves one last shot. It misses. Army wins.

Anyone can win.

Army rallies from 25-point deficit to defeat Navy

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | February 19, 2017

With just over seven minutes elapsed in the second half it looked like Navy was going to cruise past Army in the annual Star game. The Midshipmen had built a commanding 25-point lead and seemed well on the way to a season sweep of the Black Knights.

Navy was destroying Army's man-to-man defense and getting layup after layup. First-year head coach Jimmy Allen switched to a 2-3 zone out of desperation and that decision completely changed the game.

That standard defense befuddled the Midshipmen and Jordan Fox got hot from 3-point range for the Black Knights, who authored the greatest comeback in the history of the men's basketball rivalry.

Fox made five 3-pointers in scoring 22 points as Army rallied to beat Navy, 71-68, stunning a sellout crowd of 5,710 at Alumni Hall. Tommy Funk also hit some big threes in netting 14 points for the Black Knights, who outscored the host Midshipmen 42-14 over the final 12 ½ minutes.

"It's hard to put into words right now without going back and watching it," Allen said of the improbable rally. "Navy was pretty dominant for a large portion of this game, but for 12 minutes we played some pretty amazing basketball."

Senior forward Mac Hoffman had a double-double with 11 points and 10 rebounds for Army (11-17, 5-11), which snapped a three-year losing streak in the Star game. The delirious Black Knights accepted the Alumni Trophy for the first time since 2013 then celebrated at mid-court while the partisan audience looked on in disbelief.

"I'm really happy for our players because they have been working very hard and haven't been rewarded too often. We've been so close in so many games and come up short," Allen said. "Today is a nice step forward. This is a really satisfying feeling to win a game that means this much to our program and the institution."

Junior point guard Hasan Abdullah totaled 18 points, five rebounds and three assists to lead Navy, which made just 2 of the last 12 field goals it attempted. Junior swingman Shawn Anderson scored 12 points for the Midshipmen, who suffered the worst collapse in program history.

Previously, the largest lead Navy had blown en route to a loss was 18 points. That happened on three occasions, most recently in February, 1994 versus Lafayette. Interestingly, Navy notched the greatest comeback in program history earlier this season when it rallied from a 25-point deficit to beat Bryant.

"I don't know if disappointing is a strong enough word. We had the game in hand," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "The momentum of the game changed very, very quickly and we just couldn't get it back."

The Black Knights made 13 of their last 14 field goal attempts with eight of those shots being layups. DeChellis said those statistics speak to a total breakdown on defense by the Midshipmen.

"Our defensive effort was absolutely horrendous the last 12 minutes of the game," DeChellis said. "We had transition defense where they had post players running down the middle of the floor and scoring on layups. Guys were sucking in because our posts weren't getting back and they banged a few threes. Our transition defense was really bad and our half-court defense was really bad."

It was truly remarkable to watch because Navy played lockdown defense for 27 ½ minutes. At the time it trailed by 25 points, Army had made just 9 of 30 field goals and committed 18 turnovers. The Black Knights shot 75 percent and did not have a single turnover over the final 12 ½ minutes.

"To Navy's credit, they were doing everything right and we had no answer. We weren't stopping them at all during the first eight minutes of the second half," Allen said. "We went to the zone to make them make some perimeter shots and it turned things around."

During a media timeout at the 11:56 mark of the second half, Allen realized his squad had only taken 13 3-pointers. Army wound up shooting 11 threes and making six the rest of the way.

"I told the team we were going out swinging and that I wanted to shoot 35 threes before the end of this game," Allen said. "We got a couple baskets in transition, Jordan got us going by hitting a couple threes and suddenly others

guys stepped up and started making shots. It got kind of contagious there. Basketball is a funny game in terms of momentum."

Fox swished 3-pointers on consecutive possessions surrounding a Navy turnover and that cut the Army deficit to single digits for the first time in the second half with 5:11 remaining. That's when it all fell apart for the Midshipmen, who committed two more turnovers in short order and allowed layups on three straight possessions.

Funk tied the score with a three-pointer from the right elbow with 2:38 to go. That was the 10th consecutive field goal the Black Knights made while the Midshipmen had failed to make a single field goal for a span of nearly five minutes at that point.

"We didn't attack the zone very well and guys seemed very hesitant to shoot," DeChellis said. "We ran some zone sets and didn't execute them very well. We didn't drive into the zone like we talked about doing and settled for long jumpers."

Navy scored 40 points in the paint and took just seven 3-pointers through 27 minutes. The Midshipmen attempted 10 3-pointers and scored just four points in the paint over the final 13 minutes.

"I've been on both sides of that. When you see a big lead shrinking and you get a little tight, sometimes it's hard to finish," Allen said. "We just played with total abandon, played kind of reckless. We got some deflections, got them to miss some shots and that really got us going."

Fox would hit his fifth 3-pointer of the game with 19 seconds left and that proved the game-winner. Anderson provided evidence of how tight Navy had become when he air-balled a free throw with 10.5 seconds to go. He made the second foul shot to make it a one-point game, but the Mids were forced to foul and Funk made 1 of 2 free throws to restore the two-point lead.

Abdullah drove the length of the court and took a difficult shot in the lane that bounced hard off the backboard. Hoffman grabbed the rebound with 1.4 seconds remaining and that sealed the miraculous comeback.

"We made some critical mistakes down the

Army rallies from 25-point deficit to defeat Navy (cont...)

stretch. We made mistake after mistake after mistake,” DeChellis said. “You can’t play perfect, but you have to make some basic basketball plays. I thought we were playing not to lose instead of to win the game, and that’s a horrible feeling.”

Navy (15-13, 10-6) will try again to clinch a home game in the quarterfinals of the Patriot League Tournament when it hosts American on Wednesday. The Midshipmen remain in sole possession of third place in the standings.

“We have Senior Night on Wednesday. We have to figure out a way to beat American and get ourselves going,” DeChellis said. “We have a lot of basketball to be played and we can do some neat things with this team. We can’t let one loss lead to other losses. This one really hurts, but we have to put it behind, move on and try to make the bad feeling go away.”

Abdullah scored 11 points as Navy took a 33-24 halftime lead. Anderson added nine points for the Mids, who outscored the Black Knights 9-2 over the final four minutes to match their largest lead. Fox scored seven points for Army, which shot just 34.6 percent from the field and committed 13 turnovers in the opening half.

Navy opened the second half with a 10-0 run to increase the lead to 19 points. Eight of those points came on layups as a result of defensive breakdowns by Army, which missed three shots and committed three turnovers on five possessions to start the second half.

Senior guard Scott Mammel made two free throws to finally put Army on the board at the 15:50 mark. However, Navy followed with an 11-3 run and suddenly the home team was ahead by 25 points at the 12:51 mark. It took the Black Knights nearly 7 ½ minutes to hit their first field goal of the second half.

Navy seniors seek to go undefeated in Star game

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | February 18, 2017

Early semester exams were conducted at Naval Academy this past week. It's always a grueling time that makes life especially difficult on Division I athletes that are in season.

"It's a hard week. Guys are staying up late studying, coming late and leaving early from practice," said Navy men's basketball coach Ed DeChellis, whose players looked sluggish during a 74-55 loss to Lehigh on Wednesday night.

DeChellis said the Midshipmen as a whole looked like they were stuck in quicksand throughout the blowout at Stabler Arena. The sixth-year head coach can only hope his squad displays more energy on Saturday afternoon when Navy hosts Army in the Star game.

A near-sellout crowd at Alumni Hall and a national television audience on CBS Sports Network will watch the Mids attempt to sweep the regular season series between the service academies. Junior swingman Shawn Anderson scored 30 points while junior forward Bryce Dulin contributed 21 points and 17 rebounds as Navy outlasted Army, 96-80, in overtime at Christl Arena on Jan. 21.

Navy lost to Army last year, snapping their five-game winning streak against them. But they have won three straight Star Games. Last month's victory was notable because a nasty strain of stomach flu swept through the Midshipmen with numerous players and coaches stricken during the bus ride up to West Point on Friday.

"What we did well the last time was we persevered and made some basketball plays when it mattered most," said DeChellis, who had a total of eight players not practice the two days leading up to the Army-Navy showdown. "I was really proud of the determination our players showed that day."

Navy (15-12, 10-5) has already secured a bye in the Patriot League Tournament and could clinch a bye in the quarterfinals by beating Army on Saturday. This is a big game for seniors Tim Abruzzo, Edward Alade, Zach Fong, James Hemphill and Grant Vermeer, who are looking to become the first class since 2009 to go undefeated in Star games during their careers.

"We want to win that N Star, beat our rival, win

at home and continue to improve," said DeChellis, who is 7-5 against Army. "Our players know where we are in the standings so we're not going to talk about that at all."

Meanwhile, Army (10-17, 4-11) finds itself fighting to avoid playing one of two opening round games in the Patriot League Tournament. The Black Knights, under the direction of first-year head coach Jimmy Allen, currently sit in eighth place of the 10-team conference.

"We're just so young and relying on a lot of inexperienced players," said Allen, a former assistant at Navy under head coach Don DeVoe. "We need to find a better level of consistency."

Army has lost three overtime contests and blew a 17-point second-half lead in another defeat during Patriot League play. The Black Knights rank second-to-last within the conference in scoring defense, atypical of a program known for being aggressive and physical on that end of the floor.

Navy, on the other hand, stands second in that category — allowing an average of 63.6 points per game. The Midshipmen lead the league in rebounding margin while ranking third in turnover margin.

"Navy is a very solid team on both ends. They have really good athletes, good size and good experience," Allen said. "They take care of the ball, work hard to get good shots and are very strong on the offensive glass. They are very physical defensively and do a good job of turning teams over."

Anderson continues to lead Navy in scoring (11.9 points per game) while ranking second in rebounding (4.6) and assists (3.0), making a strong case for first team All-Patriot League recognition. Junior forward Tom Lacey leads the Patriot League in offensive rebounds and is third in overall rebounds, hauling down 7.7 per game.

Sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah leads Navy in assists (3.2 per game) and ranks second in the Patriot League in steals (1.9 average). Rounding out the starting lineup is Bryce Dulin, who is averaging 11.1 points versus Patriot League opponents.

Sophomore guard Jordan Fox (11.8 ppg) is the lone player averaging double figures for

Army, which ranks at the bottom of the Patriot League in turnover margin. The Black Knights have four players averaging between nine and 10 points.

"When Army shoots the ball well it can win games," DeChellis said. "Fox is a good perimeter shooter while (Luke) Morrison and (Jacob) Kessler can make threes. They have a bunch of guys who can poke their heads up and make shots."

Lehigh men's basketball team starts late-season push with rout of Navy

Stephen Miller | The Morning Call | February 16, 2017

Lehigh won't leave the Lehigh Valley for the rest of the regular season.

The Mountain Hawks took a step toward securing at least one postseason home game with a strong start to their extended area stay.

Austin Price, Pat Andree and Kyle Leufroy combined for four 3-pointers during a 20-2 second-half run that stabilized Lehigh after a Navy charge. The Mountain Hawks cruised to the finish, collecting a 74-55 win in a Patriot League men's basketball game Wednesday night at Stabler Arena.

Price, Andree and Leufroy combined for 43 points and eight 3-pointers to highlight a balanced night for Lehigh (15-11 overall, 9-6 Patriot League). The win moved the Mountain Hawks within a game of Navy (15-12, 10-5) for third place in the league standings with three games to go.

"Fortunately, we've played well at home," Lehigh coach Brett Reed said. "We expect to play well at home. We practice here, and we take pride in not only putting on a Lehigh jersey, but having our community come out and support us and watch our product.

"I have every expectation that our guys would bring that type of pride and determination to the floor. Hopefully it will continue as we finish up the rest of this regular season. For our last four games, we don't have to travel more than 20 miles. So we have the opportunity to make a pretty solid push, get our feet underneath of us, and hopefully not only gain confidence by playing well but also put ourselves in a position to compete at a pretty high level in the tournament."

Lehigh gave Reed plenty to like Wednesday. The Mountain Hawks defended well early, opening an 18-point lead. Navy moved within four points early in the second half, but Lehigh responded with ball movement and perimeter marksmanship.

Leufroy started the Mountain Hawks' put-away spurt with a 3-pointer that gave them a 41-34 lead. A 3-pointer from Price and a pair of triples from Andree allowed Lehigh to start pulling away from the Midshipmen, who had won 10 of their last 11 games.

Price finished with a game-high 19 points, 15

of which came in the second half, to lead five Lehigh players in double figures. Andree, Leufroy and Tim Kempton each scored 12 points. Brandon Alston added 10 points.

As well as Lehigh played on offense — it shot 57.4 percent from the field — its defense proved even better. The Mountain Hawks limited Navy to 39.7 percent shooting from the field. The Midshipmen also managed just four free throws.

"We gave up 55 points, and our goal is 65," Andree said. "To crush our goal by that much is great. It all started on the defensive end."

Lehigh hopes Wednesday's win is the start of a push to the NCAA Tournament. The Mountain Hawks play their final regular-season road game Sunday when they visit Lafayette. They end the regular season with two more games at Stabler Arena.

"Tonight we just came out trying to build momentum for [the Patriot League tournament]," Price said. "We weren't really worried about seeding and stuff. We just want to build momentum because we know we've got to win three games in a row regardless of where we're seeded."

Navy men able to escape Leopards

Adam Zielonka | Annapolis Capital | February 12, 2017

Navy recovered from a first half riddled with missed shot after missed shot to storm back and defeat Lafayette, 68-60, for its 10th Patriot League win Saturday night.

Navy (15-11, 10-4 Patriot) kept pace with Boston University for second place in the conference with the win, which they pulled off in front of a crowd of 2,422 at Alumni Hall. It's the fifth straight season that the Mids improved on their conference win total and their most wins since they went 11-1 in 2000.

The Mids lived and died by the 3-pointer: Their shaky 2-for-12 mark in the first half helped dig the hole, but their 7-for-11 performance in the second was vital to their resurgence.

Bryce Dulin led the Mids with 18 points and eight rebounds. Shawn Anderson had 11 points and Hassan Abdullah put up 10 along with a team-high six assists.

Nick Lindner led Lafayette (7-18, 3-11 Patriot) with 23 points, while Matt Klinewski, the league's second-best scorer (16.3 ppg), was limited to 12.

The game was nip-and-tuck from the start, with the Mids missing several open shots to extend their early lead. Navy shot 3-for-12 from the floor in the first six minutes, but grabbed four steals to keep the Leopards honest. Navy would lead by as many as five, but two Edward Alade offensive fouls halted potential scoring chances along the way.

Myles Jarrett made three baskets to carry the Leopards back into striking distance, 20-18. This then inspired a quick 6-0 run for Lafayette to take the lead, due in part to a goaltending call on Navy forward George Kiernan followed by a Kiernan foul that set up two free throws. Lafayette took a 26-23 lead to the locker room, having shot 10-16 from the floor while Navy put up an abysmal 8-for-30.

The Leopards showered Alumni Hall with points once the second half kicked off, scoring three 3-pointers and 15 total points in the first five minutes. Down 41-34, Navy started to mount a comeback, with a two-hand slam dunk by Alade as its spiritual leader. The Mids tied the game at 41 at the 10-minute mark, but had to play catch-up a few minutes longer.

Then, some fan's prayers must have been

answered, because the threes finally started to fall. Navy drained four straight 3-point attempts - Hassan Abdullah, Shawn Anderson and Kiernan twice - for a 12-4 swing that first gave them their first lead of the half, then stretched the score to 59-52. Lafayette could only make one field goal the rest of the game in their comeback effort.

Navy completed the sweep of Lafayette after beating them 88-51 in Easton, Pennsylvania, on Jan. 14. Dulin led Navy in scoring that night, too, with a career-high 23.

Navy's next home contest will be its Star Game matchup against Army on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. First the Mids will travel to Lehigh for a Wednesday game.

It's not easy to win on a military academy team. Navy basketball is finding a way.

John Feinstein | Washington Post | February 11, 2017

It was cold in Annapolis on the first Friday in January, the temperatures hovering around freezing, when the members of the Naval Academy basketball team made their way across the Yard — Navy's campus — to Alumni Hall for practice.

No one was in a very good mood. The previous night, the Midshipmen had been throttled, 71-53, by Boston University on their home court. A season that had started with so much promise was suddenly spinning out of control. The Mids were a disappointing 5-10 but, more important, they had started Patriot League play 0-3.

"They just blew us out," Coach Ed DeChellis said this past Friday, five weeks later. "We had played well enough to win but hadn't won in our first two games. We came back from Holy Cross [after losing at the buzzer] and were just completely flat."

DeChellis is in his sixth season at Navy, so he is familiar with the life his players lead and how different it is from almost all other Division I athletes. That's why he doesn't often jump them. Now though, something had to be done.

"There's a difference between criticizing and coaching," he said. "I didn't think our guys were understanding the difference. They were taking things personally. If someone misses a box-out or doesn't find someone on defense, they need to be told, sometimes firmly if it's a repeated mistake. But that's coaching. It's what I'm paid to do."

And so, before practice that afternoon, DeChellis firmly explained that to his players. They needed to be tougher, he told them. They needed to accept being coached, not sulk about it. They needed, quite simply, to get better.

"You needed thick skin to sit in that meeting," said guard Shawn Anderson, the Mids' leading scorer and emotional leader. "It was a moment to look in the mirror, for each of us to look at ourselves and understand we needed to handle things better. That day, we needed to handle being called out. It was a little bit of a shocker, I think, but it was clearly the right thing to be done."

Forward Tom Lacey, a junior like Anderson, said almost the same thing.

"There was friction and there was frustration," he said. "The word Coach D kept using was 'fiber.' Did we have the fiber to deal with adversity? We had shown it was there in some of our pre-conference games. He was making the point we had to do it consistently — and we hadn't."

Since that day, the Midshipmen (15-11, 10-4) have won 10 of 11 games, including Saturday night's 68-60 victory against Lafayette.

They have gone from dead last in the Patriot League to a tie for second place, putting them in position to avoid a first-round game in the conference tournament for the first time since DeChellis arrived in the spring of 2011.

"The first goal is to finish in the top six so our first game is in the quarterfinals," DeChellis said Friday. "We go one step at a time around here. It's been a while."

A long while. Navy won the Patriot tournament title three times in five years under Don DeVoe (1994, 1997, 1998) but had taken a deep dive since losing the conference championship game to Holy Cross in 2001. DeChellis knew it was going to take a while to turn things around when he surprised the college basketball world by leaving Penn State, his alma mater, after taking the Nittany Lions to the NCAA tournament in 2011.

"I knew it would take time, but I don't think I knew just how difficult it would be," he said, able to smile now at the memory. "There are no quick fixes at an academy. You can't bring in graduate transfers or, for that matter, any transfers. You can't go out and get junior college players. And the prep school program had gone away. We needed to start over."

Square one was not an unfamiliar place for DeChellis. He had gone 7-20 in his first season at East Tennessee State and 9-19 to start his tenure at Penn State. Still, 3-26 was a shock to his system, as was 20 wins — total — in his first three seasons at Navy. Since then, the improvement has been gradual: 13-19, followed by 19-14 last season.

The jump to 19 wins, including 9-9 in the Patriot League, was sullied by a stagger to the finish line after a fast start. The Mids finished in a four-way tie for fourth place and won their first-round tournament game against Lafayette

but then were edged by Lehigh.

"We struggled down the stretch, and I couldn't understand why," DeChellis said. "We had guys with dings, but every team does in February. I went back and looked at every tape, and we looked tired. I had to remind myself what life is like for these guys."

And so DeChellis has changed things up this winter as the end of the regular season approaches. Practices are shorter. When the team needs to look at tape, it's done at lunchtime, so the afternoon sessions are over earlier. This past Thursday, after hanging on to beat Loyola on Wednesday night, the Mids did yoga and a walk-through. No running, no contact.

Two weeks after the "coaching vs. criticism" meeting, the team traveled to Army. The MVP of that trip was team doctor Ed McDevitt. A virus had run through the team. Eight players, plus DeChellis, needed IVs on the bus trip up and that night at the hotel.

Lacey remembers being awakened the morning of the trip at 6 o'clock, by a plebe. "I was lying on the floor of the bathroom," he said. "I think I just decided I'd save a lot of time if I stayed there."

"Worst bus trip of my life," DeChellis said. "I remember Doc McDevitt giving me a second IV bag and me saying, 'I'm going to need to feel a lot better just so I can die.' It was really awful."

The next day, the team's fiber showed. The Mids blew a lead late, then won in overtime, 96-80.

"That game showed who we are and who we can be," said Anderson, another of the IV-8. "We just need to keep being that team."

After Saturday, there are four regular season games left, including trips to first-place Bucknell and the preseason league favorite, Lehigh. Then comes the conference tournament which, naturally, coincides with midterm exams.

"Not a problem," Lacey said with a grin. "School will take care of itself. We'll be ready to go. We have to be ready to go."

They've come a long way in five weeks.

Anderson gives back to community in his hometown

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | February 10, 2017

Shawn Anderson was picked on as a freshman in high school. Older kids made fun of Anderson for his athletic ability and general awkwardness.

Anderson had the last laugh, blossoming into a Division I basketball player and getting recruited to play at the Naval Academy. He was the big man on campus as a senior at New Castle High in Pennsylvania, but refused to project that type of attitude or demeanor.

Instead, Anderson sought to become the student role model that he never had and teamed with several close friends to create a program called "Moving Forward." Every nine weeks, a group of seniors met with all the ninth-graders at New Castle High to talk about issues such as bullying, peer pressure and setting goals.

"We realized that kids really need this type of mentorship," Anderson said. "Growing up, I didn't have any role models. There is just something about having someone a few years older that you can look up to and say 'I want to be like them.' It's a fundamental need for all kids."

Having seen the impact they could make on ninth graders, the group of seniors added another program they titled "Transitioning to Success" that helped youngsters make the transition to middle school.

Those initiatives prompted Anderson and close friend Mike Geramita to form a non-profit organization called "Forever Red Hurricanes." Anderson credits his father for coming up with the name, which plays off the fact New Castle's nickname is Red Hurricanes.

Larry Kelly, a local lawyer, was so impressed with what Anderson and his cohorts were doing that he paid the start-up costs and handled all the paperwork pro bono.

One of the early initiatives of the fledgling organization was a "Canes Coats for Kids" drive, which solicits donations from the community to provide winter coats for needy children.

"New Castle is a blue-collar town. Once the steel mills left, there wasn't much there. You see a lot of poverty, you see great kids in bad situations," Anderson said. "Me, Mike and some of our other friends were blessed to have great parents and a strong support system that

showed us there was life beyond New Castle. We figured we might as well turn this into something that can really result in change."

Anderson is a shining example that a son of New Castle can do great things. The 6-foot-4 junior swingman is a big reason why the Navy men's basketball program has enjoyed its best season in 16 years, leading the team in scoring and second in rebounding.

Anderson is also thriving as an economics major at the academy and has distinguished himself as an upstanding member of his company.

"Shawn has a lot of demands on his time with the academic and military obligations here, not to mention being a Division I basketball player. Yet somehow he's able to carve out some time to help others," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "Shawn is an amazing young man. He's a very, very giving person with a really, really big heart and my hat's off to him for the charity work he's doing."

Anderson, who was a member of the National Honor Society at New Castle High, spent a year at the Naval Academy Prep School in order to prepare for the rigors of attending Annapolis. He was determined to succeed at the academy, if only to show those back home it could be done.

"When Coach DeChellis called and came to see me play, I asked myself what was different about this place than the other schools that were recruiting me. I came here on a visit and realized this place was special," Anderson said. "I was very blessed with the opportunity to come here. Not too many people from New Castle get the chance to attend a service academy. It has opened the idea up to a lot of other people from my hometown. They say 'If Shawn Anderson did it, so can I.' That means a lot to me."

Anderson readily admits that others do most of the heavy lifting with regard to the organizational side of "Forever Red Hurricanes." Geramita, who still lives in New Castle, does more of the day-to-day planning, although Anderson is in constant communication with his co-founder to add input. For instance, the coat drive takes place during the winter when Anderson is deeply involved with basketball season.

"Mike is, by far, a lot better at this than I am. He is just unbelievable with all he does," Anderson said. "I rely heavily on other people to handle some of the nitty-gritty tasks. I usually go home while I'm on leave in late May and do two or three programs."

Ralph Blundo is an administrator at New Castle High and also serves as boys basketball coach. He is not at all surprised to see Anderson giving back to the community in this manner.

"Shawn was a sophomore when I was hired as head coach and he was a leader from day one. That's just his personality — smart, articulate and caring," Blundo said. "Shawn always wanted to use his position to influence and impact younger kids. He's always had a genuine concern for our community and a strong desire to give these youngsters a vision for what they can be and all they can accomplish in life."

Blundo described New Castle as "an old Rust Belt town that has struggled economically" for three decades or more. The western Pennsylvania city has a high poverty rate and large numbers of children come from single-parent homes.

"Shawn is a thinker and a dreamer and he has taken a deep look into the issues confronting New Castle," Blundo said. "Shawn is the type of person who goes against the grain and doesn't let the world dictate who he is or what he's about. He has created his own path and does what he believes is right and necessary."

Anderson is also a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and is involved with other leadership groups at the Naval Academy. DeChellis credits Shawn and Angelique Anderson for raising a son who sees the big picture of society.

"I think Shawn's parents have done a great job of instilling morals and values into his life. He has grown into a first-class individual who has a strong desire to help other people," DeChellis said. "Shawn is someone who heard a calling at a young age to give back and is very committed to doing just that. He is a great representative of the Naval Academy, which is a selfless institution."

Anderson does not feel like he is doing anything special by spearheading the Forever

Anderson gives back to community in his hometown (cont...)

Red Hurricanes foundation. He is constantly thinking about different outreach programs the organization can create and is focused on recruiting new blood.

"I'm a big dreamer and I have a lot of plans for what we can do in the future. There are going to be some challenges along the way and networking is going to be important. I would like to get as many alumni involved as possible," Anderson said. "I hope and pray this organization is still alive 30 years from now because the kids really need something like this."

Anderson does not hide the fact he's a spiritual person and believes strongly that every person on earth has a responsibility to better society.

"It's selfish for people to not perform some type of community service. I was raised based on the principle that this life is not meant for us. We believe that our purpose is much bigger than ourselves," Anderson said. "I have faith in Jesus Christ as our lord and savior and he was a servant to his fellow man. I've tried to model that ideal my whole life."

Anderson hopes to serve as an example to others that it's important to pay it forward.

"When you die, what are they going to say about you? Are they going to say you were a good 3-point shooter or that you made people believe in themselves in a way that they didn't before," he said. "When it's all said and done, I want to feel like I left a footprint and lived a life that was impactful."

Mids sweep away Greyhounds again

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | February 9, 2017

Navy is proving to be a real nemesis for the Loyola men's basketball team.

The Greyhounds came to Annapolis riding a four-game winning streak that was their longest since joining the Patriot League for the 2013-2014 season. That hot stretch came to a crashing halt against the Midshipmen, who have dominated the series of late.

Senior center Edward Alade scored 12 points and grabbed six rebounds as Navy built a big lead then held off a late rally to beat Loyola, 62-59, before an announced 1,435 at Alumni Hall. Senior wing Tim Abruzzo came off the bench to also score 12 points for the Midshipmen, who swept the home and home series between the schools for the third straight season.

"Navy's had our number the last three years. They've beaten us six times in a row so you have to give them credit," Loyola head coach G.G. Smith said.

Smith believes overall size and playing style are the reasons why Navy gives Loyola trouble.

"I just think they match up well against us. They're bigger than us, they're tough, they're strong and they're physical. We just don't like that. We don't like being bothered like that. We don't like a lot of contact."

Junior guard Bryce Dulin totaled 11 points and nine rebounds for Navy (14-11, 9-4), which maintained its hold on second place in the Patriot League. Sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah chipped in 10 points for the Midshipmen, who got back into the win column quickly after having an eight-game winning streak snapped at Colgate on Saturday.

"I knew it was going to be really hard tonight. We didn't practice exceptionally well yesterday and they were playing on an uptick," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "We got stung on Saturday afternoon and were a little down. I told the team to not let Colgate beat us twice."

Senior forward Jarred Jones scored 20 points to lead Loyola (13-11, 7-6), which fell to fifth place in the conference. Junior forward Cam Gregory added 15 points for the Greyhounds, who cut a 17-point deficit down to two on two occasions in the final minute, but could not come all the way back.

Junior point guard Andre Walker added 12 points and five assists for the visitors, who once again made a living at the free throw line by making 24 of 28. The Greyhounds came into the contest leading the Patriot League in free throws made (15.8) and attempted (22.9).

Nourse Fox scored off a steal and layup to cap an 8-1 run that gave Navy its largest lead, 47-30 at the 12:01 mark of the second half. However, Jones scored nine points to lead a 17-6 run that pulled Loyola back within four, 57-53 with 2:31 remaining.

"I was proud of our guys that they didn't quit. They kept battling. We've done this a couple times before and been victorious, but this late in the season against a good team like Navy you can't fall behind by that much," Smith said.

The Midshipmen made just one field goal over the final 9:41 and hurt themselves by missing 5 of 6 free throws over the span of four possessions down the stretch. The Greyhounds took advantage with Walker hitting a tough shot in the lane while absorbing a foul and making the subsequent free throw to make it 59-57 with 37.7 seconds left.

"I thought we played hard tonight, but we didn't execute real well. We turned the ball over too much and didn't make free throws when we had to," DeChellis said. "We didn't score down the stretch. All of a sudden we got tight with the ball. They were trapping all over the place and that gave us some trouble."

Abdullah made 1 of 2 free throws to give Navy a three-point lead, 62-59, with 21 seconds to go. Loyola had a chance to tie on the game's final possession, but missed three 3-point attempts.

Walker was short on a step-back three with 11 seconds left, but Loyola won a made scramble on the floor for the rebound. Walker missed another 3-pointer coming out of a timeout, but freshman guard Chuck Champion grabbed the rebound, dribbled out past the arc and hoisted a three that bounced high off the back rim.

"We talked about fouling so as not to give the three, but Bryce got his hands up and made Walker take a tough shot over him," DeChellis said. "I thought our kids did a good job defensively on that last possession. They made the play when it needed to be made and I'm proud

of them."

Jones fouled out with 3:05 remaining and that didn't help Loyola's comeback bid.

"It hurt us a little bit because Jarred is our veteran player out there. He's a smart player and is one of our better defenders," Smith said. "It also takes another scorer off the floor, which puts us in a bind."

Alade scored 10 points on a variety of inside moves as Navy took a 29-21 lead into halftime. Abruzzo and Abdullah contributed eight and seven points for the Mids, who shot 52 percent from the field.

Jones had eight points for Loyola, which shot just 35 percent (7-20) from the field and committed nine turnovers. The Greyhounds gave up 12 second-chance points while the Mids scored another 10 off turnovers.

Loyola rallied from an early six-point deficit to tie the score at 19 on a nifty driving layup by Champion. However, Abruzzo hit back-to-back 3-pointers to give Navy its largest lead of eight points with 55 seconds left in the half.

"Navy just destroyed us on the boards. They had 15 offensive rebounds and that just can't happen. We did a poor job of blocking out," Smith said.

Lacey converted an old-fashioned three-point play to start the second-half scoring and increase the Navy lead to 11. The Midshipmen were able to maintain a double-digit advantage until there was 4:47 remaining in the game.

"I thought we defended and didn't turn the ball over during that stretch, and we made some shots," DeChellis said. "Everyone sort of pitched in. We were active and got some steals, which was good to see. Overall, I thought we did a good job defensively. We built that 17-point lead off our defense."

Navy equaled the number of conference victories it earned last season and is two shy of securing the most since 2000 (11-1).

"I'm proud of our kids. We've got nine wins with five to play," DeChellis said. "This is a great time of the year to play. I like our team, like our players. They've got a good fiber to them, some toughness to them."

After Slow Start, Navy Basketball In Midst Of Dramatic Turnaround

Steve Jones | Press Box Online | February 1, 2017

Following a 2015-16 season that resulted in its highest win total in seven years, the Navy men's basketball team had every reason to be confident entering the current campaign. However, the Midshipmen had to regroup following a 5-10 start that was capped by a 71-53 home loss to Boston University Jan. 5.

But a seven-game winning streak has resurrected Navy's season. In January, head coach Ed DeChellis' squad rebounded from an 0-3 Patriot League start to rise to second place in the 10-team conference. On Feb. 2, the Midshipmen can extend their successful run and solidify their league standing with a win at Boston University (12-10, 7-3 Patriot League), the same team that handed Navy its most recent loss. The Midshipmen haven't won eight straight games since they earned 13 consecutive victories during the 1999-2000 season.

The most unusual win during the streak was a 96-80 overtime defeat of host Army West Point Jan. 21. Navy held a 10-point lead with 42 seconds remaining in regulation, but the Cadets rallied to send the game into an extra session. The Midshipmen outscored Army, 21-5, during the overtime period to wrap up a critical victory.

"All of the wins are so important, because we're trying to get seeded [for the conference tournament]," DeChellis said. "But the way that we won that game was significant. We had eight guys that were sick. We got a lead, then played horribly during that last minute. But the kids came back and put the hammer down. [Army] had all the juice, but we just showed our fiber."

Navy will take a 12-10 overall mark and 7-3 Patriot League record into the rematch with the Boston University Terriers. The Midshipmen and Terriers are tied for second place and trail league-leading Bucknell by two games. Six of Navy's seven wins during the streak have been by double-digit margins, including a 60-47 rout of defending Patriot League champion Holy Cross during their most recent outing Jan. 28.

"We're shooting the ball better and making our free throws," said DeChellis, who is in his sixth season at Navy. "And our point guard play has improved tremendously in the last seven games."

The Midshipmen have emerged as a legitimate contender for the Patriot League title despite

having only one double-figure scorer. Junior guard Shawn Anderson, the Midshipmen's leading scorer on last year's 19-14 team, tops the point chart again this season with a 12.4 average. But a defensive effort that has limited opponents to 64 points per game has been a key factor in Navy's turnaround. The Midshipmen lead the league in defensive rebounds and rebounding margin and are second in scoring defense.

"Defense is my pillar, and the kids understand that," DeChellis said. "We've gone to more of a matchup zone, and we're more aggressive on the ball. Since we don't have a shot blocker inside, we're trying to keep the ball from getting in the paint."

Anderson, a junior guard, is Navy's most impactful player. In addition to his team-leading scoring average, the native of New Castle, Pa., has averaged 5.1 rebounds and 3.3 assists an outing. Anderson leads a backcourt that has also received significant contributions from sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah (8.7 points, 3.1 assists, 2.0 steals per game) and junior guard Bryce Dulin (8.6 points, 3.7 rebounds).

"Shawn drives the ball and pitches it out to create shots for other guys," DeChellis said. "He has also developed great leadership qualities."

A pair of 6-foot-7 forwards, junior Tom Lacey and sophomore George Kiernan, are the anchors of Navy's frontcourt. Lacey, one of two returning starters from last year's squad, has averaged 8.1 points and a team-high 8.0 rebounds. Kiernan, who logged five minutes of playing time during his freshman season, is the squad's second-leading scorer (8.9 points) despite coming off the bench during each of his 20 appearances.

"Tom is a stable force for us defensively," DeChellis said. "He's a great communicator who can put guys in the right places, and he scores a lot on great second-effort plays. George played well when he got the chance, and he's given us a different dimension offensively."

The Midshipmen will face all of their closest competitors during the final eight games of the regular season. Following the Boston test, Navy will end its last long road trip with a meeting at Colgate Feb. 4. The Midshipmen will then play four of their next five games at

home, where they are 8-3 this year, before ending the regular season with a meeting at Bucknell Feb. 25.

"Boston University just beat us up, and we played our worst game of the season," said DeChellis of Navy's earlier 18-point loss to the Terriers, in which the Midshipmen committed a season-high 27 turnovers. "They have guys who are big and athletic and can shoot the ball. It'll be a very interesting game."

Streaking Navy downs Holy Cross

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | January 29, 2017

Navy's basketball players had a spring in their step during pre-game warmups on Saturday afternoon. The Midshipmen were smiling, laughing and joking throughout shoot-around while forward Tom Lacey fired up his teammates by throwing down a reverse two-handed dunk during layup drills.

The Mids have every reason to be loose these days as they have been playing a terrific brand of basketball. Positive contributions are coming from everywhere and the overall chemistry is off the charts right now.

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson had a strong all-around game with 15 points, six steals and six assists. Navy continued its hot streak by manhandling Holy Cross, 60-47, on Saturday afternoon before a boisterous audience of 2,278 at Alumni Hall. Sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah contributed 10 points and four assists for the Midshipmen, whose seven-game winning streak within the Patriot League is their longest in 16 years.

Anderson didn't hesitate when asked if the Mids are enjoying themselves at the moment.

"Absolutely. That's the way it should be. It should be about the experience, and that's what a lot of guys are figuring out right now," the team's leading scorer said. "We're just going out and having fun and just playing loose."

Junior guard Bryce Dulin chipped in 10 points while Lacey continued his dominance on the backboards with 15 rebounds for Navy (12-10, 7-3), which led from start to finish to stay in second place in the Patriot League. Senior center Edward Alade turned in another workmanlike effort with seven points and five rebounds for the Mids, whose aggressive defense harassed the Crusaders into 34 percent field goal shooting and 19 turnovers.

"I thought we had a great defensive effort tonight. We did a lot of really good things defensively," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said.

Seven marks the most consecutive conference victories for Navy since it strung together 12 straight over the course of the 2000 and 2001 seasons. Pretty impressive considering the Mids opened the conference campaign 0-3.

Navy women earn close road win, sweep Holy Cross

Navy women earn close road win, sweep Holy Cross

"I'm proud considering where we started. We were a fragile team. I look back on it, you lose three in a row and Colgate is coming here on a Sunday afternoon. You hate to tell your guys this is a must win, but it really was a must win," DeChellis said. "We win that game and we're able to take a deep breath and relax a little bit. From there, we've gone on to play pretty good basketball. So I am really proud of our kids."

Sophomore guard Patrick Benzan scored 12 points to lead Holy Cross (11-12, 5-5), which trailed by as much as 19 points midway through the second half. Senior forward Malachi Alexander added 11 points while senior guard Anthony Thompson had 10 for the Crusaders, who were limited to their lowest point total in Patriot League play this season.

"I thought Navy came out today and was the more aggressive team," Holy Cross head coach Bill Carmody said. "We struggled the whole way. We'll probably have to change some things around on offense because they exposed us a little bit."

Lacey has been relentlessly pounding the glass of late, grabbing double-digit rebounds in three straight games. The 6-foot-7, 235-pounder, who also had 15 boards against American on Wednesday night, is the first Navy player to accomplish that feat since Laramie Mergerson in 2004.

"Tom is the man. If you're going to war, you want to take Tom Lacey with you. He is just killing people on the boards," Anderson said.

It wasn't the best performance for the Navy offense, which shot just 34 percent from the field in the second half and finished with 19 turnovers. The Mids came in averaging 79 points over the previous six contests.

"Offensively, we were out of sync. This is the most turnovers we've had in a long, long time," DeChellis said. "I'm a little disappointed with the way we took care of the ball. We threw the ball away carelessly at times. We didn't play our best game and we found a way to win. I'll take that."

Dulin scored all nine of his points on 3-pointers as Navy took a 33-24 lead into halftime.

Anderson and Abdullah added eight and seven points for the Mids, who shot 56.5 percent (13-for-23) from the field in the first half.

Holy Cross struggled offensively in the first half as well, shooting 38 percent (8-21) and committing 10 turnovers.

After a slow start to the second half, Anderson drilled a 3-pointer and followed with a driving layup to get Navy going. Sophomore forward George Kiernan followed with a long trey as the Mids moved ahead by 15 points. Holy Cross struggled mightily to start the second half, managing just seven points over a span of 11 ½ minutes in watching Navy take a commanding 50-31 lead.

"We're just sticking to the process. Coach D has a game-plan. He tells us what to do, we come in and work hard in practice. When it comes to the game, we execute and bring energy," Anderson said. "We've really matured a lot. If you look at the start of the game, we had five or six turnovers. You saw us gradually gather ourselves, slow down and start executing our offense. At the beginning of the year, we probably get blown out in this game. I'm really proud of the way guys have grown up. We showed a lot of growth in this game."

Navy now embarks on its most extended road trip of the Patriot League season, playing at Boston University on Thursday and Colgate on Saturday.

Navy men's basketball getting into flow

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | January 27, 2017

Navy men's basketball can accomplish something on Saturday it hasn't done in 16 years. The Midshipmen are seeking their seventh straight victory versus Patriot League opponents.

Navy hasn't fashioned a conference winning streak that long since 2001. The Midshipmen won 12 in a row over a span of two seasons starting in 2000.

Head coach Ed DeChellis said several factors are responsible for the recent surge, which has propelled Navy (11-10, 6-3) into a three-way tie for second place in the Patriot League standings. The Midshipmen have suddenly found a level of cohesion that was missing for most of the season.

"I think our team is playing very well right now. Individuals are playing well, and that's the key," DeChellis said. "We're getting contributions from a lot of different people and collectively that translates into team success."

Things didn't look so promising after Navy started Patriot League play with three straight losses and saw its overall record drop to 5-10. The Midshipmen were struggling mightily on offense, scoring 55 points or less in four straight contests from Dec. 22 through Jan. 5.

Rock bottom came when Navy was blown out by Boston University, 71-53, at Alumni Hall, shooting just 39 percent from the field and committing a whopping 27 turnovers in the process. The Midshipmen have turned things around on the offensive end in a big way during the current six-game winning streak, averaging 79 points while shooting 51 percent from the field.

"Things are flowing offensively and we're making shots. It's that simple," DeChellis said. "We're sharing the basketball and running crisp offense. Guys are getting good looks and knocking them down."

Navy's attack was clicking on all cylinders during Wednesday night's 71-53 rout of American with five players reaching double figures. The Midshipmen scored 28 points in the paint, 16 off turnovers and 16 as a result of offensive rebounds.

"I think we're one of the top defensive teams in the league. Lately, we've been able to score

off defense, which means getting easier shots that leads to a higher shooting percentage," DeChellis said.

Bryce Dulin has come on strong, scoring 23 points against Lafayette and 21 versus Army while reaching double digits in two other games during the streak. The 6-foot-4 junior guard had been in a slump, scoring just 16 points in the five previous games.

"Bryce is just playing better. He's seeing the ball go into the basket and that means a lot," DeChellis said. "Bryce is playing with a lot of confidence right now. Our team as a whole is playing with a lot more confidence."

Point guard Hasan Abdullah has been a catalyst on both ends of the floor, averaging 6.5 assists and 4.75 steals over the last six games. The 6-foot sophomore has scored 14 points or more in five of six contests.

Swingman Shawn Anderson, who was held scoreless in a loss to Holy Cross on Jan. 2 and limited to single digits in three other games during December, has also stepped up. The versatile 6-foot-4, 220-pound junior, exploded for 30 points in Navy's overtime victory over archrival Army.

After tinkering with the starting lineup and the bench during the non-conference portion of the schedule, DeChellis has settled into a more consistent rotation and that has helped. Abdullah, Anderson, Dulin, power forward Tom Lacey and center Edward Alade have comprised the starting lineup during the six-game winning streak. Freshman forward Evan Wieck, who had started 12 games, is now coming off the bench.

"As a coach you try to mold and tinker and motivate. Over the course of the season, you try to guide guys toward their respective roles," DeChellis said. "The current rotation is working very well. Guys seem to be more settled in the roles than they were earlier in the season. We've developed some depth."

Wieck, senior wing Tim Abruzzo and sophomore forward George Kiernan are now receiving the most playing time off the bench. Junior point guard Nourse Fox and sophomore shooting guard Ryan Pearson round out the regular rotation as DeChellis has primarily used 10 players. Senior shooting guard Zach

Fong and senior forward James Hemphill are seeing spot minutes here and there.

"I think we've developed pretty good chemistry. It's chemistry from within. These kids believe in each other and are having fun with each other. I think they enjoy playing with each other," DeChellis said.

Navy's coaching staff appreciates the leadership the seniors have shown. Abruzzo, Fong, Hemphill and Grant Vermeer have been vocal in practice and encouraging from the bench during games, DeChellis said.

Lacey has emerged as the team's emotional leader, a relentless rebounder and aggressive defender whose nonstop activity in all areas sets quite an example. The rugged 6-foot-7, 235-pound junior ranks third in the Patriot League with 7.7 rebounding average. The New Jersey native has been particularly effective working the offensive glass, averaging three per game. He set a single-game school record with 11 offensive boards to spark the comeback win over Bryant and hauled down 10 against American.

"I think the way Tom plays is very uplifting. He works hard and that work ethic and energy are contagious," DeChellis said. "Tom is a very physical player and really goes hard after the basketball."

Navy put together a six-game winning streak within the Patriot League last season and could not maintain that level of play, going 3-8 over the last 11 games of the regular season. Saturday afternoon's home game against Holy Cross begins the second half of the 18-game conference rotation.

"We went through the same thing last year. We had a good first and didn't do as well in the second," DeChellis said. "We need to continue to concentrate on the keys that we've been emphasizing. It's all about repetition, repetition, repetition. We have to keep the same emphasis, same focus."

Red-hot Navy ends nine-year drought at Bender Arena

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | January 26, 2017

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Bender Arena has been a house of horrors for the Navy men's basketball team over the years. Going into Wednesday night's Patriot League game against host American, the Midshipmen were an abysmal 2-19 at the cozy facility in north-west Washington.

However, these Mids are red-hot and have suddenly transformed into road warriors.

Junior guard Bryce Dulin scored 15 points to lead five players in double figures as Navy pretty much controlled play from start to finish in beating American, 71-53, before an announced 757 at Bender Arena. Junior forward Tom Lacey notched his fourth double-double of the season with 14 points and 15 rebounds for the Midshipmen, who snapped a nine game losing streak at the gymnasium that opened in 1988.

"We haven't won here in nine years so I'm very, very excited for our program," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "To finally come here and win a game and do so in a very solid, workmanlike fashion is big."

Sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah totaled 14 points and five assists for Navy (11-10, 6-3), which has won seven straight to move above .500 for the first time all season. Junior swingman Shawn Anderson and sophomore forward George Kiernan contributed 10 points apiece for the Mids, who remained in a three-way tie for second place in the Patriot League.

"I thought we had a very, very solid evening on both ends of the floor. I thought several guys played well," DeChellis said. "When you have five guys in double figures like we did tonight, that's a good sign. I thought we spread the ball around pretty well."

Sophomore forward Lonnie Rivera scored 13 points to lead American (5-15, 2-7), which has dropped eight of its last 10. Freshman guard Sa'eed Nelson and freshman center Mark Gasperini both netted 11 points for the Eagles, who led for just 17 seconds in the entire game.

Senior forward Edward Alade added eight points and four rebounds for Navy.

"I think our team is doing a really good job of preparation. They've also done a good job with focus. Our guard play has been much better,"

DeChellis said. "Our guys are just playing with a lot of confidence. The key for us is defense, rebounding and taking care of the ball. The kids have bought into that and are doing a good job. We're starting to play on all cylinders and guys are having fun."

Lacey was an absolute beast on the boards, grabbing 10 rebounds on the offensive end. That was one shy of the school record set by the 6-foot-7, 235-pounder earlier this season against Bryant. It should be noted that Navy did not record offensive rebounds as a statistic during the David Robinson era.

"I think Tom Lacey's rebounding was just tremendous. With about eight minutes to go we lost our rhythm a little bit offensively and I thought Tom did a great job of getting us second shots," DeChellis said. "Tom really has a knack for getting the ball off the glass."

Navy hauled down a total of 16 offensive rebounds and converted them into 16 second-chance points. Six other players had one offensive board each.

"I've challenged Lacey and Ed Alade and our wings to be offensive rebounders. That's a focus every day in practice," DeChellis said.

Abdullah continues to do an outstanding job of running the offense and committed just one turnover while also making 4 of 6 3-pointers. He hit consecutive shots from beyond the arc after American had cut a 15-point lead down to seven with 6:46 remaining in the game.

"Hasan just has great confidence right now. It was an eight or nine point game and he bangs two threes back-to-back. That kind of breaks your spirit a little bit," DeChellis said. "Hasan has really played well here in the last month and that's one of the main reasons why we've won a few games. He's kind of found himself."

Dulin has also gotten into a good groove offensively, averaging almost 16 points over the past five games. The 6-foot-4 Missouri native scored off a mixture of short pullup jumpers and drives to the basket in making 5 of 7 from the field on Wednesday night.

"My teammates are getting me open and I'm getting some good looks," Dulin said. "Hasan and Shawn are really good creators off the dribble so a lot of the credit goes to them.

They're penetrating and kicking to me."

Anderson had nine points to lead six different scorers as Navy took a 35-25 halftime lead. Dulin added eight points for the Midshipmen, who shot a sizzling 54 percent (13-for-24) from the field in the opening frame.

Alade threw down a two-handed dunk and hit a nifty turnaround in the lane as Navy raced to an 11-0 lead just minutes into the contest. Gasperini hit a 3-pointer and a jumper to spark a 12-0 run that gave American its only lead.

It didn't last long as Anderson scored six points to spark a 16-4 run that put the Mids back ahead by 11, 27-16 with just over six minutes remaining. Kiernan came off the bench to cram seven points into a short span and help Navy takes its largest lead of 13 points at the 4:23 mark.

Nelson had nine points to lead American, which was out-rebounded 19-8 in the first half.

Navy returns to Alumni Hall on Saturday afternoon when its hosts Holy Cross (11-11, 5-4), which lost to Loyola on Wednesday to fall out of a four-way tie for second behind Patriot League leader Bucknell (16-6, 8-1).

Navy falters, then flourishes to beat Army West Point in OT

Ken McMillan | Annapolis Capital | January 22, 2017

Bryce Dulin admits he thought Navy had a win wrapped up with over a minute to play on Saturday but Army had other ideas.

Improbably, Army erased a nine-point deficit in the final 25 seconds of regulation, tying the game at the buzzer as freshman Tommy Funk was left open in the lane following a three-quarters court dash by Jordan Fox.

"My first thought? Coach D is going to kill us," said Shawn Anderson. "I was a little worried about what was going to happen after the game if we didn't pull this one out."

Navy left little doubt after giving up the first point of overtime, outscoring Army 21-5 in the extra session for a 96-80 Patriot League win. Navy held Army to 1-for-9 shooting in the overtime, and 39 percent for the game.

"I told them go back to work," said Navy coach Ed DeChellis. "As a coach you can see a look of, 'Nahhh, I don't know if we can do this or not.' That look was never there. These kids were confident that they could go back, go out there for five minutes and get things done."

Navy (10-10, 5-3 Patriot) has won five in a row, three coming on the road.

"We started out the league 0-3 and people started to count us out," Anderson said, "but we never gave up on ourselves."

"We're a team and we're a family and we are going to fight no matter what," Dulin said. "We had to stick a pole in the ground and decide, 'We have to make a change. We can't keep playing the way we are playing.' We had to make a difference and guys started stepping up."

Army actually led for 28 minutes of regulation time. But Navy started to force Army into some tough shots and the Midshipmen put on a 12-0 scoring run to seize a 60-56 lead with 4:20 to play.

Army wouldn't go away, though, and the Midshipmen left just enough cracks to support the Black Knights' late rally. Army trailed by nine with 25 seconds remaining but got two 3-pointers from Kennedy Edwards and two foul shots and the buzzer beater by Funk to tie the contest at 75.

Army scored the first point of overtime before a 7-0 run by Navy. Anderson scored on a floater, Tom Lacey converted two buckets inside and Dulin dropped in a foul shot for an 82-76 lead. Navy held Army to no field goals over the final 2:30 and hit 12 of its final 14 foul shots to secure its fifth consecutive win at West Point.

"We didn't have an attitude," Anderson said. "We were trying to force it on the offensive end. We didn't have an identity. Coach really challenged us to find our identity. And for us it was the defensive end. We knew that from last year and the team needed to establish that this year.

"The coaches pushed us and we responded. It took some growing pains. We haven't arrived obviously but we understand who we are as a team and what we have to do to win games."

Anderson hit 13 of 17 free throws and scored 30 points. Dulin added a career-high 17 rebounds to his 21 points. Hasan Abdullah also scored 21 for the Midshipmen.

Edwards scored 20. Funk tallied 16 and Luke Morrison 15 before each player fouled out. John Emezie added 12 for Army.

"This is the kind of game where you establish an attitude and a fire and ours came out," Anderson said. "It wasn't as pretty as you would like but it gives you something to build upon and give the young guys some confidence and the older guys confidence going into the next game."

DeChellis was impressed with how Navy responded considering eight players missed practice Thursday with the stomach flu.

The schedule has not been kind to Navy, with a stretch of six road games in eight. The Midshipmen play at American on Wednesday before returning home Saturday against Holy Cross.

"We came through this rough part of the schedule with flying colors," DeChellis said. "I am proud of our guys, just proud of our team."

Army rallies, but falls in OT to Navy

Ken McMillan | Times Herald-Record | January 22, 2017

There was less than five seconds to play in the Army-Navy basketball game and Army needed a basket to send the game to overtime.

Jordan Fox caught the inbounds pass on the fly, weaved around one defender at half-court and cut back to his left as he approached the top of the key. He zipped a pass into the lane to an open Tommy Funk and the freshman got the shot off his fingertips with 0.7 seconds left. The ball tickled the twine as the buzzer sounded and Army had completed the most improbable nine-point closing rally in program history as a crowd of 5,291 rocked Christl Arena.

CBS Sports Network analyst Reggie Miller, announcing courtside, needed just nine seconds to score eight points on the Knicks in an epic 1995 playoff win by the Pacers so he could appreciate what happened.

But that's where the feel-good story for Army on Saturday in the series coaching debut of Jimmy Allen came to an end.

"I felt at that point we were poised to win the game when you do something that crazy," Allen said.

Navy may have stumbled in that stretch run, stepping on the sidelines twice under Army defensive pressure, but the Midshipmen held their poise in the ensuing five minutes, outscoring Army 21-5 and pulling out the 96-80 Patriot League victory. It marks the fifth consecutive year Navy has won at West Point.

"It's a little disappointing it didn't happen," Allen said, "and for that to happen during the Army-Navy game and the crowd like that â€¦ I don't think anybody is walking out of here not talking about it for a while."

Army actually led for 28 minutes of regulation time and had a 56-48 lead with 9:57 left. Navy scored the next 12 points as Army missed its next five shots and turned the ball over three times. Hasan Abdullah's 3-pointer from the left wing with 4:51 left staked Navy to only its third lead of the game at 58-56. The Midshipmen extended to 68-58 just as the foul-fest began with 1:16 to play.

In the final 36 seconds, John Emezie hit two buckets and a foul shot and Kennedy Edwards sank a pair of 3-pointers to cut the deficit to 74-71. After turning the ball over, Navy fouled

Funk instead of allowing him to shoot a 3-pointer and the freshman sank two free throws. Army sent Shawn Anderson to the line with 4.5 seconds left and he missed the first of two free throws, allowing Funk to finish off Fox's mad dash.

"You have to keep battling," Edwards said. "We were able to do that and knock down some shots."

Army shot 1-for-9 in the overtime and Navy was 4-for-6.

Edwards scored 20 points, Funk 16, Luke Morrison 15 and John Emezie 12 for Army (8-12, 2-6 Patriot).

Anderson hit 13 of 17 foul shots for his 30 points and Abdullah and Bryce Dulin each scored 21 for Navy (10-10, 5-3 Patriot). Dulin grabbed a career-high 17 rebounds.

Q&A with Navy Basketball's Shawn Anderson

Gary Lambrecht | USNA WaveTops | January 19, 2017

Navy men's basketball coach Ed DeChellis has been in charge of the Midshipmen for six seasons, a span that has seen him rebuild the program from the ground up. One of the key pieces in that rebuilding effort has been Shawn Anderson '18, the versatile, 6-foot-4 guard from the Western Pennsylvania town of New Castle. Anderson, who at one time thought he would be a quarterback at New Castle High before injuries redirected him to hoops, proved he belonged on the Navy roster as a backup during his plebe year. Anderson helped the Mids finish 13-19, their highest win total under DeChellis. Last season, Anderson blossomed as a starter by leading Navy in scoring (13.2 ppg), and so did Navy by finishing 19-14, another high point in the DeChellis era. As this year's Mids were getting into their conference schedule with designs on winning the Patriot League for the first time in 20 years, Anderson was leading 6-10 Navy in scoring with 11.4 points per game. Anderson recently chatted with writer Gary Lambrecht.

Q: What has Navy basketball taught you about being a leader?

A: I think the most important thing it's taught me is you can never get down on yourself. As [teammate] Tom Lacey likes to say, 'Don't pity yourself.' I agree with that one hundred percent. I've had some great stretches and I've had some really bad stretches. You've got to stay even-keeled, whether things are going your way or not. I realize other [younger] guys are looking at me and how I handle that.

Q: How do you stay on Coach DeChellis' good side?

A: Coach D always says you'd better rebound, block out [on the boards], play hard and do not turn the ball over. If you take care of those things, he can live with the mistakes that are going to happen. Either way, you know he's going to ride you. He's a very old-school, blue-collar guy from Western Pennsylvania, and I certainly understand that. When you've made a bad mistake and you hear that foot [of his] slam on the floor, you try to avoid looking over at the bench.

Q: What were some of the big adjustments you had to make at the college level?

A: I came from a system [in high school] where no shot was a bad shot -- and of course, no

shot clock. If you were open, you were shooting. At this level, you learn pretty quickly that, even though you can make a move with the ball and get open enough to take a shot that it might not be the best shot for the team. I think that makes you better as an all-around player.

Q: You were a major part of back-to-back teams at New Castle High that went a combined 57-2 and won league championships in your last two years there. Besides the general culture shock that hits everybody as a plebe, how shocking was it to deal with a 19-loss season as a plebe?

A: I took the losing very hard in my first year. I look back now and see a young kid who was very immature. One thing my Dad taught me is that basketball is a platform that God has given me to help me inspire others. We had a great time winning at New Castle. I'm a small-town kid. Most people where I'm from don't do what we did. The best part of that winning was the relationships we built as a team. The rebuilding here started with relationships. We might not be the best program, but we're becoming the best team we can be.

Q: Besides being the scorer, shooter and passer you were last year, how did you help the Mids raise their victory total to 19?

A: As difficult as it was to deal with a record below .500 in my first year, I did my best to focus last year on moving on from game to game and trying to enjoy the ride. Sometimes it's not only about the wins and losses. It's more about the experiences you have as a team and caring about each other. Our guys want to be great. I know it's going to click for us. I know we're going to be good. If we each play for the guy next to us and have fun, the wins will take care of themselves.

Q: Did you envision yourself at a young age playing basketball in college?

A: No, I wanted to be a Division I football player. Football was so much fun to play. When I got moved from wide receiver to quarterback in eighth grade, I loved it because my coach would let me change the play sometimes if I saw something [favorable] in the defense. That's when I realized how strategic the game could be. But I suffered this freak injury in ninth grade. I got tackled awkwardly from behind and fractured a vertebra. That got me away from

football. Basketball stole my heart.

Q: When did you have an idea you would end playing at Navy?

A: When Coach D first recruited me during my junior season, I didn't even know what the Army-Navy football game was. At that point, I was hoping Pitt or Duquesne would offer me [a scholarship]. That's where some of my friends were going. When I came down here for a visit with my Dad, it was hard to look at this opportunity and say no.

Q: When I say New Castle, what do you think of?

A: I think of fireworks festivals, a place that's gone through tough times in terms of the economy. And I think of good people and really good food, whether you want homemade Italian, a Coney Island hot dog or Mexican that you can't beat at El Canelo.

Q: You're about an hour from Pittsburgh and a couple of hours from Cleveland. Any question about your allegiance to the Steelers?

A: No way. There is somewhat of a mix back home, but most Browns fans are quiet about it. I bleed red and black for New Castle and black and gold for the Steelers. When the Steelers are on TV, the city shuts down. Everyone is on Facebook talking about it. I remember back in sixth grade when the Steelers were making their Super Bowl [title] run [in 2006], we were eating in the cafeteria and one of the teachers started a "Here we go, Steelers" chant. That was the first time I remember seeing so many people come together like that.

Q: Your oldest sister, Tarina, was quite the basketball player at Southeast Missouri State. Who wins the one-on-one game today?

A: She's 30 now. She's dealt with a lot of injuries. When I was young, I played her and she destroyed me. I saw her embarrass a lot of guys on the court growing up. With each of us in our primes, she would beat me. I'm not too prideful to admit that.

Navy turns tables on Lehigh, 75-72

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | January 19, 2017

You know the Navy men's basketball team is really on a roll when it beats Lehigh.

The Mountain Hawks have dominated the Midshipmen over the last seven years, winning 13 of 14 meetings going into Wednesday night's important Patriot League battle.

The Mids turned the tables on their old nemesis thanks to the hot shooting of sophomore forward George Kiernan, who is quickly becoming a cult figure in Annapolis.

Kiernan came off the bench to score a career-high 18 points on the strength of four 3-pointers as Navy won a back-and-forth battle with Lehigh, 75-72, before an announced 1,292 at Alumni Hall. Sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah added 14 points and a career-best seven assists for the Midshipmen, who won their fourth straight.

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson had a solid all-around game with 11 points, five rebounds and four assists for Navy (9-10, 4-3), which moved into a three-way tie for third place in the Patriot League.

"I think it's an important win. It gives our team some confidence," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "The way we won was important. Being down and fighting back, making big plays down the stretch."

Lehigh beat Navy by two points in the quarterfinals of the Patriot League Tournament last year. The Mountain Hawks, who wound up losing to Holy Cross in the championship game, were the preseason pick to win the league this year.

"That was the team that ended our season in a close game in the conference tournament. That was in the back of our minds," Abdullah said. "I feel great about my teammates because it doesn't matter how far we're down, doesn't matter if we're not making shots. We believe in each other that we'll will our way back into the game. We knew they were going to make a run. We just stayed the course and remained resilient."

Senior center Tim Kempton notched his 11th double-double of the season with 17 points and 10 rebounds for Lehigh (10-8, 4-3), which had a three-game winning streak snapped. Junior point guard Kahron Ross totaled 17 points and five assists for the Mountain Hawks, who had

won six straight in Annapolis.

"I was really disappointed. We hit a major dry spell in the second half. During that stretch we turned it over and didn't get the type of shot attempts we needed because we were trying to do too much individually," Lehigh head coach Brett Reed said. "Things were coming easily for us when we were moving the basketball and making the defense work. Unfortunately, some of the formula that built our lead evaporated."

Freshman forward Pat Andree scored seven of his 10 points during a 17-5 run that gave Lehigh its largest lead, 54-43, at the 12:42 mark of the second half. Ross had five points during the stretch, which saw the visitors make seven straight shots.

Reserve forward James Hemphill turned things around for Navy by making a nifty left-handed lay-in then taking a charge on the other end. Hemphill then made a difficult reverse layup to spark a 27-7 run that put the Mids in control.

Freshman forward Evan Wieck went 4-for-4 from the field in contributing eight points for Navy, which finished with a huge advantage in bench points.

"I think James Hemphill came off the bench and gave us a huge lift. Evan Wieck went in there and made some big baskets," DeChellis said. "I look at the final numbers and the thing that jumps out at me is 41 bench points to 14. I thought our second wave came in and did an unbelievable job tonight."

Kiernan canned two treys during the decisive run, not even hesitating after catching the ball beyond the arc. The Illinois native, who only played in two varsity games as a freshman, finished 7-for-11 from the field.

"George doesn't have a conscience out on the court, and that's good," Abdullah said. "It doesn't matter if he's making shots or missing shots, his play is going to remain the same. He's a great shooter and is not afraid to shoot the ball."

Anderson made two tough driving layups in the final five minutes while Abdullah drained a 3-pointer from the right wing as Navy took a 70-61 lead with 1:31 remaining. However, the Mids could not put the Mountain Hawks away thanks in part to three missed foul shots in the final 43 seconds.

Meanwhile, Lehigh made three 3-pointers in the final minute to creep back into contention. Trailing by three with 10 seconds remaining, the visitors had two chances to tie, but Austin Price had one 3-point attempt blocked by Wieck then watched another bounce hard off the backboard at the buzzer.

"Lehigh is a very good team and made a run at us, but I think our kids were resilient and really fought back," DeChellis said. "We made some baskets and got ourselves back into the game. I think we got back into the flow offensively. We made some shots that got our energy going, especially our defensive energy."

Kempton drained a 3-pointer from the top of the key as time expired to forge a 33-33 tie at halftime. He and Price scored eight points apiece for the Mountain Hawks, who made 7 of 10 free throws in the first half.

Kiernan made 3 of 5 field goals in scoring seven points for Navy, which saw a 10-point lead evaporate over the final four minutes. Abdullah dished off five assists for the Midshipmen, who shot 50 percent (13-26) from the field in the first half.

Abruzzo came off the bench to sandwich a pair of 3-pointers around a trey by Abdullah as Navy took a 32-22 lead at the 4:18 mark. The Midshipmen managed only one point the rest of the way. There were three ties and four lead changes in the opening stanza.

"It was a back-and-forth game. I thought we played pretty good in the first half, but the last four minutes we were really hampered by foul trouble and didn't finish the half well offensively," DeChellis said.

Navy's four-game winning streak in Patriot League play is the second-longest during the six-year tenure of DeChellis. The Mids, who won six consecutive conference contests last season, hope to stay hot on Saturday when they travel to West Point.

"We have to take care of our bodies tomorrow, which will be a mental day, a focus day," said DeChellis, who owns a 6-5 record against Army. "We have to come back at it really hard on Friday morning then get on a bus and go up there."

Mids take it to Loyola in Baltimore

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | January 11, 2017

Navy men's basketball has been making itself right at home in Reitz Arena of late. Loyola must be wondering why it doesn't seem to have a home-court advantage when the visitors from Annapolis come to town.

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson scored 15 points to lead a balanced offense while sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah swiped four steals to spearhead a strong defense as Navy beat Loyola, 75-62, before an announced 592 at Reitz Arena.

Junior guard Bryce Dulin contributed 14 points and seven rebounds for the Midshipmen, who posted their third straight convincing victory on Forbes Court.

The two schools, located 26 miles apart, have played twice each season ever since Loyola joined the Patriot League in 2013. The Midshipmen are now 3-1 in conference contests held at the Baltimore school. Navy routed Loyola, 71-51, at Reitz Arena last season and posted a 57-47 win the year before.

Sophomore forward George Kiernan drained three 3-pointers in netting 11 points for Navy (7-10, 2-3), which has won two in a row following a four-game losing streak. Senior center Edward Alade continued his solid play of late with six points and four rebounds for the Mids, who never trailed after the opening minute.

Junior forward Tom Lacey and sophomore guard Ryan Pearson chipped in seven points apiece for Navy, which earned its first road victory of the season. The Midshipmen had been a combined 0-7 in road and neutral contests.

"We haven't won on the road so it was really important for us come up here and play well.

I thought we probably played our best game from start to finish tonight, which was really nice to see. This was a huge game for us. Fortunately, we've played pretty well here."

DeChellis was asked why he thinks the Mids have been able to post three straight double-digit wins at Reitz Arena.

"You know what, it's a tight gym so it's a good background for shooting. It's a lot like Halsey," said DeChellis, referring to Navy's practice facility at Halsey Field House.

Senior forward Jarred Jones scored 17 points to lead Loyola (8-8, 2-3), which suffered its second straight loss. Junior guard Andre Walker totaled 12 points, four rebounds and four assists for the Greyhounds, who were behind by double digits for most of the game.

"Navy is one of the best defensive teams in our conference. They've really done a good job of guarding us over the years," Loyola head coach G.G. Smith said. "We just weren't tough enough. It comes down to being tough and we weren't tough enough to play against Navy."

Smith was particularly perturbed that Navy easily exceeded its season average of 62.8 points per game. The Midshipmen, who could not manage more than 55 points in three losses to start league play, have now scored 67 and 75 in back-to-back games.

"It's not an Xs and Os thing. Our guys have to learn to dig down and play some defense. It comes down to guarding people and we need to be better," Smith said.

Anderson made numerous determined drives to the basket and drew fouls, finishing 5-for-5 from the foul line. The 6-foot-4 wing also grabbed seven rebounds and dished off five assists in arguably his best performance of the season.

"Shawn can really drive the basketball. We're trying to get him to play with a little pace and I thought he did that more in the second half. When he goes to the basket hard, he's pretty hard to stop," DeChellis said.

Navy had assists on 16 of 27 baskets with Abdullah adding four helpers. The Midshipmen closed out the contest by making their free throws, finishing 13 of 21 from the charity stripe.

"I'm really proud of our kids. I thought they played really hard and battled," DeChellis said.

Abdullah harassed Walker into 3-for-11 shooting and three turnovers. Anderson and Dulin also played tough perimeter defense.

"I thought Hasan was really good on the ball tonight. He's really quick and has great hands. Shawn and Bryce also put good pressure on the ball. I thought defensively we were pretty good early and knocked some balls free,"

DeChellis said. "We keep talking about playing with great energy, enthusiasm and emotion. We talk about being aggressive and getting after the ball. I thought our guys did all of that tonight."

Dulin scored eight points as Navy took a 36-28 lead into halftime. Senior guard Tim Abruzzo came off the bench to make a pair of 3-pointers for the Mids, who had nine different players reach the scoring column in the opening stanza.

Kiernan knocked down a three from the top of the key to give Navy its largest lead, 30-20, at the 5:45 mark. Jones scored 10 points for Loyola, which scored the game's first basket then promptly allowed a 7-0 run that put Navy ahead the rest of the way.

Anderson got a breakaway layup off a turnover then made two free throws as the Midshipmen increased their lead to 13 points early in the second half. Loyola converted consecutive steals into layups by Jones and freshman guard Chuck Campion in cutting the deficit to 56-49 with 8:54 remaining, but could get no closer.

Junior forward Tom Lacey scored off a power move to the basket and Abdullah followed with a driving layup as Navy quickly pushed the lead back to double figures and maintained that advantage the rest of the way.

"They did make a run in the second half and it was growth for our team because we were able to hold them off and make a little run ourselves," DeChellis said.

Loyola continued to make a living at the free throw line, making 16 of 23 attempts. The Greyhounds lead the Patriot League in both free throws attempted (23.1) and made (16.2) per game.

It was only the second home loss this season for Loyola with Smith at a loss to explain why his club cannot seem to beat Navy at Reitz Arena.

"We're embarrassing ourselves playing at home," Smith said. "Andre and Jarred are our two best players and they've got to take more leadership of the team. They need to be leaders and an extension of me."

Lacey, Abdullah lead way as Navy picks up first Patriot League win

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | January 9, 2017

When it comes to conference competition, the prevailing wisdom is that a school must win most of its home games and try to steal a few on the road in order to be a true contender.

Navy men's basketball had not done well in that regard early in the Patriot League schedule. The Midshipmen lost two home games to begin league play and could not afford to drop another.

Junior forward Tom Lacey notched a double-double with 14 points and 11 rebounds as Navy protected its home court in impressive fashion on Sunday afternoon, leading from start to finish in a 67-55 defeat of Colgate at Alumni Hall.

Sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah had a solid all-around game with 14 points, five assists, five steals and five rebounds for Navy (6-10, 1-3), which snapped a four-game losing streak and picked up its first Patriot League victory.

"Obviously, without a win in the league Navy was hungry. They needed a win and that was evident by how hard their kids played today," Colgate head coach Matt Langel said.

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson contributed 14 points and six rebounds for the Midshipmen, who led by as much as 21 points at one stage of the second half.

"Our backs were against the wall. What are you made out of and what are you going to get done? I thought the kids responded today and I'm proud of them," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "I think we've improved as a team over the last couple days."

Junior forward Tom Rivard totaled 21 points and eight rebounds to lead Colgate (3-14, 1-3), which fell behind by 13 points early and was forced to play catch-up the rest of the way. The Red Raiders committed turnovers on six of seven possessions to start the game.

"We couldn't get off a shot at the basket, much less make a basket," Langel said. "When you get off to slow starts the way we have the past couple games, it puts so much pressure on a group that hasn't found a way to win. That makes it really hard. If you can be in the game early and not be playing so much from behind, it makes a big difference."

Junior guard Sean O'Brien drained a pair of 3-pointers to fuel a 9-2 run that cut the Colgate deficit to 29-25 early in the second half. Abdullah hit a 3-pointer and Lacey converted an old-fashioned three-point play to spark a 21-4 run by Navy.

Sophomore forward George Kiernan sandwiched a couple of long 3-pointers around a nifty reverse layup as the Midshipmen took a commanding 50-29 lead with 8:38 remaining.

"That was really important and it shows growth. There are going to be runs and you have to respond. We responded and pushed the lead back out," DeChellis said of the decisive run.

Abdullah made an impact early by putting pressure on Colgate point guard Sean O'Brien and overplaying the passing lanes. The first-year starter also did a good job of directing the offense while looking for his own shot.

"I thought Hasan played probably his best game. I thought his on-the-ball defense to start the game was tremendous. He's a strong kid with long arms and can cause some problems," DeChellis said.

"Hasan did a great job running the game. He was really a point guard out there," Lacey said.

DeChellis said the coaching staff has placed an emphasis on taking higher percentage shots instead of settling for 3-pointers or long jumpers. Navy was aggressive going to the basket on Sunday and wound up making 23 of 29 free throws. The Midshipmen were 19-for-23 from the line in the second half.

"Our focus was trying to get the ball inside and drive the ball more. We were able to do that today. We shot 29 free throws and made 23 and there's the game. It makes things so much easier," DeChellis said. "Our guys made the free throws at the end of the game that they needed to make."

Navy opened Patriot League play with a four-point loss to Bucknell at Alumni Hall then was nipped, 51-50, by Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. The Midshipmen returned home and played poorly in getting blown out by Boston University.

"We're a resilient bunch. We had two really

close games then we had the one against Boston where they punched us in the face. We just knew we needed to come out today and get a win. That's how we practiced the last couple days and that's how we played the game today," Lacey said.

Lacey led a balanced attack with eight points as Navy took a 27-16 lead into intermission. Abdullah had seven points, four steals and three assists for the Mids, who led by 13 points on multiple occasions.

Navy played tenacious defense during the opening 20 minutes, forcing Colgate into 36.8 percent shooting (7 for 19) and 11 turnovers. The Red Raiders were held scoreless for the nine minutes to start the contest.

"I thought our effort defensively to start the game was very good," DeChellis said.

Navy heads back out on the road for games at Loyola-Maryland on Wednesday night and at Lafayette on Saturday afternoon. The Midshipmen have won the last two meetings in Baltimore against the Greyhounds and are also riding a two-game winning streak in Easton.

"This is a huge week for us. Hopefully, we can go on the road and get some things done," DeChellis said.

Kiernan emerges as a key contributor for Navy basketball

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | January 8, 2017

George Kiernan came into the Navy men's basketball team with the ability to make perimeter jump shots. However, the freshman forward quickly realized that was not the only skill needed to earn playing time at the Division I level.

Kiernan arrived in Annapolis for plebe summer weighing around 200 pounds and was not very strong. The Illinois native needed considerable work on the defensive end and had to become a better ballhandler.

Head coach Ed DeChellis saw considerable potential in Kiernan and believed he would benefit from playing for what has been dubbed the "Navy Basketball Development Team." That is a euphemism for junior varsity and gives freshmen and sophomores an opportunity to improve while playing games against junior colleges and prep schools.

"George could always shoot the basketball. It was more about competing in the post, fighting for rebounds, knowing what to do defensively," DeChellis said. "I think he's improved in all those areas and playing for the development team helped."

After appearing in just two varsity games a year ago, Kiernan has emerged as a key contributor for Navy. The 6-foot-7 sophomore stands second on the squad in scoring with nine points per game and is the leading 3-point shooter in terms of percentage (35.8).

"You like to see players make that jump from their freshmen to their sophomore years, and George has certainly done that," DeChellis said. "We were counting on George to make significant improvement. He's gotten an opportunity and has taken advantage of it. He's had some good moments in games so far."

Kiernan routinely practiced with the varsity as a plebe, but wound up playing a total of five minutes in two contests. However, the Hinsdale Central High product impressed the coaching staff with the way he performed for the development team.

"I needed last year to mature and get ready for college basketball. The game is so much more physical, so much faster," Kiernan said. "Playing in JV games really helped me prepare for the intensity and speed you see at this level."

One advantage of junior varsity games is that young players aren't under as much pressure. Out of the spotlight of fans and media, mistakes are not magnified as much. Players can work on their weaknesses without worrying about being yanked out of the game.

"I think the development games give you an opportunity to play against people other than your teammates. Any competition against an outside opponent is a chance to grow and develop," Kiernan said. "There are a lot of good things to take away from that experience."

Kiernan spent considerable time during the offseason working with Joe Fondale, the strength and conditioning coordinator for men's basketball. He added 25 pounds and considerable muscle.

"Being bigger and stronger helps you so much on defense and with rebounding," Kiernan said. "I'm not getting pushed around in the post as much as I had been."

DeChellis saw during preseason practice that Kiernan was capable of contributing and was disappointed when an ankle injury caused him to miss two weeks. The 6-foot-7, 225-pounder was not available for the opener against Ohio State in the Veterans Classic and also sat out a home game against Washington College.

Kiernan saw his first significant action against High Point and scored 11 points on the strength of three 3-pointers.

"It's definitely a lot different on varsity. Everything is just so much more serious," Kiernan said. "I remember the first three I took against High Point was a bank shot. I was a little nervous, but seeing that shot go in settled me down."

Kiernan has reached double figures in seven of 15 games and established a career-high with 16 points at Holy Cross. He has made 19 of 53 shots from beyond the arc, a high percentage for a power forward.

"I'm a four man that can shoot the ball. That's my strength," Kiernan said. "I appreciate the coaching staff for giving me the confidence to take open threes and I have to credit my teammates for creating those shots."

Kiernan's perimeter shooting ability draws opposing power forwards away from the basket and spreads the floor. "George can make baskets, and it really helps us because it stretches the defense," DeChellis said.

DeChellis was impressed to see Kiernan drive the ball to the basket a couple times in recent games, getting all the way to the rim for a layup against Holy Cross and drawing a defender then dishing to a teammate versus Bucknell.

"What really surprised us was that he's put the ball on the floor a little better than I thought he would do at this point in time," DeChellis said. "We told George: Now you're on the scouting report. Teams are going to run you off the line because they know you can shoot threes. You need to be able to shot fake and drive the ball. He's made a couple nice moves that showed he could do just that."

Kiernan, who played summer ball for the Chicago LockDown, was spotted at an Amateur Athletic Union tournament by Navy assistant Jon Perry. He took an official recruiting visit to the Naval Academy along with Hasan Abdullah and Ryan Pearson with all three players committing to the program shortly thereafter.

Now that group of sophomores are all playing key roles with Abdullah the starting point guard and Pearson earning playing time off the bench. Abdullah missed most of his freshman season with a hip injury.

Kiernan knows he must continue to get stronger in order to be a more effective rebounder. He cites perimeter defense as a priority for improvement and looks to junior forward Tom Lacey as an example for how to play.

"I'm learning a lot from Tom Lacey about how hard to compete. I need to learn how to use my body and play relentless like he does," Kiernan said.

DeChellis believes Kiernan can take another giant leap next season if he continues to get stronger. "It all starts up there in the weight room for George. He needs to tighten up his core and become a faster guy, a more explosive guy," DeChellis said.

Anemic offense dooms Navy

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | January 6, 2017

Navy is putting itself behind the eight ball in the Patriot League men's basketball race, and an anemic offense is the biggest reason why.

The Midshipmen saw another conference opportunity fall by the wayside amidst a flurry of missed shots and turnovers.

Senior forward Justin Alston led a balanced attack with 14 points as Boston University blew out Navy, 71-53, before a sparse crowd at Alumni Hall on Thursday night. Junior guards Will Goff and Cedric Hankerson scored 12 points apiece for the Terriers, who picked up their first road win of the season.

Goff and Hankerson both made four 3-pointers for Boston (8-7, 3-0), which used a 13-0 run over the opening nine minutes of the second half to blow the game open. The Terriers were on fire from outside, making a total of 12 shots from beyond the arc.

"I thought it was by far the worst I've seen our team play in a long time. I'm very disappointed," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "We were very, very poor offensively tonight."

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson scored 10 points for Navy (6-9, 0-3), which committed a season-high 27 turnovers and shot 39 percent (20-for-51) from the field. Senior guard Zach Fong had eight points for the Midshipmen, who are off to their worst start in Patriot League play since 2012.

"We're a team that doesn't have a lot of confidence right now, as you can see," DeChellis said. "You have to play harder and you have to play tougher to find confidence."

Goff swished three shots from 3-point range to jump-start the decisive run, which was fueled by five turnovers by Navy. Alston had a two-handed dunk while freshman forward Max Mahoney scored an easy basket inside as the Terriers took a 51-30 lead at the 11:12 mark of the second half.

DeChellis tried all sorts of different player combinations to no avail as the Midshipmen just could not get untracked offensively and saw the deficit grow as high as 29 points.

"Midway through the second half, we looked like we were dead tired. We just had no juice whatsoever," the sixth-year head coach said.

Anderson, the team's leading scorer, committed six turnovers. Junior forward Tom Lacey, normally one of the Midshipmen's best passers, finished with five. DeChellis said the number one goal he posted on the blackboard before the game was to take care of the basketball.

"Our judgment on passing the ball is just very, very poor. We're a team that has turned the ball over in practice, and it's not just one guy. It seems like we take turns turning the ball over," DeChellis said. "Shawn Anderson and Tom Lacey had 11 turnovers between them. That's your two juniors, two of the guys you're counting on to take care of the ball."

Boston piled up 19 steals, two shy of a single-game school record set way back in 1989. Sophomore guard Kyle Foreman was responsible for five steals and also dished off six assists.

"I was pleased with the defensive effort throughout the ballgame. We were very active and did a good job of anticipating passes," Boston University head coach Joe Jones said. "In the second half, we rebounded the ball better and were able to get out in transition and make the game easier."

Navy was limited to 55 points in dropping its Patriot League opener at home to Bucknell by four. The Midshipmen managed only 50 points in getting nipped by one at Holy Cross on Monday night.

DeChellis must figure out what is wrong with the offense in a hurry as Navy returns to action on Sunday afternoon at Alumni Hall against Colgate (3-13, 1-2).

"We had a chance to win against Bucknell and didn't. We had a chance to win at Holy Cross and didn't," DeChellis said. "We have another opportunity on Sunday afternoon and we have to come ready to play against Colgate."

For a team that is struggling offensively, Navy is settling far too often for low-percentage shots. The Midshipmen jacked up 25 3-pointers on Thursday night, making just eight. DeChellis noted the Mids had some success when they did get the ball inside, scoring 20 points in the paint on limited opportunities.

"Believe it or not, that was the mantra for tonight - to get the ball inside," he said. "We're yelling from the bench to get it inside, get it inside. We played in a mushroom again all night, from the top of the key on out. We never got the ball down below the foul line."

Patrick Benzan's buzzer-beating layup lifts Crusaders to victory over Navy

Jennifer Toland | Worcester Telegram & Gazette | January 3, 2017

Holy Cross sophomore guard Patrick Benzan missed a tying free throw late in Monday night's game against Navy at the Hart Center, but with less than 12 seconds to play, he didn't have time to dwell on it.

"I was disappointed," Benzan said, "but I focused on the next play. There were still (11.8) seconds. In a basketball game, that's an eternity. I knew there would be another chance to make a play."

Navy's Ryan Pearson missed the front end of a one-and-one with 7.6 seconds to play. HC senior forward Malachi Alexander grabbed the rebound and got the ball to Benzan, who took it through the lane for the winning layup as time expired.

"We knew if they missed, we'd have to push the ball up the court," Benzan said after HC's 51-50 victory. "I saw a little space on the left side, crossed over and went over there. I knew I had to make it to make up for missing that free throw."

The Crusaders (7-8, 1-1 Patriot League) were coming off a six-point loss at Boston University. Five of Holy Cross' eight losses this year have been by eight points or less (three by three points or less), so the Crusaders felt good about finally winning a close one.

"It felt good to come out on top," Alexander said. "I'm glad we gave our fans something to be excited about at the end of the game because it was ugly, but we pulled it out."

The PL foes split their regular-season series last year, with HC's win coming here in overtime.

Navy (5-9, 0-2) is 0-7 away from home this season.

Benzan, who prepped at Worcester Academy, started the last five games, but came off the bench against the Midshipmen. He finished with 12 points on 5-of-7 shooting.

"Pat has a way of getting in the lane, and he got in the lane, and he knew what the deal was, and he finished it," Holy Cross coach Bill Carmody said. "We were fortunate, but you have to win those close games."

The game pitted the PL's top scoring defenses

(HC is No. 1, Navy is No. 2), and points were hard to come by for both teams in the first half. Navy led, 18-14, with five minutes left in the first, and 22-19 at the break.

"All four years I've been there, they've plays us tough," Alexander said. "There have been no easy wins for us against them. They hit us in the first half, and we kind of looked confused at the end of the first half. We knew we had to come out with a lot more intensity and match their intensity, and also stay calm and run what we wanted to run."

Alexander scored a game-high 17 points, and senior guard Robert Champion added 11, but the pair, HC's leading scorers this season, was a combined 10 of 32 from the field.

The Crusaders were 6 of 25 from the floor in the first half and had an eight-minute gap between field goals, and finished the game 18 of 50 (36 percent).

A second-half offensive drought doomed the Crusaders in last week's loss to BU.

"We have to do something with our offense, obviously," Carmody said. "Usually, I think I have an idea of what to do with things. I guess they're not good shots. I think we're getting pretty good shots, generally, but if we're not making them they're not good shots for this team. We have to come up with something, somehow."

"Their defense sort of threw us," Carmody said. "It's all we prepared for for two days, and with all those upperclass guys out there, it looked like we didn't know what we were doing half the time, which bothers me a lot."

Holy Cross did start the second half pretty well and outscored the Mids, 13-2, over a four-minute span to turn a six-point deficit into a 34-29 lead on Alexander's 3-pointer with 11:26 left.

Navy responded by scoring 11 straight and led, 40-34, after sophomore George Kiernan's basket with less than seven minutes remaining.

HC hung in and tied it at 42 after back-to-back 3s by Benzan and senior center Matt Husek.

Navy led, 50-46, after junior Tom Lacey's tip-in with 1:18 to play.

Benzan scored Holy Cross' final five points.

"It was an ugly win," Alexander said, "but we stayed with it and kept going."

Kiernan led Navy with 16 points. Lacey added 11. Navy shot 42 percent from the field.

Mids fall to Bison yet again

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | December 31, 2016

Just over a minute into the second half, Bucknell head coach Nathan Davis angrily called a timeout. Davis was truly bewildered by the lackluster play of his ballclub, which was allowing host Navy to have its way on both ends of the court.

"I've been a head coach for seven years and that is easily the earliest I've called a timeout in the second half," said Davis, a former Navy assistant under Don DeVoe.

Davis clearly had not gotten his message across during halftime and had to pull the trigger early in order to wake up the Bison, who trailed by 13 points at the time. Sophomore guard Kimbal Mackenzie led the way as the visitors responded with an impressive run to get back in the game.

Mackenzie scored 22 points as Bucknell rallied to beat Navy, 59-55, in the Patriot League opener for both schools before an announced 2,301 at Alumni Hall. The Ontario native, who prepped at John Carroll, made 4 of 6 3-pointers in finishing three points shy of a career-high.

Mackenzie, the Baltimore Catholic League Player of the Year as a senior, rebounded a missed free throw with 7.3 seconds left and drained two free throws to clinch the come-from-behind victory.

Junior center Nana Foulland notched a double-double with 12 points and 12 rebounds for Bucknell (9-5, 1-0), the defending regular season champions in the Patriot League.

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson scored 12 points and grabbed eight rebounds to lead Navy (5-8, 0-1), which has lost 14 of the last 15 meetings with Bucknell. Sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah and freshman center Evan Wieck scored nine points apiece for the Midshipmen, who led for all but 3 ½ minutes.

"I thought we played really, really hard. I don't think we played well," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "It comes down to making a free throw and making a big shot when you need to and we didn't do either tonight."

A layup by Wieck followed by a driving basket by junior guard Bryce Dulin gave Navy its largest lead of the game, 36-23 at the 18:45 mark of the second half. That is when Davis called the early timeout and succeeded in lighting a

spark under his squad.

"Having not played well in the first half, we come out and give up two layups and commit a turnover to start the second half," Davis said. "We were doing some uncharacteristic things at times. We didn't talk at all about Xs and Os. It was all about mental and physical toughness."

Mackenzie scored off a breakaway layup then later swished a pair of 3-pointers from the corner to spark a 12-2 run that cut the deficit to 38-35 with 11:19 remaining. Sophomore forward George Kiernan converted a driving layup and drained a 3-pointer as Navy briefly repelled the rally.

However, Mackenzie scored off a tough drive to the basket and made another 3-pointer to key a 7-0 run that got Bucknell within one. The Bison went more than 12 minutes without making a field goal and the Midshipmen were unable to take advantage of that extended drought.

"You've got to make hay when there is time for hay to be made," DeChellis said. "We're not a great offensive team, as you witnessed. We just couldn't break away. I knew they were going to make a run because they have a great point guard and a great big man."

Point guard Stephen Brown turned a steal into a breakaway layup to put Bucknell ahead 55-53 with 1:11 remaining in the game. It was the first lead for the Bison since the 17:39 mark of the first half.

Navy had multiple opportunities to tie or take the lead, but Anderson made just 2 of 6 free throws in the final minute while Zach Fong missed a pair of long 3-pointers. Anderson rebounded the second of those errant threes and was fouled with 8.3 seconds left, but missed both foul shots at a point when the Mids trailed 57-55.

"We're going to him because he's a good driver and gets fouled, but you have to finish it off," DeChellis said of Anderson, who was 2-for-8 from the foul line. "No one feels worse than Shawn. He feels terrible."

Navy shot 37 percent (20-for-54) from the field and 9 of 18 from the charity stripe. The Midshipmen committed 17 turnovers and were

just 6-for-24 from 3-point range.

"We have to learn how to win. We have to learn how to make the big shot, learn how to make free throws down the stretch," DeChellis said. "You have to make baskets in this game. It's not that earth-shattering. Right now, we're a team that has struggled to make shots."

Abdullah drained a pair of 3-pointers and crammed nine points into a two-minute sequence as Navy scored 13 consecutive points to take control early. That run was fueled by six straight turnovers by Bucknell, which was out of sync offensively the entire first half.

Dulin and Anderson made 3-pointers moments apart as the Midshipmen took their largest lead of the opening half, 23-11, at the 10:47 mark. The Bison shot just 28 percent (7-25) and committed 12 turnovers during the difficult first half.

"Coach DeChellis clearly had his team more ready to play than I did. The beginning of the game is all on me. We weren't focused coming out and they took it to us early," Davis said.

Abdullah did not score again after the early flurry and wound up shooting 3 of 12 from the field. He committed four turnovers and dished off just one assist.

"I thought Hasan took some tough shots. He gets excited and takes some difficult shots," DeChellis said. "He's a sophomore and is still learning."

Midshipmen excited about early conference test

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | December 30, 2016

Navy will find out quickly whether it can compete with the top tier of the Patriot League when it hosts defending regular season champion Bucknell on Friday night.

Bucknell returns three starters and two all-conference performers from a squad that went 14-4 in the Patriot League a year ago. The Bison, under the direction of second-year head coach Nathan Davis, posted an 8-5 record during the non-conference portion of the schedule with upset victories over Vanderbilt of the Southeastern Conference and Richmond, a perennial contender in the Atlantic 10.

"I think Bucknell is very talented. They have a nice nucleus of really skilled players," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "It's a hard team to guard because they shoot the ball so well from the perimeter and have a guy in the post who can catch the ball and score. They have three bona-fide scorers so this will be a big test for our defense."

Bucknell blasted Navy, 88-58, in last season's Patriot League opener. The Bison clinched the regular season crown by beating the Midshipmen, 77-73, in Annapolis in the finale.

"We're excited about beginning league play against a good team on our home court," Navy junior forward Tom Lacey said. "As a team, I think we're growing every day. Competition is always intense and physical in conference play. I think we have a group of guys that are going to rise to the occasion."

Mids can't contain Bulldogs in bowl shootout Bucknell was picked to place third in the Patriot League by a preseason poll. The Bison lost two starters, including leader scorer Chris Hass.

However, Bucknell brings back one of the best big men in Nana Foulland and one of the top point guards in Stephen Brown, juniors who were named second and third team All-Patriot League. The 6-foot-9, 230-pound Foulland is averaging 14.5 points and 8 rebounds while the smooth, speedy Brown is posting 9.9 points and 4.7 assists per game.

Bucknell has gotten a big lift from junior forward Zach Thomas, who may be the most improved player in the Patriot League. The 6-foot-7, 228-pound product of Oakdale High in Ijamsville, Maryland is the team's leading scorer (16.6 ppg).

Navy compiled a 5-7 record in non-conference play — going 5-1 at Alumni Hall and 0-6 in road or neutral games. DeChellis, in his sixth season at the helm, said there's a simple explanation for why the Midshipmen have struggled so much on the road.

"We haven't been very successful on the road, and the reason is that we haven't shot the ball very well. Our road numbers shooting the basketball are not very good at all," DeChellis said. "We've shot the ball much better at home, which shows we are capable. We've got some young guys that clearly feel more comfortable at home. I think we'll be a team that plays better on the road as we go along."

Navy is coming off a 63-54 defeat at Hartford in which it shot a season-low 34.9 percent (22-for-63) from the field. That figure was low-lighted by a season-worst 13 percent shooting (3-for-23) from 3-point range.

For the season, Navy is averaging 64.9 points on 43 percent field goal shooting — ranking near the bottom of the 10-team Patriot League in both categories. On the bright side, the Midshipmen stand second in the conference in field goal percentage defense along with both rebounding and turnover margin.

"Defensively, I feel like we've really picked up our intensity and are getting into teams," Lacey said. "We definitely need to work on running our offense better. I think that just comes with maturity. The more games we play, the better we're going to get on the offensive end."

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson leads Navy in scoring with 12.4 points per game and ranks second in rebounding with a 5.2 average. The 6-foot-4, 220-pound slasher has the ability to be an All-Patriot League performer, but must be more consistent.

"Shawn is important to us and we need him to continue to develop and play with confidence," DeChellis said. "We need Shawn to drive the ball and create for others, not just himself."

Navy has no other player averaging in double figures, although forward George Kiernan is close at 9.2 points. The 6-foot-7, 225-pound sophomore, who appeared in just two varsity games last season, has been a pleasant surprise as he's shooting a sizzling 54 percent from the field while coming off the bench.

DeChellis has also been pleased with the overall play of Lacey, who leads the team and stands third in the Patriot League in rebounding (7.7 per game). The rugged 6-foot-7, 235-pounder has hauled down 37 offensive rebounds, which is tops in the conference.

"Lacey is bringing great energy to the team as well as unbelievable offensive rebounding. He's just really going after the ball, rebounding with his face as I call it," DeChellis said. "Tom also does a very good job of talking defensively and runs the floor well. He's providing tremendous overall leadership."

Freshman Evan Wieck has moved into the starting lineup in the pivot, replacing senior Edward Alade. Wieck (6-8, 220) is averaging just 3.9 points and 3.0 rebounds, but the coaching staff likes the intangibles he brings.

"Wieck is a good defender, good ball screen hedger, good post passer so you can run the offense through him," said DeChellis, who is concerned the plebe might be wearing down a bit after losing 20 pounds during his first semester at the Naval Academy.

Another lineup change has come at small forward where Bryce Dulin has supplanted Tim Abruzzo, who missed five games after aggravating his surgically-repaired knee. Neither player is shooting very well from the perimeter with Abruzzo 5-for-21 on 3-pointers and Dulin barely better at 6-for-21.

"Abruzzo got hurt and I didn't think he was 100 percent. He was kind of dragging his leg," DeChellis said. "Dulin is a real good defender. We've tried to have him play the other team's best perimeter offensive player."

Navy was picked to finish eighth in the 10-team Patriot League, which has become commonplace. The Midshipmen have improved their record — both overall and in the conference — every year under DeChellis, but are still viewed as cellar dwellers by their conference brethren.

"There's always a chip on our shoulder. Everyone on this team was under-recruited. Nobody ever gives us much respect. It's a constant reminder that we still have to prove ourselves," Lacey said.

Legacy recruit Butler leaves Navy basketball program

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | December 28, 2016

It was a feel-good story when James Butler committed to play basketball for the Naval Academy last November. That's because he is the son of one of Navy's all-time greatest players.

However, James Butler has decided not to follow in his father's footsteps after all, leaving the Navy program recently due largely to lack of playing time. The 6-foot-8, 230-pound freshman forward appeared in just four games and logged only 25 total minutes.

"James told me he didn't feel like he was in the rotation right now and he wanted to step away," head coach Ed DeChellis said after practice on Wednesday afternoon. "I don't know if he's going to stay at the academy or move on to another school."

Butler was named first team All-Metro by The Washington Post after leading the area in scoring with 27.5 points per game as a senior at Lake Braddock High. He was the Virginia 6A North Region Player of the Year and was also selected first team All-State.

"James is a great kid who worked hard. He comes from a great family," DeChellis said. "Guys make decisions and we have to move on as well."

Vernon Butler ranks second in Navy basketball history in both scoring (1,952) and rebounding (1,115) behind legendary former teammate David Robinson. Butler and Robinson comprised a dominant front-court that led Navy to the Elite Eight of the 1986 NCAA Tournament.

James Butler, who chose Navy over UMBC and Wofford among others, was described by recruiting analysts as a rugged rebounder and tough inside scorer — much like his father.

Butler was one of seven plebes on the Navy roster this season and only one of them has received significant action. Evan Wieck, a 6-foot-8, 220-pound forward, has played in all 12 games with nine starts and is averaging 3.9 points and 3.0 rebounds.

DeChellis was asked if he was surprised that a freshman still adjusting to life at the Naval Academy would decide to leave the basketball program this early in the season.

"I've been doing this a long time and nothing

surprises me anymore," he said. "This is a trend in college basketball. You see a lot of young kids transferring across the country."

DeChellis noted there were more than 600 transfers at the Division I level during the 2015-2016 season.

"Everybody wants instant gratification. Sometimes, it takes a little longer than you would like," he said.

Navy men's basketball has experienced very minimal attrition during the six-year tenure of DeChellis. Jace Hogan became the first recruit of the DeChellis era to transfer when he departed for Jacksonville University following the spring semester.

DeChellis said he did not speak to Vernon Butler after speaking with James Butler, whose potential was praised by the head coach during preseason.

"Young people have to make their own decisions. It doesn't matter if the father went here. That really doesn't have any affect on a young guy. It's all about what he feels he needs to do. We wish James all the best," DeChellis said.

Anderson leads Navy past Columbia

Brian Burden | Annapolis Capital | December 9, 2016

There was no need for a historic comeback Friday night in Annapolis. This time around, the Midshipmen had it covered from start to finish.

Shawn Anderson had 21 points and five rebounds and three assists, George Kiernan had 11 points and seven rebounds and Bryce Dulin added 13 points and seven rebounds as Navy defeated Columbia, 69-54.

The Midshipmen (5-6) led from the start against the visiting Lions (3-5), jumping out to an 8-2 lead. Tom Lacey, who had 16 points and a career-high 17 rebounds in Navy's 25-point halftime comeback win over Bryant Tuesday, was strong again inside for Navy. He had eight first-half points and 12 overall, to go with seven rebounds as the Mids were strong on the ball defensively throughout the first half, taking a 40-30 lead at the break.

"I thought this was our strongest game defensively this season," Navy coach Ed DeChellis said.

Instead of chasing the lead all game, the Mids were tasked with protecting it. With the exception of the occasional Columbia 3-pointer, Navy did just that.

"We just could not get into a flow offensively all game," Columbia coach Jim Engles said. "We had some guys in foul trouble throughout the game, and that disrupted our attack."

Nate Hickman had had 16 points and Mike Smith added 15 points to lead the Lions, but Columbia never went on a run. Navy stunted most offensive possessions, and controlled most critical rebounds. Columbia's Luke Petrasek, whom Engles classifies as his best player, and who averages 16 points and eight rebounds a game, had three fouls in the first half, and picked up his fourth just 21 seconds into the second.

"The credit for that goes to our bigs," Anderson said "They did a good job inside and on the boards."

Petrasek's absence left a good-sized hole in the paint, and Navy exploited it with regularity on drives to the basket. Although Navy spread the wealth offensively in the first half, Anderson identified options on the drive and had 14 points after the break. The junior from New Castle, Pa. was active around the rim, on the

drive and on the perimeter all game, finishing with three assists and no turnovers in 33 minutes.

"I think that was Shawn's best offensive game of the season," DeChellis said. "To have four guys in double figures, that says a lot about us spreading the ball out."

Navy was never in danger, with the lead shrinking to just seven in the second half. Any time it looked like the Lions would gain some offensive momentum, Lacey or Dulin or Anderson had a big rebound. Anderson, Dulin, Zach Fong and Nourse Fox worked tirelessly on the perimeter all game, and the Lions were forced into numerous poor shot situations late in the shot clock.

"The guards did a great job on the perimeter for us tonight," Kiernan said.

It was the Mids' last home game before finals, and they closed strong. Lacey had a dunk in the waning seconds to finish off the 15-point victory. DeChellis wanted to see a bit more offensive rebounding and a slightly better performance from the foul line (18 for 29, 62 percent), but he was happy with what he saw for 40 minutes. After only leading for 25 seconds against Bryant, the Midshipmen led for 38 minutes, 40 seconds.

"They never did go on a run, and we played a pretty complete game," DeChellis said.

Anderson took a finger in the eye midway through the second half, but otherwise came away unscathed. He appreciated that he and his teammates made this effort much easier on themselves than Tuesday's contest.

"This was much easier; I will take this all the time," Anderson said.

It is back to academics as the Midshipmen focus on their finals, with the Patriot League schedule looming right around New Year's.

"It is always about academics here, but our last final before Christmas is in Hartford."

NAVY NOTES: The Midshipmen are off the next 12 days for final exams before traveling to play Hartford on December 22nd. They open Patriot League play at home against Bucknell Friday, December 30th, at 7 p.m...Tom Lacey's

17 rebounds against Bryant were the most by a Midshipman since Matt Fannin had 19 against American during the 2004-05 season...The Mids, playing Columbia for the first time since the 2004-05 season, now trail in the all-time series, 19-17.

Mids rally from 25 down, beat Bryant

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | December 7, 2016

Hopefully, someone taped the halftime speech head coach Ed DeChellis gave to the Navy men's basketball team on Tuesday night.

Whatever DeChellis said following a completely lackluster effort in the first half worked wonders for the Midshipmen, who delivered the greatest comeback in program history.

Senior forward Tom Lacey posted a double-double with 16 points and a career-high 17 rebounds as Navy overcome a 25-point halftime deficit to beat Bryant, 76-74, before a sparse crowd at Alumni Hall.

Sophomore forward George Kiernan and senior guard Zach Fong came off the bench to contribute 14 and 12 points for Navy (4-6), which outscored the visitors 52-25 in the second half. Junior guard Bryce Dulin also scored 12 points for the Midshipmen, who trailed for all but 25 seconds of the contest.

"I'm proud of our guys with the way we came back. There's a fiber there and I just have to build on it," DeChellis said. "I thought our defensive intensity in the second half was outstanding. We rebounded the ball and we took care of the ball."

Asked what he told the Midshipmen in the locker room during the break, DeChellis half-jokingly replied that it was not something that could be printed.

"I told the players that you have to have some heart, you have to have some competitive spirit," DeChellis said. "I said we're playing like we're in tuxedos. You can't play this game that way. You have to get out and get gritty. That's who we are. We have to be a bring our lunch pail and go to work type of team."

Freshman guard Adam Grant made 11 of 17 field goals in scoring a game-high 24 points for Bryant (3-7), which led 49-24 at halftime. Sophomore guard Nisre Zouzoua drained four 3-pointers in adding 21 points for the Bulldogs, who allowed the Mids to shoot 58 percent from the field in the second half.

Lacey gave Navy its first lead of the game by banking in a layup with 38.1 seconds remaining. Grant hit a pull-up jumper to put Bryant back ahead, 74-73. However, junior swingman Shawn Anderson scored the game-winning basket off a driving layup with 13.7 left.

Kiernan took a charge on the other end and Anderson hit 1 of 2 free throws to make it a two-point game. Grant missed a long jumper from just inside the 3-point line at the buzzer as Navy authored the 10th-largest comeback in NCAA Division I history.

Only one other team had overcome a larger halftime deficit. Navy's previous best comeback was from a 16-point deficit, accomplished twice.

"It was our energy defensively. We picked it up on the defensive end and saw it translate over to the offense," Anderson said when asked how Navy pulled it off. "It's a great lesson for a young team because this season is a marathon, not a sprint. For us to fight back from being down 25 points is very pivotal and something we need to use to really set a tone for the rest of the season."

Navy came into the contest last in the Patriot League in field goal percentage defense (.501) and that trend continued in the first half. Zouzoua and Grant combined to score 33 points as Bryant shot 57.6 percent (19-33) from the field in taking a 49-24 lead into intermission.

"We played the first half exactly how we played the Furman game, which was really, really poorly. I never thought we would play that way again — totally lethargic," said DeChellis, referring to an embarrassing 79-46 loss on Saturday afternoon. "Just no intensity and I was really disappointed in our guys."

Anderson said Lacey and Fong got into their teammates before DeChellis and the rest of the coaching staff came into the locker room.

"We had some guys like Tom Lacey and Zach Fong really step up. As upperclassmen, we took that as an opportunity to really challenge the team," Anderson said. "Coach D can come in and yell at us again like last game, but what is that going to do? We really had to step up individually, and that's what Tom said."

Lacey said afterward that he told the players that, individually, they all needed to "drive a stake into the ground and say enough's enough."

Navy looked like a completely different team from the outset of the second half. Junior guard

Bryce Dulin swished consecutive 3-pointers in the opening minute and the Midshipmen made defensive stops on the opening five possessions of the Bulldogs to change the momentum.

"As a team, we came together and made stops. We trusted our teammates, trusted the coaches and finally did what Coach DeChellis has been asking us to do all season," Anderson said.

Kiernan and Fong came off the bench to hit some big 3-pointers as Navy opened the second half on a 25-5 run that cut the deficit to five — 54-49 at the 12:20 mark.

Anderson, the team's leading scorer at 12.3 points per game, did not scratch in the first half after suffering a dislocated finger. The 6-foot-4 wing showed some energy down the stretch to finish with nine points and eight rebounds.

"I thought Shawn Anderson was really good the last 8-10 minutes. He dislocated his finger in the first half and was all sideways. I just sat him because he kept looking at his hand," said DeChellis, who point-blank asked Anderson whether or not he wanted to play in the second half.

DeChellis admitted afterward that he is still trying to figure out this Navy basketball team.

"These guys let their offense affect their defense, and it's so evident. We have to be a defensive team and hopefully get some steals and stops to get our offense going," DeChellis said.

Lacey set a school record with 11 offensive rebounds, four of which he converted into second-chance points.

"I thought Lacey was unbelievable on the glass, just played his brains out," DeChellis said.

Mids cool down, claw back to drop Penn

Ryan Morse | Annapolis Capital | November 27, 2016

The Navy men's basketball team had the scorching touch in a win over UMBC on Wednesday, making a season-high 11 3-pointers and shooting 62 percent from the floor to pull away for a 12-point win.

Against a familiar foe in Penn (2-2), the touch began to elude them in the second half while the Quakers heated up, eventually going up by eight. Navy focused on what it could control with tough defense and excellent ball movement on offense to claw back and win, 70-68, getting the go-ahead basket from Shawn Anderson with 16 seconds left. Anderson led the Midshipmen with 15 points.

"Coach D (DeChellis) had talked to us about finding our identity and that's what we needed this game," Anderson said. "After the first half we didn't really make shots and for a while there it started to look like things were turning their way. So we stuck our pole in the ground and as a very young team we figured out who we are and that we had to man up and play defense."

It was Navy who was cruising, pulling into the half with a 46-36 lead, mainly on the strength of 61.5 percent shooting from the floor, including 7 for 11 from behind the arc.

"Penn's a very good basketball team. I thought we were fortunate to be up at the half," Navy coach Ed DeChellis said. "We shot the ball really, really well and sometimes when you make a bunch of 3s it's fools gold and then you come back down to earth."

The Mids descent came quickly in the second half while Penn used a 16-4 run out of the break to take a 52-50 lead. The Quakers pushed their lead to 63-55 with nine minutes to play but the Mids stayed resilient and worked to get back into it.

"I thought Navy played a terrific first half and really had us back on our heels," Penn coach Steve Donahue said. "We just didn't play really good basketball down the stretch. They were able to slow the game down and take our momentum away and they were able to grind out a few possessions to get some points."

The Quakers scored their last points of the game with 5:21 to play. From there, the Mids finally got to where DeChellis wanted them on defense, forcing the Quakers into tough, con-

tested shots, thanks in part to a lineup tinker that made the Midshipmen smaller but more able to move and prevent basket penetration.

"I didn't think our defense was very good until the last four minutes," DeChellis said. "We went small, changed the lineup around and I thought we did a good job defensively guarding the basketball. This was a great learning experience for our team. We are young in some key spots and we haven't been in this kind of game so it was good to see our guys fight back and have some resiliency and come back."

Navy got the ball back trailing by one with 32 seconds left and its patience on offense allowed them to get the game winner.

"It was really just patience," Navy guard Bryce Dulin said. "I think that was just kind of the thing that kept getting to us. When they started hitting shots, we started getting impatient. We knew we needed to be patient and I was able to get a drive and he (Shawn) was wide open and able to get a layup."

The Mids had four players in double figures as center Evan Wieck had 10 points while guards Hasan Abdullah and Ryan Pearson each had 11 to go along with Anderson's 15. Forward Tom Lacey had eight points and two blocks and pulled down 14 rebounds for Navy, now 3-4.

Reserves step up for short-handed Navy in 78-66 victory over UMBC

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | November 24, 2016

One of the decisions Ed DeChellis made after being hired as Navy men's basketball coach was to re-establish a junior varsity program.

Former head coach Don DeVoe used the JV squad with great success during his 12-year tenure, which produced five Patriot League regular season championships and three NCAA Tournament berths.

Shortly after being hired in 2012, DeChellis consulted with DeVoe and learned the value of utilizing junior varsity games to give young players experience.

DeChellis quickly reinstated the program, which was discontinued by predecessor Billy Lange, and dubbed it the Navy Basketball Development Team. Five years into the DeChellis era, that initiative has begun to pay dividends.

On Wednesday night, several products of the NBDT helped the Navy varsity beat UMBC, 78-66, before an announced crowd of 867 at Alumni Hall. Sophomore guard Ryan Pearson scored 15 points while junior swingman Bryce Dulin and sophomore forward George Kiernan added 14 points apiece. Kiernan and Pearson both saw substantial action with the junior varsity program a year ago.

"A lot of our guys played on the development team their freshman year and it's just a wonderful way to play a bunch of games and gain confidence," DeChellis said.

Kiernan is a prime example of a player that improved dramatically as part of the Navy Basketball Development Team, which annually plays about a dozen games against junior colleges and prep schools in the region.

A product of Hinsdale Central in Illinois, Kiernan had some holes in his game that required patching. The 6-foot-7, 235-pounder also needed to add weight and strength, DeChellis said. After appearing in just two varsity games as a plebe, Kiernan is now a valuable member of the regular rotation.

"I think it's just growth and maturity," DeChellis said when asked why Kiernan has blossomed this season. "He was a kid that could always shoot the basketball. Now he's starting to value rebounding, defense, taking care of the ball, playing through mistakes."

Playing in the stress-free environment of junior varsity contests enables youngsters to play through mistakes and work on weaknesses without feeling any pressure to perform. DeChellis said Kiernan was not prepared for the pressure or spotlight of the varsity as a plebe.

"George wants to be a perfectionist and that was affecting his game. Stuff would happen and he wouldn't let it roll off his back. He would carry it with him. He has finally gotten through that," DeChellis said.

Kiernan came off the bench and was a catalyst of a first-half comeback for Navy (2-4), which fell behind 15-7 with eight minutes elapsed. Kiernan knocked down a pair of 3-pointers as the Midshipmen used an 18-2 run to turn things around.

"George is different, he stretches the floor because he's a four man that can shoot," DeChellis said. "Now we can start to add to the package, have him be the trail in transition and shoot it."

Kiernan missed almost three weeks of pre-season practice with an ankle injury, sitting out both scrimmages and the opener against Ohio State. He scored 11 points on the strength of three 3-pointers at High Point on Saturday then built on that outing by making all three shots he took from beyond the arc and going 5-for-6 from the free throw line while establishing a career-high for points versus UMBC.

"I think George is a young guy that is starting to gain some confidence," DeChellis said. "George has lifted and gotten bigger and stronger than he was last year."

Navy was a bit short-handed going into Wednesday night's game. The Midshipmen were without two starters and a key reserve.

It was announced beforehand that senior guard Tim Abruzzo would miss a third straight game with a knee injury. Also, junior swingman and leading scorer Shawn Anderson was unavailable due to a family matter while backup forward James Hemphill would not play due to illness.

Early on, it appeared the visiting Retrievers would take advantage of the fact the Midshipmen were fielding a revamped rotation. UMBC came out strong and really took it to the home

team, building an eight-point lead with just under eight minutes elapsed.

Then, in one of the more sudden changes of momentum you will see, Navy completely turned the tables on the previously unbeaten club from Baltimore County.

Pearson, who has replaced Abruzzo in the starting lineup, made 6 of 9 shots from the field in netting a career-best 15 points for the second time in three games.

"Ryan had a tough weekend down in North Carolina. He didn't shoot the ball very well. He shot it much better tonight," said DeChellis, who also liked that Pearson dished off three assists.

Pearson, out of Henrico High in Richmond, Virginia, was similar to Kiernan in needing to learn that making jumpers was not enough to earning playing time.

"You have young guys that value offense. They want to validate themselves by scoring the ball," DeChellis said. "Unfortunately, the old man wants defense and rebounding. They have to understand that if you don't defend and you don't rebound you're not going to get on the floor.

Ryan has grown up and started to understand that."

Dulin, who was starting in place of Anderson, ran the floor hard and threw down three ferocious dunks in finishing two shy of his career-high for points. DeChellis was particularly pleased to see the 6-foot-4, 200-pound leaper grab a career-best seven rebounds.

"Bryce was really good defensively, made some shots, got out on the break and ran, grabbed some rebounds for us," DeChellis said.

Dulin also missed considerable practice time in preseason after breaking a bone in his cheek and having a couple teeth knocked out in a face-forward fall. The Missouri native, who saw spot duty in a total of 54 games as a freshman and sophomore, was eager to make up for Anderson's absence.

"Coach stressed that at the end of the game, no one was going to be like so and so is hurt,

Reserves step up for short-handed Navy in 78-66 victory over UMBC (cont...)

so and so is sick. It was just going to be the Navy score and the UMBC score,” Dulin said. “We had confidence in everyone who was going to come in would step up and make plays.”

Senior guard Zach Fong added 11 points for the Midshipmen, who shot a sizzling 55.8 percent from the field and made a season-high 11 3-pointers. DeChellis was pleased with the way Navy bounced back after going 0-3 at the High Point Tournament in North Carolina.

“I’m very proud of our team tonight. We didn’t have a very good weekend. We were short-handed a little bit here tonight in terms of guys that normally would play,” DeChellis said. “Other guys stepped up. I thought we shot the ball well, shared the ball well. Our defense was pretty solid. Our guys had a little something to them tonight, which was fun to see.”

Navy’s bench turned things around with Kiernan and Fong leading the way. Senior forward Edward Alade (six points, three rebounds) also played fairly well as the Navy reserves accounted for 31 points.

“One thing coach talked about was having a team approach, next man up mentality. I think the guys came out with a lot of energy. We rallied around each other and really stepped up,” Pearson said. “I think our second unit got us going with its energy and intensity then the rest of us fell in behind them.”

Navy graduated three starters in point guard Tilman Dunbar, wing guard Kendall Knorr and center Will Kelly. The Midshipmen lost another key contributor when power forward Jace Hogan transferred to Jacksonville.

That put the onus on the likes of Dulin, Kiernan and Pearson to play at a higher level and contribute. Sophomore point guard Hasan Abdullah, who missed almost all of last season with a hip injury, also fell into that category. Abdullah, who has started every game this season, hit a pair of 3-pointers in totaling six points, four assists and four steals on Wednesday night.

“We knew in the offseason we would all have to step up – me, Ryan, George, Hasan – everyone who didn’t play a whole lot last year,” Dulin said. “We worked hard during the offseason, got in the gym as much as we could and it’s paying off.”

Junior guard Jairus Lyles scored 15 points to lead UMBC (4-2), which was seeking to match its best start since moving up to Division 1. Senior swingman Will Darley contributed 12 points for the Retrievers, who were held 22 points below their season average.

“Navy played really well. They bothered us with the zone early in the game. Their zone slowed our pace down. We never really adjusted to it,” first-year UMBC head coach Ryan Odom said. “Offensively, they were moving the basketball and making shots. They made six threes very quickly. We delivered the first punch, but they punched back and it was pretty much a knockout.”

Navy led by 23 points at the 11:09 mark of the second half and the outcome was never in doubt the rest of the way, even though UMBC was able to steadily creep closer down the stretch. That was due in part to poor free throw shooting by the Mids, who made just 9 of 20 from the charity stripe.

“Obviously, we had a rough weekend down in North Carolina. We didn’t perform as well as we wanted and thought we would. So this is a huge win for us. It’s a big confidence boost for us moving forward,” Dulin said.

Navy returns to action on Saturday when it hosts Pennsylvania at Alumni Hall. DeChellis expects to have Anderson and Hemphill back in the rotation while Abruzzo is still being evaluated and remains questionable.

Navy men shoot past Washington College

James Peters | Annapolis Capital | November 14, 2016

Sunday afternoon's men's college basketball game between host Navy and Washington College proved to be a win for both squads.

For the Midshipmen, it was a chance to bounce back from Friday's 10-point loss to Ohio State in a commanding way, dispensing with the Division III Shoremen, 74-47, to record the team's first victory of the new season.

"You just want to get the first win out of the way, get in the win column and move on from there," said Navy guard Tim Abruzzo, who led all scorers with 21 points as he made all six of his shots in the first half, including a trio of 3-pointers for a 43-21 halftime advantage. "At the end of the day, we played pretty well and got that first win."

Washington College actually walked away without an official loss – Division III programs cannot play official games until Nov. 15 – and it was able to prepare for its upcoming season against a much taller Navy squad that outrebounded the Shoremen, 44-17. Washington College's fullcourt press, however, was able to force 23 Navy turnovers.

"I was just want to thank (Navy) Coach (Ed) DeChellis; he is my mentor," said Shoremen coach Aaron Goodman, who spent nine years as an assistant coach at Navy before assuming his first head coaching position at Washington College a year ago. "He just gave us an opportunity to come. I just appreciate the opportunity and it will help our guys down the road.

"We've been working on our pressure and I think we've been getting better and better. That was big to do that against a team with this kind of talent."

That talent gap showed for much of the first half as the Midshipmen shot 57 percent from the field, including 6 for 12 from the 3-point line, and outrebounded Washington, 21-9, en route to building its 22-point halftime advantage.

Besides Abruzzo's 17 first half points, Navy got at least two points from eight other players, including eight of Nourse Fox's 13 points on 3-for-3 shooting from the floor.

"I thought we were focused to start the game; I thought we weren't focused at all in the second half," DeChellis said. "The first half, I thought

we did some good things. Timmy (Abruzzo) did some good things. In the second half, I was a little disappointed with our execution."

After intermission, Washington College was able to cut the deficit to 15 points, 46-31, early on behind eight straight points from James Drury. But a modest 11-6 run by the Midshipmen pushed the lead back to 20 points and Navy was never challenged the rest of the way.

Despite the lopsided victory, DeChellis expressed disappointment in the team's 23 turnovers, 10 of which came from the low post. His goal this week is to help his frontcourt players become more comfortable handling the ball. He also wants to set a player rotation, which has been difficult with the absence of various players due to injuries, including starter Shawn Anderson, who sat out the contest as a precaution as he rests from lower leg tendon issue.

Navy is idle until the weekend when it heads to North Carolina to play a trio of contests at the HPU Tournament at High Point University.

Ohio State tops Navy in men's basketball opener

Mike James | The Mid Report | November 12, 2016

The Veterans Classic is quickly becoming a great Annapolis tradition, attracting national-caliber basketball programs to Alumni Hall to open their seasons. The atmosphere gets an extra boost when the hosts play well, and they did tonight before falling to Ohio State, 78-68. Hasan Abdullah led Navy with 22 points, while the Buckeyes were paced by Kam Williams, who scored 23.

Despite opening the season with a loss, Navy head coach Ed DeChellis liked a lot of what he saw from his team.

"We were proud of our guys," he said. "I thought we really battled, came out and played well to start, hung in there."

Navy opened the game with a 7-2 run, with Shawn Anderson and Tim Abruzzo able to get to the basket early. The hot start turned cold after that, and Ohio State went on a 12-2 run over the next six and a half minutes to take a 14-9 lead.

The Mids fought back to tie the game at 14 after a James Hemphill layup at 10:31, but the Buckeyes answered by scoring on their next four trips down the floor, pushing the lead back to four at 22-18.

A Shawn Anderson layup with 1:28 left in the half brought the Mids to within three, but JaQuan Lyle hit a three-pointer with 37 seconds remaining in the first half to give the Buckeyes a six-point advantage. The Mids went into the locker room down five, 33-28.

Navy opened the second half the same way they opened the first, going on a 7-2 run that was capped off by an Edward Alade dunk that tied the game at 35 with 18:20 left to play. That would be the last time the game was tied. As Navy's shooting went cold, Ohio State gradually built a lead that got as large as 18 points before the Mids start to fight back. They never got closer than 10, though, which was ultimately the final margin.

Even with the loss, there were several encouraging signs. Ohio State is a long, athletic Big Ten squad, but Navy had a 30-22 scoring advantage in the paint. That was partly by design, as the Mids made a concerted effort to keep Ohio State from scoring easy baskets.

"Our strategy was to make them beat us on

the perimeter, and they did," said DeChellis. "Williams came off the bench. We knew he could shoot, and he had a great night for them making threes. That's what they had to do to beat us, and that's what they did."

The Mids did an admirable job attacking the basket themselves, although that wasn't necessarily the plan going in.

"We were trying to drive the ball," continued DeChellis. "We thought we had to get to the free throw line. We wanted to try to drive and kick, and we didn't really do a great job of kicking. We thought we could get inside and get it back outside."

DeChellis wasn't sure that the Mids would be able to get to the basket given Ohio State's size, which is why the original plan was to drive and kick. The ability to drive and finish might have been a pleasant surprise, although free throw shooting is a concern that persists from last season; the Mids shot only 58% from the line.

Another pleasant surprise was the play of Hasan Abdullah. The sophomore point guard got off to a promising start last year before his season ended due to a hip injury. He earned the start at point guard tonight and did not disappoint, sinking shots from beyond the arc and leading the team in scoring. Youth, in general, was a theme of the night, with the Mids getting solid contributions from fellow sophomore Ryan Pearson and freshman center Evan Wieck. DeChellis also mentioned that sophomore forward George Kiernan was expected to play before twisting his ankle in practice this week.

It's hard to draw too many conclusions from one game, but already it appears that Navy's two biggest questions heading into the season have been answered. The first question was whether a starting point guard would emerge, and it seems that one has. The second issue was how well the team could handle the loss of Will Kelly, and the Mids ability to limit Ohio State's production in the paint is a testament to Edward Alade and Evan Wieck. It's something to build on as the team begins their march toward the Patriot League schedule.

Buckeyes too much for Mids at Veterans Classic

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | November 12, 2016

Sophomore Hasan Abdullah made his first career start at point guard and confidently drained 3-pointers.

Sophomore shooting guard Ryan Pearson saw the most extensive action of his young career and flashed an ability to shoot from long range and slash into the lane.

Junior swingman Shawn Anderson, the team's leading scorer last season, displayed leadership while taking the ball strong to the basket.

Senior forward James Hemphill unveiled a new left-handed free throw shot. Hemphill, who shoots right-handed from the field, showed off a soft touch in making 4 of 6 from the foul line.

Navy did a lot of good things during Friday night's season opener against heavily-favored Ohio State. The Midshipmen played the Buckeyes from the Big Ten Conference on even terms for the better part of 25 minutes.

However, Ohio State's overwhelming size and length eventually wore down Navy and the visitors steadily pulled away to the double-digit victory most expected.

Baltimore native Kam Williams enjoyed a successful homecoming by scoring 23 points as Ohio State defeated Navy, 78-68, in the second game of a doubleheader in the third annual Veterans Classic at Alumni Hall. Williams, a red-shirt Mount St. Joseph graduate, swished 5 of 6 3-pointers in equaling his career-high.

"I was just taking what the defense was giving me. They were slacking off me so I had to take and make those open shots," said Williams, who was 7-for-9 from the field overall.

Junior forward Keita Bates-Diop used his inside-outside scoring ability to net 14 points and also grabbed a game-high 14 rebounds for Ohio State, which picked up the defensive intensity in the second half and either blocked or altered numerous Navy shots.

Senior forward Marc Loving and senior center Trevor Thompson added 13 and 11 points, respectively, as the balanced Buckeyes placed five players in double figures.

Abdullah, who missed most of last season with a hip injury, erupted for a career-high 22 points to lead Navy. Hemphill threw down a

thunderous dunk to cap a career-high 12-point outing off the bench. Anderson (11 points) and Pearson (10) also reached double digits for the Midshipmen, who showed new-found depth by rotating 10 players.

"I'm really proud of our guys. I thought we really battled. We came out, played well from the start and hung in there," Navy head coach Ed DeChellis said. "I thought our guys did a great job of fighting and competing and getting on the floor. Obviously, we're not happy we got beat, but I think Ohio State is a very good basketball team that can beat you in different ways."

Tate (10 points) was the other player in double figures for Ohio State, which out-rebounded Navy 22-14 in the second half. The Buckeyes finished with eight blocked shots with the 7-foot Thompson and 6-7 Bates-Diop getting three each.

Navy sat in a 2-3 zone for most of the game and dared Ohio State to shoot from outside. The Buckeyes obliged and wound up making 10 of 18 shots from beyond the arc.

"Our strategy was to try to make them beat us from the perimeter, and they did. We knew Williams could shoot and he had a great night for them making threes," DeChellis said.

DeChellis was pleased by the development of Abdullah, Pearson and Hemphill as well as the relatively poised play of freshman forwards Evan Wieck and James Butler.

"I think those guys did a very good job. Ryan Pearson is greatly improved. James Hemphill came off the bench and I thought he gave us great minutes tonight," DeChellis said. "James Butler is a freshman. Evan Wieck is a freshman. Hasan is almost like a freshman since he didn't play at all last year. I think the positive thing is that we had some guys who didn't play. So we have a couple more pieces that we think we can throw in there and be deeper."

Abdullah showed off a nice shooting stroke in making 6 of 14 3-point attempts. He also did a good job of taking care of the basketball, finishing without a single turnover.

"I felt comfortable on the floor with my teammates. They found me and I made open shots. They were keying in on Shawn so that kind of

opened things up for me," said Abdullah, who engaged in a spirited preseason battle with junior Nourse Fox to succeed the graduated Tilman Dunbar as the starting point guard.

Anderson, who led Navy with six assists thanks to his ability to penetrate and draw defenders, was encouraged by the contributions of the younger players.

"We had a lot of new faces. To see Hasan, Ryan Pearson, James Butler and Evan Wieck come into the game and play very well was great and something we can build off," Anderson said.

In somewhat of a surprise, Navy outscored Ohio State 30-22 in the paint. The Midshipmen also had a 23-11 advantage in points off turnovers.

"We were trying to drive the ball. We thought we had to get to the free throw line," DeChellis explained. "We wanted to drive and kick. We didn't do such a good job of kicking."

Senior center Edward Alade put down a two-handed dunk as Navy tied the score at 35 early in the second half. However, the Midshipmen then went nearly five minutes without making a field goal (0-for-7) and the Buckeyes took advantage.

Thompson converted an old-fashioned three-point play while Williams made a 3-pointer from the wing as Ohio State stretched the lead to 10 points (47-37) at the 13:20 mark. A pair of free throws by Alade briefly got the Mids back within single digits, but the Buckeyes responded with a 13-3 run that pretty much put the game away.

Tate got loose on the baseline for an uncontested dunk and Loving finished a fastbreak with a powerful slam to get the decisive push started. Williams and Loving followed with back-to-back 3-pointers while Thompson added his third three-point play of the game as Ohio State built its largest lead of the game – 63-45 with 8:37 remaining.

Anderson dropped a driving floater and Abdullah followed with a high-arching 3-pointer as Navy jumped out to an early 7-2 lead. Ohio State woke up after the first media timeout and took its first lead at 11-9 on a slam dunk by Thompson.

Buckeyes too much for Mids at Veterans Classic (cont...)

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | November 12, 2016

The Mids stayed in a 2-3 zone for most of the first half and the Buckeyes finally made them pay by draining a few 3-pointers. Consecutive threes by Bates-Diop and Loving helped the visitors take their largest lead, 30-23 with just under four minutes remaining.

Navy closed the first half strong with Hemphill using his unique left-handed style to make 3 of 4 free throws over the final 2:46. Anderson scored off a determined drive to the basket as the home team went into intermission trailing 33-28.

Abdullah, Anderson and Hemphill all scored six points for the Midshipmen, who out-rebounded the taller, longer Buckeyes by two in the first half. Bates-Diop scored 14 points for Ohio State, which led by just at the break five despite shooting 56.5 percent from the field.

Sophomore Hasan Abdullah made his first career start at point guard and confidently drained 3-pointers.

Navy basketball faces stiff challenge in season opener

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | November 9, 2016

Ohio State men's basketball is coming off a disappointing season by its high standards. The Buckeyes, who finished 19-12 overall and 11-7 in the Big Ten Conference, failed to make the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2008.

Last season's struggles are the primary reason why Ohio State is not ranked in the Associated Press preseason Top 25. The Buckeyes are among the others receiving votes, trailing five Big Ten Conference schools that are ranked.

Navy head coach Ed DeChellis is here to tell you that Ohio State will be much improved this season. DeChellis, who spent much of his career in the Big Ten Conference as an assistant and head coach at Penn State, believes the Buckeyes are loaded.

"This is a quality Big Ten team that has a chance to win that conference. This is a very talented team that's going to be in the NCAA Tournament," DeChellis said. "Ohio State has all the pieces and Thad Matta is an outstanding coach."

Navy will face perhaps its stiffest test of the 2016-2017 campaign when it hosts Ohio State in the third annual Veterans Classic on Friday night at Alumni Hall.

Ohio State returns all five starters along with its top two backups. Leading the way is small forward Marc Loving, an honorable mention All-Big Ten selection a year ago. The 6-foot-8, 220-pound senior led the Buckeyes in scoring with 14 points per game and also averaged 5.3 rebounds.

"Loving is a very long wing who does a lot of different things well. A very versatile player," DeChellis said.

Power forward Keita Bates-Diop was also an honorable mention Big Ten pick after ranking second on the squad in scoring (11.8) and tying for team lead in rebounding (6.4).

"Bates-Diop is sort of a stretch four. He shoots threes and can put the ball on the floor and drive it," DeChellis said of the 6-foot-7, 235-pound junior.

Many observers believe shooting guard Jae'Sean Tate is Ohio State's most talented player and top NBA prospect. The 6-foot-4, 230-pound left-hander averaged 11.7 points and 6.4 rebounds as a sophomore.

"Tate is a very tough matchup. He can play on the perimeter or in the post. He's a shooter and a slasher," DeChellis said. "If you guard (Tate) with a four man he'll step outside and drive by him. At the same time, he's took thick and strong to cover with a three man."

Point guard JaQuan Lyle and 7-foot, 250-pound center Trevor Thompson are the other returning starters. Junior guard Kam Williams, a Mount St. Joseph graduate and Baltimore native, was one of the best sixth men in the Big Ten and had the top 3-point shooting percentage (51.5) during conference play.

Matta has augmented those returning players with a talented recruiting class led by center Micah Potter (6-9, 240) and forward Derek Funderburk (6-9, 205). Potter was the starting pivot in place of Thompson in an exhibition game.

"Ohio State has 11 guys that can really play. If one guy isn't playing well, Thad has the luxury of putting him on the bench and using someone else," DeChellis said. "They have the personnel to upsize or downsize depending on the situation. It's a very long, athletic and fast ballclub that presents a lot of problems."

DeChellis said Navy will likely mix defenses between man-to-man and various zones, stating that "you can't give this team a steady diet of anything or they will pick you apart." The sixth-year head coach expects Ohio State to use full-court pressure at times in an attempt to create turnovers and easy baskets.

"It's going to be a high-speed game and it will be imperative that we take care of the ball," DeChellis said. "We cannot commit live ball turnovers that lead to layups."

Rebounding will also be crucial if Navy hopes to keep things close in this contest. The Midshipmen lost their top two rebounders from last season as center Will Kelly graduated and power forward Jace Hogan transferred. Power forward Tom Lacey and swingman Shawn Anderson are the leading returning rebounders, having grabbed 4.2 and 4.0 per game a year ago.

"Rebounding is going to be vital. We've got to limit them to one shot. We can't give them second chances. We have to block out well at every position and find a way to be competitive on the glass," DeChellis said. "Our guards

need to get in there, mix it up and help us rebound."

Anderson was Navy's leading scorer last season, putting up 13.2 points per game. Senior swingman Tim Abruzzo, who only averaged 6.6 points, is the second-leading returning scorer. DeChellis said the Midshipmen will have to work hard to get good shots and must make the open looks they do create.

Navy played Michigan State tough in the inaugural Veterans Classic, falling 64-59 in 2014. Navy was not nearly as competitive in the second installment of the season-opening tournament, losing 59-41 to Florida.

"Obviously, the nature of this event is that we're going to be playing a top tier opponent, so it's always going to be a challenge," DeChellis said. "To get the likes of Michigan State and Ohio State to come into our gymnasium is quite an accomplishment. There aren't many mid-major schools in the country that can play teams of that caliber on their home floor. So it's a great opportunity and one our players really look forward to."

DeChellis came up with the idea for the Veterans Classic and is rightfully proud of how it's evolved. Navy is close to announcing the lineup for next year's event with big-time programs lining up to participate.

"There is great interest in the Veterans Classic. Nationally, when I go out during the summer time and talk to my colleagues, everyone has an interest in playing in this event," DeChellis said. "We have the teams for next year just about locked up."

Shaka Smart brought his Virginia Commonwealth club to the inaugural Veterans Classic and would like to come back with Texas now that he's head coach at that school. All previous participating head coaches, such as Michigan State's Tom Izzo and North Carolina's Roy Williams, have raved about the tour of the Naval Academy on Thursday that includes boarding a Yard Patrol boat, checking out military equipment such as a helicopter and Humvee then capped by watching the noon meal formation by the Brigade of Midshipmen.

"We can do things they can't do at other places in terms of the military experience the other teams receive on Thursday. It's a very unique event and just a tremendous opportunity, which is what the coaches love," DeChellis said.

Strong Field Boosts Navy's Veterans Classic

Steve Jones | Press Box DC | November 9, 2016

For the first time in its brief three-year history, the Veterans Classic field doesn't contain a preseason top 25 team. But the tournament that will kick off the Navy men's basketball season has again drawn a formidable group of entrants.

On Veterans Day, the Midshipmen will welcome Marquette, Vanderbilt and Ohio State to Alumni Hall for the Nov. 11 season-opening doubleheader. Marquette and Vanderbilt will begin the session at 6:30 p.m., with Navy facing Ohio State in the 9 p.m. nightcap.

The tournament has attracted top-shelf teams during its existence. Michigan State launched its 2014-15 Final Four campaign with a 64-59 triumph against Navy during the inaugural event. North Carolina, which defeated Temple, 91-67, during the 2015 Veterans Classic opener, reached the NCAA championship game last season.

The 2016 field features four teams with significant basketball histories. Marquette, an annual contender for the Big East title, was the 1974 national runner-up and won the 1977 NCAA championship. Vanderbilt has reached the NCAA Sweet 16 four times and earned an Elite Eight berth during the 1965 season. Ohio State, the 1960 NCAA champion, lost in the title game four other times, most recently in 2007.

Navy, an NCAA Elite Eight squad during the 1985-86 campaign, is coming off its best season in seven years. Head coach Ed DeChellis's squad posted a 19-14 record and finished in a four-way tie for fourth place in the Patriot League standings.

But Navy will have to replace three of its top players from the 2015-16 squad. Point guard Tilman Dunbar and center Will Kelly graduated, while forward Jace Hogan decided to leave the Academy. Kelly, the Patriot League's reigning Defensive Player of the Year, finished second on Navy's career blocked shots list behind Basketball Hall of Fame member David Robinson.

The Midshipmen welcome back two frontcourt starters. Junior forward Shawn Anderson averaged a team-high 13.2 points, 4.0 rebounds and 2.6 assists per game during the 2015-16 campaign. Tom Lacey, a junior forward, added 4.5 points and 4.2 rebounds. Senior guard Tim Abruzzo made valuable contributions off the

bench, averaging 6.6 points and a team-leading 1.2 steals per game.

Following the loss of three of their top four scorers, DeChellis stressed Navy will have to be disciplined at the defensive end.

"We're a team that really needs to defend, rebound and take care of the ball," DeChellis said during the Patriot League's preseason media conference call. "We can't give up easy baskets by turning the ball over. We also need to shoot the ball better from the perimeter and make our free throws."

Ohio State, which lost its only previous encounter with the Midshipmen during the 1931-32 season, made seven consecutive NCAA tournament appearances before playing in the 2016 National Invitation Tournament. The Buckeyes, who finished 21-14 overall and 11-7 in the Big Ten, will return their top six scorers. Ohio State is solid at the forward spots, with senior Marc Loving (14.0 points, 5.3 rebounds per game), junior Keita Bates-Diop (11.8 points, 6.4 rebounds) and junior Jae'Sean Tate (11.7 points, 6.4 rebounds). Head coach Thad Matta's backcourt is led by sophomore JaQuan Lyle (11.2 points, 4.7 rebounds, 4.2 assists) and junior Kam Williams (8.3 points).

The opening game of the Veterans Classic will feature two teams that lost their best players to the NBA Draft last summer. Marquette, which posted a 20-13 overall mark and 8-10 Big East record last season, waved goodbye to center Henry Ellenson. During his freshman year, Ellenson led the Golden Eagles in scoring (17.0 points) and rebounding (9.7) before becoming a first-round pick of the Detroit Pistons.

Despite the loss of Ellenson, head coach Steve Wojciechowski's Golden Eagles have a strong returning core led by senior center Luke Fischer (12.1 points, 6.2 rebounds per game). Wojciechowski, a former Duke standout who grew up in Severna Park, Md., will rely on a deep backcourt, including sophomore Haanif Cheatham (11.8 points, 2.2 assists), redshirt junior Duane Wilson (11.6 points, 2.5 assists), senior Jajuan Johnson (10.2 points) and sophomore Traci Carter (4.6 assists).

Following a first-round NCAA tournament loss to Wichita State, Vanderbilt hired former Valparaiso coach Bryce Drew to run the program. The Commodores suffered heavy

losses on NBA Draft night, losing first-round choices Wade Baldwin IV and Damian Jones. Vanderbilt doesn't have a returning player who averaged double figures last season. Junior guard Matthew Fisher-Davis (9.7 points), junior forward Jeff Roberson (9.3 points, 5.6 rebounds) and senior center Luke Kornet (8.9 points, 7.3 rebounds, 3.0 blocks) will try to help the Commodores improve on last season's 19-14 finish (11-7 in the Southeastern Conference).

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It's homecoming week for Severna Park's Wojciechowski

John McNamara | Annapolis Capital | November 9, 2016

During his summers in high school, Severna Park native Steve Wojciechowski spent a lot of time honing his basketball skills at the U.S. Naval Academy.

Wojciechowski, now the head coach at Marquette, would sometimes grab a couple of his buddies and head over to the academy to keep their games sharp over the summer months.

They'd work out, lift weights and engage in friendly pickup games with some of the Mids on hand.

"I would usually go with a friend or two," recalled Wojciechowski, who played his high school ball at Cardinals Gibbons and his college ball at Duke. "We'd lift weights and go work out in the gym and there would be Mids there playing pickup."

Now more than two decades later, Wojciechowski will be back at the academy on Friday night. He'll be coaching his team in the opening game of the Veterans Classic at Alumni Hall.

The Golden Eagles will face Vanderbilt in the first game, which tips off at 6:30 p.m. Navy will play host to Ohio State in the second game of the doubleheader, which kicks off the opening weekend of the college basketball season.

Wojciechowski has been back to the area before; his team plays Big East conference rival Georgetown at the Verizon Center each year. But the Veterans Classic offers him the chance to bring the team he coaches into his own backyard.

"This feels so much more like a homecoming than playing at Georgetown," he said. "It's a nice thing to be able to go back home and share something with so many people who helped me get to where I am today."

As you might expect, the demand for tickets within Wojciechowski's circle — his parents still live in Chartwell — is pretty high. In fact, he's not sure exactly how big a hometown rooting section he'll have on Friday night.

"It's a lot," he said with a chuckle. "I'm not sure how many. I would think it would be over 100."

Coming back to Anne Arundel County offers Wojciechowski a lot of personal benefits. But he's more interested in having his team experi-

ence what life at the academy is all about.

This is the third installment of the Veterans Classic and one of the big draws of the event for the players and coaches is the chance for out-of-town teams to see life at the academy up close.

"I'll see family and friends over the course of the days we're there," Wojciechowski said. "But my primary focus is to make sure our team has a great experience."

The Marquette traveling party was scheduled to arrive in Annapolis on Wednesday night. Thursday, the team will spend the day at the academy, getting a taste of what the midshipmen go through on a typical day. In other words, what it's like to go around campus in a uniform that doesn't have a number on it.

"I'm so excited for our guys to have that opportunity," Wojciechowski said. "We'll have a chance to tour the academy and experience what the Mids do on a daily basis. We'll learn more about the military and the sacrifices that the military makes for our country and get a greater appreciation of that."

"We're thrilled to be part of this event."

Marquette was attractive to Veterans Classic organizers as well — in no small part because of their coach's background.

"We had an interest in Marquette because of Coach Wojciechowski and his ties to the area, the school's outstanding reputation as an academic institution and its very strong basketball tradition," said Eric Ruden, Navy's deputy director of athletics, who helps set the field each year.

It's that strong tradition that Wojciechowski is trying to build upon. The program won a national championship in 1977 and advanced to the Final Four as recently as 2003, with Dwyane Wade as its star player.

Wojciechowski struggled in his first year in charge, going 13-19 during the 2014-15 season. Last year, the Golden Eagles improved to 20-13, but found themselves on the outside looking in when the NCAA Tournament field was announced.

Wojciechowski hopes to change that this sea-

son, but he'll have to do so without the team's best player. Henry Ellenson, a 6-foot-11 center who averaged 17.9 points and 7.9 rebounds per game, left school for the NBA Draft. He was taken with the 18th pick overall by the Detroit Pistons.

Wojciechowski's team will be different this year as a result of his departure. Marquette probably will have to shoot better from the outside to match last year's success. But Wojciechowski is encouraged as the season gets underway. Although Ellenson is gone, four starters return.

"Obviously, losing a first-round pick — somebody who averaged almost a double-double for us — you don't replace him with one guy," Wojciechowski said. "But I like my team. We're undersized in some spots, but I like our versatility."

Navy basketball unveils revamped roster after graduating three starters

Bill Wagner | Annapolis Capital | November 3, 2016

Head coach Ed DeChellis felt his Navy men's basketball team played pretty well in scrimmages against Liberty and William & Mary. Neither of those schools are anywhere near the caliber of Ohio State, Navy's season-opening opponent in the third annual Veterans Classic.

Having graduated three senior starters and lost a fourth member of the rotation to transfer, DeChellis has a revamped roster he is still sorting through with just over a week remaining until next Friday's nationally-televvised opener against the Buckeyes of the Big Ten Conference.

"I think we've had a very good fall up to this point in terms of our team and what we've been able to accomplish. I think we improved in each scrimmage so that was positive," DeChellis said during Navy's basketball Media Day event. "That being said, I don't know how good we are. I really don't. I'm looking forward to seeing how this team evolves because I think we have a lot of nice pieces."

Navy's two biggest holes come at point guard and the post position where Tilman Dunbar and Will Kelly must be replaced. Dunbar was a three-year starter and finished sixth on Navy's all-time list with 434 career assists. Kelly played in 125 career games with 77 starts and ranks second in program history with 199 blocked shots.

DeChellis said junior Nourse Fox and sophomore Hasan Abdullah are battling to replace Dunbar at the point. Fox played in 32 games as Dunbar's backup last season, averaging 8.4 minutes and dishing off 30 assists.

"The point guard spot has been a very good battle, a very competitive opportunity for Nourse Fox and Hassan Abdullah," DeChellis said. "We've had two scrimmages and both of the guys have played well in both. I see both of them playing a lot at that position. They're both a little different."

Abdullah appeared in eight games before sustaining a hip injury that required season-ending surgery. The 6-foot, 195-pounder impressed the coaching staff with his speed and quickness before going down a year ago. DeChellis said the Alabama native, who is fully recovered from the injury, must learn how to operate at proper pace while being more vocal on the court.

"Hassan can really push the ball. Now I'm trying to get him to change speeds. You can't go out and throw fastballs for nine innings. I'm trying to get him to use different speeds, doing more start and stop type of stuff," DeChellis said. "You can't be flying up the floor all the time. You need to pick your spots. He's a willing passer, a willing driver and can shoot the ball. Now he needs to make the right decisions with the basketball."

Senior Edward Alade would seem the likely heir apparent to Kelly at the pivot spot as he possesses the most experience. The 6-foot-9, 235-pound Texan has played in 88 games with 22 starts. After averaging 5.3 points and 3.4 rebounds as a sophomore, Alade saw his minutes and statistics drop last season because Kelly played so well.

"Consistency is what I'm on Ed Alade about. He's responded some days, other days he hasn't responded so well," DeChellis said. "Other guys are pushing him. We have a lot of competition up front."

Long-armed freshman Evan Wieck has looked good in preseason and is very much in the hunt to start down low. The 6-foot-8, 220-pounder from Amarillo, Texas was a key member of the Hargrave Military Academy squad that captured the National Prep Tournament championship for 2015-2016.

"Evan just does everything solid. He hedges ball screens real well. He makes his free throws. He makes open jumpers out to 15 feet," DeChellis said. "Very savvy with very good court awareness. He just has a feel for the game."

DeChellis had a similar description of James Butler, another plebe who is a virtual clone of Wieck at 6-foot-8 and 230 pounds. Butler was a Washington Post first team All-Metro selection after averaging 27.5 points as a senior at Lake Braddock High. The Fairfax, Virginia native is the son of Vernon Butler, one of Navy's all-time greatest players.

"James needs to be James. He's not Vernon. They're different people, different players at different stages of their career," DeChellis said. "I don't want James to put any more pressure on himself than a freshman normally does. That's hard for a young guy. I've told James to

just be who you are, do what you do and play to your strengths."

Navy's top returning player is junior swingman Shawn Anderson, who led the team in scoring last season with 13.2 points per game. The versatile 6-foot-4, 220-pounder also ranked second in assists (87), third in steals (26) and fourth in rebounding (4.0 average).

DeChellis said Anderson sat out the entire month of September with a calf injury and is "just getting back into full swing." The sixth-year head coach is pushing the Pennsylvania resident to become a more complete player.

"Shawn is a very good player and we need him to perform well," DeChellis said. "I've turned the heat up on him a little bit, especially defensively. Shawn needs to be a much better defender for us. I thought last year at times we gave him a pass."

Power forward Tom Lacey, who started 30 of 33 games and averaged 4.5 points and 4.2 rebounds, is the only other returning starter. The rugged 6-foot-7, 235-pound junior snagged 11 rebounds in the scrimmage with William & Mary and the coaching staff loves the passion, energy and emotion he displays on the court.

Wing guard Kendall Knorr was the other starter lost to graduation and will likely be replaced in the lineup by senior Tim Abruzzo, who led Navy in 3-pointers made (40) and steals (35) last season. Abruzzo, who will need to increase his scoring after averaging 6.6 points, is almost two years removed from a severe knee injury and is moving much better.

"Tim Abruzzo has played very well in both scrimmages. He has shot the ball well and done some good things as we would expect a senior to do," DeChellis said. "I thought Tim played pretty well early last year, but I thought he got tired. His ACL leg got tired. He was dragging his leg around. I think he's in a much better place this year."

Junior Bryce Dulin and sophomore Ryan Pearson are two other candidates for increased playing time on the wing. Dulin, who scored a career-high 16 points against Colgate in the quarterfinals of the Patriot League Tournament, recently broke a bone in his cheek while diving for a loose ball and will be out another two to three weeks. Pearson, who has the ability to

Navy basketball unveils revamped roster after graduating three starters (cont...)

get hot from 3-point range, scored 27 points in the William & Mary scrimmage.

"I like our team. We have pretty good depth. When we shoot the ball well, we can be really good," DeChellis said. "We're trying to play inside-outside. We have kids who are very willing passers in the post. They kick the ball out for step-in threes. We want to push the ball because we're faster getting up the floor. I think we can score in different ways right now."

DeChellis noted the Midshipmen must improve their perimeter defense now that Kelly, the Patriot League Defensive Player of the Year, is not lurking near the basket.

"Will affected a lot of shots. We don't have that. We have to be more solid defensively. We can't gamble because we don't have someone back there who can change shots," DeChellis said.

Navy has improved its record, both overall and within the Patriot League, every season under DeChellis. The Midshipmen are coming off a 19-14 (9-9) record, their first winning season since 2008-2009.

"We have a confident feel to us. I think we've improved every year and that's a positive, but we haven't won the prize yet," DeChellis said.

"We have to continue that trend, whether that's more wins overall or more wins in the league or winning the championship. We have to take the next step, whatever that may be. This is not a team that by any stretch has arrived. We haven't done anything. We want to win a Patriot League championship and get to the NCAA Tournament. That's our goal.

Despite the progress shown last season, Navy was picked seventh out of 10 schools in the preseason Patriot League poll. The Midshipmen have never been picked higher than eighth during the six-year tenure of DeChellis. Last season, Navy finished tied for fourth after being picked in the preseason to finish 10th.

"I don't think the coaches know who we have. They haven't seen our newcomers or our freshmen that have turned into sophomores," DeChellis said. "That doesn't really bother me at all. When we start playing games, nobody cares where teams were picked. If we keep everybody healthy, we'll be in the mix."

Shawn Anderson doing himself, New Castle proud

Larry Kelly | New Castle News | October 28, 2016

I recently visited the United States Naval Academy and had the privilege of having lunch with a person who might one day be President of the United States.

No — I'm not talking about Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump.

I had lunch with 2013 New Castle High graduate Shawn Anderson.

I don't know if Shawn has political aspirations, but if he does, then he embodies all of the attributes of a great leader.

As a senior captain for the Red Hurricane, Shawn received first team all-state honors in basketball. He is currently a junior at the United States Naval Academy. The Naval Academy is a special place and Shawn is the epitome of everything that it represents.

If a trip to the Academy doesn't make your heart swell with patriotism, then you don't have a heart. Watching the Midshipmen march onto the field before a Navy football game is an emotional experience.

Shawn will be a starter for the second consecutive year for the Navy basketball team. Last season, Shawn started all 33 games for the Mids. He led the team in scoring at 13.2 ppg and was second in assists.

Anderson's honors last season included being named the Patriot League Player of the Week and NAAA athlete of the week on two separate occasions. He also was named MVP of the Spartan Showcase Tournament.

To say that his basketball career to this point is accomplished is an understatement. But it's not his skills on the hardwood that makes this young man special.

He is mature beyond his years. He understands his purpose. While most young men have a mind set that says, "it's all about me," Shawn lives by the credo that screams "you can count on me."

Since his graduation, Anderson has run a program during his Christmas break called 'Canes' Coats for Kids. He solicits donations from the community and uses the money to provide warm coats for children in New Castle who don't have a coat to keep them warm in

the winter.

What other college kid that you know is willing to spend his limited time off between semesters making sure kids in his community stay warm.

If that isn't enough Anderson, with help of fellow Ne-Ca-Hi classmate Michael Geramita, has started a not-for-profit corporation called Forever Red Hurricanes.

Anderson believes that all young children need mentors to be successful. It's his vision that FRH will be able to provide the same type of mentorship and guidance that allowed him to achieve such great success so early in his adolescent life.

That's vision, that's integrity and that represents the type of selflessness that is the cornerstone of leadership.

In a world where inspirational leaders are few and far between, our community is blessed to have a young man who's well on his way to greatness.

He will soon be a Naval Officer. He's already a fine gentleman. And maybe one day — President of the United States.

Vermeer Serves Others as Plebe Summer Regimental Commander

Matt Muzza | NavySports.com | September 6, 2016

The city of Annapolis is typically very quiet at 6:00 a.m. on a summer weekday. As the sun slowly rises over the glassy waters of the Annapolis Harbor, there is a stillness to the streets of Maryland's capital. However, inside the walls of the U.S. Naval Academy there is a flurry of activity, and Navy men's basketball senior guard Grant Vermeer is at its center as the Regimental Commander of Plebe Summer.

Plebe Summer is six-week training program that turns incoming freshmen, or plebes, into trained midshipmen who are indoctrinated into the ways of the Naval Academy and are ready to join the Brigade of Midshipmen at the start of the academic year.

Beginning on Induction Day on June 30, the nearly 1,200 plebes are put through their training by approximately 250 upperclassmen detailers. The chain of command amongst the detailers is headed by the regimental staff. At the top of the regimental staff is the Regimental Commander, and during the second set of the 2016 Plebe Summer, that position was filled by Vermeer.

Vermeer helped the Navy basketball team to a 19-14 record this past season and he has appeared in 39 career games with 10 starts. The Mountain View, California native was named to the National Association of Basketball Coaches Honors Court due to his 3.43 cumulative grade-point average as a cyber operations major.

"My job as the Plebe Summer Regimental Commander was to ensure the overall safety, welfare and execution of the training of the fourth class and the personnel in the fourth class regiment," said Vermeer. "I was the tone-setter and set the overall command climate. I was the person who had to make sure things were running smoothly."

The upperclassmen in Plebe Summer are either in the regimental staff or the company staff. The detailers in the company staff are tasked with the hands-on, day-to-day training of the plebes. The regimental staff supports and guides the detailers.

"My job was to help the detailers, the people that are doing the hands-on work," said Vermeer. "I was there to help make their training more effective and more efficient. To support them in their roles and to help them with their problems. My role was to help others and to

serve my people."

In his role as Regimental Commander, Vermeer received the unique opportunity to practice peer leadership on a large scale. In order to effectively oversee Plebe Summer, Vermeer had to have the support of the upperclassmen detailers that were under his command.

"I asked the detailers to first be a good person and to treat everyone with dignity and respect," said Vermeer. "Second was to have a positive attitude. Have an enthusiasm and a positivity that is infectious, motivating and inspiring. That way, the plebes know you wanted to be there and that you cared about the training. The third thing was to give 100 percent effort all the time. I wanted this to be an opportunity to practice exhaustive leadership. So by the time we were done, you knew you gave everything you have to help these people grow into who they are going to become."

Another way Vermeer supported the plebes and the detailers in the company staff was through the power of presence. Since the regimental staff is not as involved in the day-to-day, hands-on training of the plebes, it can be challenging to understand the problems the company staffs are having. To remedy this, Vermeer made being present at different training evolutions a priority.

"It's a lot easier for someone to tell you something is going wrong or they need something changed or fixed if you are in their company area," Vermeer said. "They aren't always going to seek you out because they are also busy. If you are present you get a better sense of what is really going on and the struggles they are facing. You can better help them and make things more efficient."

Being open to the concept of supporting others and letting others help you is one of the reasons Vermeer has been so successful at the Naval Academy. Vermeer experienced his own struggles at the Naval Academy as a plebe.

"I was so worried about myself that I wasn't seeing the bigger picture," said Vermeer. "I had some role models that helped me shift my mindset from 'me' to 'we' and to adopt a team mentality. I stopped worrying about myself so much and started to really appreciate the people around me. That's when things started to get better."

Knowing that he was part of something bigger than himself and embracing the mission of the Naval Academy helped him not only get through his own plebe year, but also to flourish as a midshipman.

"The people here are phenomenal," said Vermeer. "Whether it's the students, the faculty or the officer staff. Everyone here is dedicated to the overall development of every person at this school. I'm a big believer that it's not what you do, it's who you do it with. And I know now that there is not a different group of people that I want to do something with than the people that are at this school."

Some of those people played a big role Vermeer seeking out and successfully serving as the Regimental Commander. In addition to the support of basketball head coach Ed DeChellis, former teammate Kevin Alter, who served as a Plebe Summer Battalion Commander in 2014, encouraged Vermeer to get involved with Plebe Summer training.

Additionally, Vermeer worked under Cmdr. Michael Murnane, who was the officer in charge of Plebe Summer and is Vermeer's battalion officer during the academic year.

"I learned an immense amount about leadership from Cmdr. Murnane," said Vermeer. "That positivity, enthusiasm and energy that he brought every day was fantastic. The positive impact that he had on my life was incredible. I admire him so much as a person and as a leader."

Vermeer also credits his Plebe Summer Executive Officer (XO), Matt Meltzer, and the regimental staff as critical in ensuring the effectiveness of Vermeer's own position. The regimental staff involves everyone embracing their role and contributing to an overall team effort.

"The people on the regimental staff are the people making everything happen," said Vermeer. "They are the 'doers.' They are the people that really make it all work. My XO, Matt Meltzer, was phenomenal. He made my job easy. He allowed me to do what my job entailed and he set me up for success in being as great as he was."

Vermeer will apply the lessons he learned from his role of Regimental Commander of Plebe

Vermeer Serves Others as Plebe Summer Regimental Commander (cont...)

Summer when he graduates from the Naval Academy next spring and is commissioned as an officer in the United States Navy or Marine Corps.

“The purpose of the Naval Academy is to give you that leadership experience to get you ready to lead a division, platoon or squad out in the fleet,” said Vermeer. “When you get out into the fleet, the people you are going to be leading are extremely diverse. Everybody comes for different reasons, they are from different parts of the country, they all have different family situations. So to be the person who is there to take care of and lead these people and help develop them on their path and their journey is a really exciting thought.

“To think, as a 22-year-old person who just graduated from college you’re going to be making a positive impact and a positive influence on a lot of people’s lives. You are going to be directly responsible for the development, training, welfare and safety of your people. To have that opportunity and responsibility is something that I am extremely excited for.”