

VILLANOVA



2006-07 Preview



2006-07 Season Outlook

Three Seniors to Lead Young Roster

Given the dynamic nature of the enterprise, the number was simply startling. 99.9 percent.

It represented the percentage of points slated to return to the Villanova roster in 2005-06 one year ago. Toss in a percentage of rebounding that was just a shade under 99 percent and you had the rarest of situations in college basketball, a club coming off a Sweet 16 appearance with a roster nearly identical to the previous season.

That the Wildcats lived up to every expectation, reaching the Elite Eight, before falling to the eventual NCAA champion (Florida) for the second straight year, made sense on the surface. That the 'Cats did it without a major staple of the pre-season equation, forward Curtis Sumpter, makes their achievement one that will register in the minds of the Villanova faithful for years to come.

In 2006-07, Villanova enters a new realm. Gone are All-Americans Randy Foye and Allan Ray, both four-year starters who combined for over 4,000 points in their careers. Electric guard Kyle Lowry, a second team All-Big East selection, has moved on to the National Basketball Association with them. The 'Cats will also be without interior veterans Jason Fraser and Chris Charles.

The percentage of scoring returning from 2005-06 is a modest 27.4 percent while 51.8 percent of the rebounding returns.

Clearly, the Wildcats of 2006-07 will look different than their immediate predecessors.

"We say each year that even if your personnel doesn't change, your team changes," says Villanova head coach Jay Wright. "Each individual player grows and changes their expectations and goals.

"But this is truly going to be a unique situation. Everyone is really accepting a completely different role from what they had."

In 2005-06, much of the focus was aimed at Villanova's four dynamic guards. Co-captains Foye and Ray were the foundation of the Wildcats while Lowry supplied speed, quickness and toughness as the primary quarterback on the court. Fraser and Charles were leaders who contributed in less-heralded but significant ways.

"I don't think you can quantify what they gave us," Wright says. "They gave us leadership, maturity and a killer instinct, things that you can't put a number on. And I don't want this year's team to be compared to them or have to live up to those standards. This is a new team and a new group.

"It's refreshing. It's exciting. It's what's beautiful about college basketball."



Curtis Sumpter

Though 10 underclassmen constitute the bulk of the roster, there are a handful of seasoned vets who will serve as a vital link to the recent past.

The percentage of points and rebounds returning is, in one respect, misleading for it does not include the considerable contributions of senior Curtis Sumpter. The 6-7 native of Brooklyn, N.Y., emerged as a force in the Big East during the 2004-05 campaign, helping fuel Villanova's emergence as a nationally ranked squad.

A torn ACL in his left knee cost him the entire 2005-06 season, however. Sumpter underwent surgery on Nov. 15, 2005 and appears ready to shoulder a heavy burden in the new season.

"Curt's misfortune has actually turned out to be good fortune for our coaching staff and these young players," Wright states. "These guys look up to Curt and they naturally link Curt to Randy, Al, Jason, and that group. He will be valuable to us in ways we can't even understand yet. He's just been in every situation and not just the good ones. There were some tough times early on that Mike (Nardi) and Bump (Sheridan) missed."

Wright understands that Sumpter may take time to round into the form that saw him average 15.3 points and 7.3 rebounds in 2004-05.

"I actually anticipate a gradual improvement

from him as the season moves along," states Wright. "He's really missed a year and half, from the time he first injured the knee in March of 2005. The fact we will be playing in a pre-season tournament and a lot of early games in November will be good for Curt. I think he'll be physically ready to play, he is just going to need game experience. That's what will bring him to the point where he can reach his potential."

Two other seasoned seniors will also be instrumental in the fortunes of the 2005-06 Wildcats. Nardi and Will "Bump" Sheridan have extensive starting experience and will be counted upon to supply leadership.

"Both Bump and Mike are natural leaders," says Wright. "They have been leaders for us but it may not have been recognized outside our program because they were alongside Randy, Allan and Jason. I think more people will understand the importance of the leadership these guys bring this season."

Nardi shifted roles last season to help compensate for the absence of Sumpter. Instead of serving as the primary ballhandler, the 6-2 native of Linden, N.J., moved off the ball so the offense would have another deep shooting threat. In that capacity he averaged 10.4 ppg and connected on .401 of his 3-point attempts. Now he will slide back to the role he knew for most of his first two seasons at Villanova, point guard.

"This is 'back to the future' for Mike," says Wright. "This is where he's comfortable and confident. This is a natural position for Mike. Being a team leader, ballhandler, point guard and captain is something he was born to do. I'm very happy he can take on this role, and I know he's excited about it too."

Sheridan's contributions have often been overshadowed, but he has been a vital cog in Villanova's success over the past two seasons. A 6-8 forward, he is an accomplished defender and rebounder. Last season he also stepped forward with some giant offensive performances in critical spots, including 13 points in a win over Connecticut and 16 points in a second round NCAA Tournament triumph over Arizona.

"I think Bump will be a much bigger part of everything we do on the court this season," states Wright. "He has always been a leader behind the scenes and on campus, the voice of the coaching staff along with Randy on the court. Because of the prominence of some of his teammates, he really wasn't recognized for his efforts. This year people will see just how vital he is to what we do."

VILLANOVA

Sheridan is Villanova's top returning rebounder at 6.3 rpg and also chipped in with 5.5 ppg and 1.4 bpg.

There are a host of talented candidates eager to join this trio in the rotation. Wright and his staff don't lack for choices among the rest of the roster.

Sophomore Dante Cunningham, 6-8, figures to be a factor up front. Cunningham provided valuable front court relief as a freshman, logging heavy minutes in NCAA Tournament victories over Arizona and Boston College. He made four starts, averaged 19.1 minutes, 2.2 points and 4.0 rebounds per outing while displaying terrific athletic tools.

"I see Dante expanding his role in every way," Wright says. "I don't think that will be any kind of problem for him. He constricted his game last year to fit in. That was probably harder for him than doing what we will ask him to this year, expanding his game.

"He's very talented - I don't think we've seen yet what he can do offensively. Dante is going to be able to show a lot more of his offensive skills."

Another sophomore who saw important minutes, particularly down the stretch, is 6-7 Shane Clark. The product of Philadelphia scored nine points against West Virginia and made key plays late in a game to help secure a win at Cincinnati.

"You can't plan whether guys make plays in big situations," explains Wright. "Once they do, it can never be taken away from them. Dante and Shane definitely have that now in them. They've gotten it done in big games."

Clark also figures to benefit from a full pre-season, something he did not have as a rookie. He joined the roster at the end of the first semester and managed to find a spot in the rotation despite the late start.

"We're just so excited about Shane getting a full year under his belt," states Wright. "As a staff we are just so impressed with what he was able to accomplish in a short period of time. It really just tweaked our enthusiasm for what he can do in the future."

Both Clark and Cunningham figure to join Sumpter and Sheridan in the frontcourt rotation. A classmate, Frank Tchuisi, and freshmen Casiem Drummond and Andrew Ott will be in the mix as well.

"Frank is a true competitor," says Wright. "We have the confidence in him to put him in the game at any time because of his ability to block shots, run the floor, rebound and defend. He continues to improve and work hard. I love what he brings to our team."

Drummond is a 6-10 freshman from Bloomfield Tech High School (N.J.). He brings good size and soft hands to the mix.

"Casim is one of those players who is marked by that dangerous word, 'potential,'" Wright

notes. "This is a really skilled player with good hands. He has the things you can't teach - strength and size. We look for him to really work hard to improve his endurance and athleticism. It's something he is very committed to and we are confident he will do the things necessary to become an outstanding player."

At 6-10 Ott is a versatile forward who brings an outstanding passing eye and long-range shooting touch to Villanova.

"Andrew Ott brings skill and intelligence immediately," Wright says. "His competitiveness and his ability to add strength quickly will determine how quickly he can help us. He can shoot the ball, is an outstanding passer and brings some size."

Two former teammates at St. Thomas More (Conn.), 6-5 sophomore Dwayne Anderson and 6-7 freshman Antonio Pena are versatile wing players with skill to become substantial contributors.

"It may not have been visible to our fans, but I really thought Dwayne grew as a freshman," states Wright. "His defense, his commitment to playing every possession really improved. This is a season where the opportunity is really going to be there for him and we really look forward to him taking advantage of that. We think he can be a real offensive threat and a factor on the boards at 6-6."

Pena follows in the footsteps of fellow New York City products Sumpter and Ray. At 6-6, he is capable of scoring on the perimeter and the interior.

"Antonio is physically mature and prepared to play at this level immediately," notes Wright. "How well he adjusts to our system and style of play will determine how quickly he helps us. We



Mike Nardi

have great confidence in his abilities, both offensively and defensively, to become an impact player on our team."

Bilal Benn made several meaningful contributions as a backup guard in limited opportunities last season. He filled in admirably for Nardi when Nardi was sidelined by tonsillitis in February, scoring nine points in a 61-51 win at DePaul. At 6-5 Benn brings defensive tenacity and point guard skills to the guard corps.

"Last season Bilal really proved his toughness to our coaching staff and to his teammates," Wright says. "That's the foundation of our program. This year he will have the opportunity to prove his other abilities."

Another Philadelphia product, 6-5 Reggie Redding, brings intelligence and multiple skills to the 'Cats. He too will look to make a mark quickly.

"This is another young man who gives us great size at the guard position and the kind of skills that could make him an effective Big East player immediately," Wright states. "Like any freshman, his ability to play consistently at the level demanded by the Big East will determine how much he can help us as a freshman."

Perhaps the most notable newcomer is the most recent. Freshman guard Scottie Reynolds came on board this spring after a standout career at Herndon (Va.) High School that saw him earn McDonald's All-American honors. He is just the third Wildcat in the last decade - joining Fraser and Tim Thomas - to arrive with that distinction.

"Scottie is an exciting addition to our program," states Wright. "He gives us the kind of point guard that is vital to our success. We are going to need him to help us immediately."

Senior Ross Condon returns to provide depth and additional experience to the mix.

It promises to be a season of change but one filled with ample opportunity for the next generation of Wildcats.

"As a coaching staff, we're all excited about this," says Wright. "It is very comforting to us to have the leadership of three experienced players like Curt, Mike and Bump. They will offer great guidance to our young guys, just as Randy, Allan and Jason did last season.

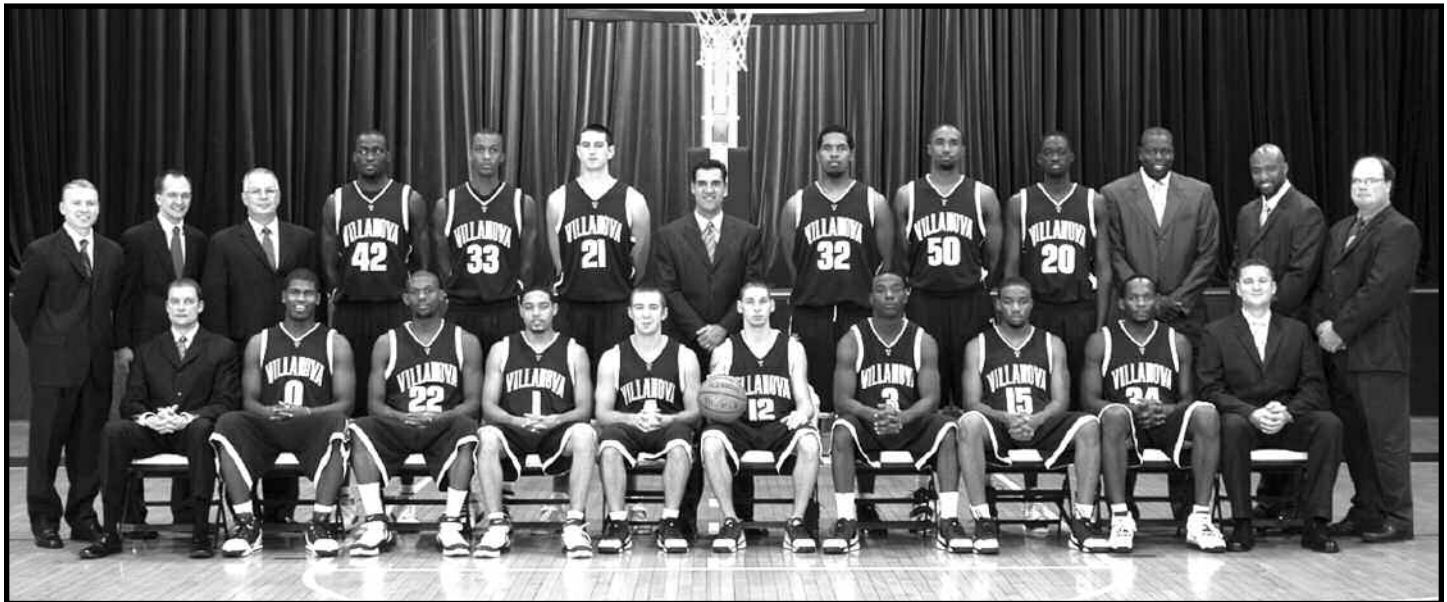
"We also are excited to work with the younger guys as they receive their opportunity to make their mark at Villanova.

"It may take us some time to find how the pieces best work together. But we have the potential to be a very good team, and I know we're all very enthusiastic about the future."

Construction on Villanova's new Intercollegiate Athletic Recreation Facility began last summer. It will serve as a fitting metaphor as the 2006-07 squad constructs a bridge to the future.



2006-07 Wildcat Rosters



Back Row (L-R) Assistant Coach Patrick Chambers, Graduate Manager Mark McClintick, Athletic Trainer Jeff Pierce, Frank Tchuisi, Dante Cunningham, Andrew Ott, Head Coach Jay Wright, Casiem Drummond, Will Sheridan, Shane Clark, Assistant Coach Ed Pinckney, Video Coordinator Andrew Francis, Strength and Conditioning Coach Jeff Watson; Front Row (L-R) Associate Head Coach Brett Gunning, Antonio Peña, Dwayne Anderson, Scottie Reynolds, Ross Condon, Mike Nardi, Bilal Benn, Reggie Redding, Curtis Sumpter, Manager of Basketball Operations Jason Donnelly.

Alphabetical Roster

| No. | Name | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Cl.-Exp. | Hometown (High School) |
|-----|------------------|------|------|-----|----------|---|
| 22 | Dwayne Anderson | G/F | 6-5 | 215 | So.-1L | Washington, D.C. (St. Thomas More) |
| 3 | Bilal Benn | G/F | 6-5 | 205 | So.-1L | Philadelphia, Pa. (Hargrave Military Academy) |
| 20 | Shane Clark | F | 6-7 | 205 | So.-1L | Philadelphia, Pa. (Hargrave Military Academy) |
| 4 | Ross Condon | G | 5-11 | 180 | Sr.-3L | Springfield, Va. (Potomac School) |
| 33 | Dante Cunningham | F | 6-8 | 225 | So.-1L | Silver Spring, Md. (Potomac) |
| 32 | Casiem Drummond | F/C | 6-10 | 280 | Fr.-HS | West Orange, N.J. (Bloomfield Tech) |
| 12 | Mike Nardi | G | 6-2 | 170 | Sr.-3L | Linden, N.J. (St. Patrick's) |
| 21 | Andrew Ott | F | 6-10 | 220 | Fr.-HS | Abington, Pa. (Germantown Academy) |
| 0 | Antonio Peña | F | 6-8 | 235 | Fr.-HS | Brooklyn, N.Y. (St. Thomas More) |
| 15 | Reggie Redding | G | 6-5 | 205 | Fr.-HS | Philadelphia, Pa. (St. Joseph's Prep) |
| 1 | Scottie Reynolds | G | 6-2 | 195 | Fr.-HS | Herndon, Va. (Herndon) |
| 50 | Will Sheridan | F | 6-8 | 240 | Sr.-3L | Bear, Del. (Sanford School) |
| 34 | Curtis Sumpter | F | 6-7 | 225 | R-Sr.-4L | Brooklyn, N.Y. (Bishop Loughlin) |
| 42 | Frank Tchuisi | F | 6-8 | 215 | So.-1L | Douala, Cameroon (St. Benedict's) |

Numerical Roster

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Head Coach: Jay Wright; Associate Head Coach: Brett Gunning, Assistant Coaches: Ed Pinckney, Patrick Chambers
 Manager of Basketball Operations: Jason Donnelly; Trainer: Jeff Pierce.