

THREE VILLAGE TIMES

SPORTS

Preview of Adelphi Men's Basketball

By Leslie Feffer

In his first year as head coach, Adelphi University's Steve Clifford accomplished many things with his team — setting the school record for most wins in a season (23-7), winning the New York Collegiate Athletic Conference Championship and receiving the team's second straight NCAA Division II bid. But some of that satisfaction was overshadowed by doubt, as the Panthers were defeated in the first round of the nationals for the second time in as many years and lost both their best offensive player (NYCAC Player of the Year and Third Team All-American Perry Herbert) and their best defensive player (Anthony Gilliam) to graduation last spring.

"I don't think you ever replace a player like Perry," the coach said, noting that Herbert is "probably the best player that Adelphi has ever had." However, Coach Clifford was quick to point out that the group of new Panthers is filling the void. Newcomers shooting guard Jeff Donato (a junior transfer from Suffolk Community College) and forward Chris Bernard (a sophomore transfer from Rider University) have already worked their way into a starting line-up that includes tri-captains point guard Danny Gimpel (senior), forward Raymond Williams (senior) and forward Andrew Bridges (junior).

Herbert had been the Panthers' go-to guy, averaging 20.6 ppg last year, but the coach pointed out that his six new players give the team more depth than they have had in previous years, as well as more of a defensive presence. He describes the Panthers' offense as an "unselfish, team style" of play, with no designated go-to player. Gimpel agreed with his coach, saying, "Last year, Perry dropped about 20 points per game. But this year, we have

Nov. 30	Sat.	St. Michael's College	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 4	Wed.	New York Tech	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 11	Wed.	L.I.U.-C.W. Post	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	Sat.	Mercy College	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 8	Wed.	L.I.U.-Stamhampton	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 13	Mon.	Queens College	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	Sat.	Pace University	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 22	Wed.	Concordia College	5 p.m.
Jan. 29	Wed.	Dowling College	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 6	Wed.	Molloy College	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 12	Wed.	College of Saint Rose	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 19	Wed.	Philadelph. Textile	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 25	Tue.	NYCAC Playoffs	
		(First Round) TBA - time & place	
Mar. 1	Fri.	NYCAC Playoffs (Semifinals)	
		TBA - time & place	
Mar. 2	Sat.	NYCAC Playoffs (Finals)	
		TBA - time & place	

more guys [who can score], so no one player has to get those 20 every game. It can be anybody on any given night. We don't really rely on any one or two guys to do it."

The point guard praised the offensive play of veteran forwards Williams and Justin Mallis, as well as his new backcourt teammate, Donato. "Jeff is great to play with because he doesn't make any mistakes," said Gimpel, laughing. He is pleased with the team's chemistry and depth. "We now have nine or 10 guys who can play," the tri-captain said. "Last year, we only had about seven and that hurt us at the end of the season, because everyone was playing 37-38 minutes per game."

While Coach Clifford is optimistic

about his team's potential this year, believing that they are as good as, if not better, than they were last year, his biggest

concern is their need to jell. Early last season, the Panthers won a few close games, and the coach attributes that to their being a veteran team that was comfortable playing together.

Both the coach and the returning players are still disappointed about falling short of their ultimate goal last season — winning the regional title — and have already begun planning to accomplish it this season. While working on the physical aspects of the game, Coach Clifford is also emphasizing the mental parts. "We've been talking about building legitimate habits, the kind of habits that you need, from both a mental and physical standpoint, to be able to go into somebody else's gym and play well."

So far, the team has been doing just that, as they've opened the season with a 3-0 record, all on the road. Gimpel noted that last year's first round loss in the NCAA tournament is driving him to come back twice as hard this season. "Every senior remembers his last game," said the point guard. "And I want my last game to be in Louisville, KY [site of the 1997 NCAA Division II Elite Eight]."