

MEN'S
Bb
BASKETBALL

2005-06 SEASON
PREVIEW





SEASON OUTLOOK

VETERAN SQUAD LOOKS FOR RETURN TO NCAA TOURNAMENT SUCCESS.

The saying goes, "What goes around comes around," and as the Maryland men's basketball team approaches the 2005-06 season, it appears to be "coming around."

Two seasons ago, head coach Gary Williams led his squad – a team that statistically rated as the youngest team in the nation – to the 2004 ACC championship. With only one senior and the core of the squad comprised of a combined nine freshmen and sophomores, the young Terps rose to unprecedented heights, defeating three of the ACC's best en route to the school's third tournament title.

Last season, though a year older, the Terps were still comprised of mainly underclassmen. With only one scholarship senior on the roster and a key injury suffered midway through the season, the Terrapins compiled 19 victories, managed a sweep of league rival and eventual ACC champion Duke, and built a postseason run that carried the squad to the NIT semifinals after narrowly missing a 12th straight NCAA bid.

It is a different story for Williams' 2005-06 squad, as the Terrapins are no longer the "new kids on the block." The always-driven head coach now has the type of senior-laden team he believes is poised to achieve great things. The Terps – a year older, wiser and hungrier – return one of the ACC's deepest and most talented rosters and are looking to take their coach back to the NCAA Tournament and deep into March.

"WE HAVE TO BE TOUGHER. OUR DEFENSE AND REBOUNDING - ALL THOSE THINGS THAT MAKE YOU A GOOD TEAM - HAVE TO BE THERE ON A MORE CONSISTENT BASIS. WE WERE ABLE TO DO THAT AT TIMES LAST YEAR, BUT WE COULDN'T DO THAT FOR THE 32 GAMES." - GARY WILLIAMS

"I'm very optimistic. We have an experienced group returning. I think you always look at that in college basketball – you see how much experience you have coming back," said Williams. "This is our year with seniors, and we haven't had really more than one senior in the last two years. This is an opportunity for the seniors to be great leaders and to be people who work really hard. They realize that this is their last year in college, and this is their year to see how good we can be."

The Terrapins return a deep and talented backcourt, with all the personnel that engineered last year's postseason resurgence and NIT run. Further, junior defensive dynamo D.J. Strawberry returns to the backcourt unit after recovering from an ACL tear suffered midway through last season. Strawberry's energy, enthusiasm and minutes were certainly missed last year as the Terps hit the always-difficult grind of the ACC conference schedule.

"One thing that I think got overlooked last year is that we lost D.J. Strawberry," said Williams. "A very significant player as a freshman who last year was able to play in only one league game. Having him back will be key because he can play three positions."

Maryland's frontcourt also returns in its entirety, a year stronger and more experienced. Last season some of the Terrapins' younger post players proved their worth among the ACC's best, and Williams and his staff are once again in a position to mix and match for a four-man frontcourt. Versatility and depth in the post have been keys to success during Maryland's championship seasons, and the Terrapin frontcourt is fully loaded for the new campaign.

Despite 541 career victories and 12 consecutive post-season appearances, the never-complacent Williams is as determined as ever to drive his 2005-06 squad to a season of success. The Terrapins will be ready from the jump on the first day of practice, and their head coach has already seen the positive signs of things to come.

"We have to be tougher. Our defense and rebounding – all those things that make you a good team – have to be there on a more consistent basis. We were able to do that at times last year, but we couldn't do that for the 32 games," said Williams. "Now we have to step up and make that commitment. You are able to do that because of how hard you work in the summer and in the fall before the start of practice. I think our guys have been working harder this offseason than they did a year ago."

FRONTCOURT

One of the most athletic and versatile frontcourts in the ACC returns for the Terrapins – a year smarter, a year more mature and a year more experienced.

Nik Caner-Medley and Travis Garrison led the 2004-05 Terrapins in scoring and rebounding, respectively, and are poised to again assume leadership roles in this, their senior seasons. Combined with athletic power forwards Ekene Ibekwe and James Gist, as well as a much-improved and solid Will Bowers, Maryland's frontcourt could give opponents a number of matchup problems this year.

Caner-Medley, one of the preseason candidates for the 2005-06 Wooden Award, averaged 16.0 points per game last year, eclipsing the elusive 500-point mark for the Terrapins. Always one of the best all-around players on the



Gary Williams



Nik Caner-Medley



Travis Garrison

team statistically, Caner-Medley finished last year among team leaders in rebounding (third at 6.2 per game), assists (third) and steals (second). He improved his average in 16 league games to 16.6 points per game.

"Nik had some games last year that were tremendous, such as his performance at Duke," said Williams. "This year, he has to be more consistent. Nik has worked hard in camps over the summer and played against guys who are considered to be the best players in the country. He knows what it takes, and I look forward to Nik to have a great senior year."

Despite often being matched up with taller players, Garrison is one of those players who finds a way to have the ball land in his hands. He led the Terps with 207 rebounds, including 76 offensive boards, giving witness to his ability to create second-chance opportunities for his teammates. Garrison led the Terps in four Postseason NIT games in scoring (15.0 ppg) and rebounding (9.3 rpg). It was the second straight season he had peaked at the right time for the Terrapins, as he finished strong in the spring of 2004.

"Travis is a great shooter for a big man, and he has had some unbelievable games where he's done it all," said Williams. "This year as a senior, Travis has to be more consistent

throughout the season, and rebound and play great defense even when his shot is not falling."

One of the most athletic big men to play at Maryland, the 6-foot-9 Ibekwe has led the Terrapins in blocked shots in each of his first two seasons in College Park. He finished with 55 a year ago and was second to Garrison in rebounding at 6.3 boards per game. Ibekwe also possesses some range with his jumper.

"Ekene has shown flashes of being a great player," said Williams. "He knows he has to be in a little better shape this year, but there are very few people at that 6-9 size with his flexibility and quickness."

Bowers, who is Maryland's tallest player at 7-foot-1, improved his game impressively prior to the 2004-05 season, earning himself significant playing time as a sophomore. Bowers started 10 games at center for Maryland a year ago, giving the Terps much needed size, bulk and presence under the basket. He had back-to-back double-figure scoring games late in the season, including a 14-point effort in the NIT opener against Oral Roberts.

Gist was another pleasant surprise as a freshman for Maryland a season ago. Playing in all but one game and averaging 17 minutes, Gist provided a needed spark off the bench for the Terps while shooting .493 from the field. He also finished with 31 blocks, ranking third on the team in that category despite being a reserve. Gist had six games in double figures last year, including a career-high 18 points in a late-season start at Virginia Tech.

Junior **Gini Chukura**, a 6-foot-5 walk-on at small forward a year ago, and 6-foot-7 freshman **Dave Neal**, a powerfully built frontcourt player from nearby McLean, Va., will also see action on the front line for Maryland in 2005-06.



Ekene Ibekwe

BACKCOURT

Experience and talent abounds in the Maryland backcourt for 2005-06, as a strong group that led the Terrapins to a run to the Postseason NIT semifinals returns for a new season. The Terps have the tools to play well at the guard positions, and Williams is hoping those tools, coupled with hard work in the off-season will translate into success.

"We have pretty good size, our guards are big," the coach says of his backcourt. "Mike Jones, D.J. Strawberry and Chris McCray are all that 6-4, 6-5 size. Sterling Ledbetter is about 6-4 at the point guard position, and Parrish Brown is a very strong 6-1. We have good size and good depth in our backcourt."

McCray was possibly the most consistent performer for Maryland a year ago, hitting double figures in scoring in all but five games. He averaged 14.1 points, 4.3 rebounds, was second on the team with 99 assists and led the team with 58 steals as a junior. McCray also was one of the top free-throw shooters in the ACC a year ago, hitting .903 at the line.

"Chris has a tremendous amount of experience, has good size and can handle the ball well for a shooting guard," said Williams. "Now he needs to take it to the next level as a shooter. When he has open shots, he has to knock them down."

Strawberry, like McCray a tall shooting guard at 6-5, is hoping that hard work at rehabilitating after knee surgery could make him even stronger than he was before the injury. Strawberry played in 14 games in 2004-05 before suffering the season-ending injury in mid-January. He was averaging 7.1 points per game at the time of his injury, but his defensive effort against opposing guards was the big



Chris McCray



difference. Strawberry had 24 steals in only 300 minutes for the Terps prior to the injury. He can play three positions for the Terps, so he is an important ingredient to Maryland's success in the new year.

"He was our best perimeter defender as a freshman, and that is uncommon for a first-year player," said Williams. "That defensive quality D.J. has is contagious. He is not going to be rushed back, but when he is back at 100 percent, he is going to make us a much better team defensively."

Jones continued to show progress last season, showing at times his ability to instantly take over a game offensively. He had seven double-figure games in the Terps' final 13 outings of the year, including 58 points in the Terps' four games in the Postseason NIT, averaging 14.5 points in 18.5 minutes in those appearances. Williams is hoping that Jones can round out his game for his junior season in order to provide more depth and punch to the No. 2-guard spot.

At the point, Ledbetter and Brown are experienced players who will give Williams some options and some depth to use in that important position.

Ledbetter took over the starting duties during the Terps' run through the Postseason NIT. As Maryland went 3-1 in that stretch, Ledbetter played well, averaging 6.0 points, 5.3 rebounds and 5.0 assists in the four games. He had back-to-back 10-point games in the first two rounds, just missing double-doubles in each of those games.

"Sterling had an opportunity at the end of the year to start the NIT games and average 30 minutes per game," said Williams. "That gave him a good chance to see what he had to work on for this year. He is in a great position to be the starting point guard, but he has to earn it."

Giving him some strong competition for the starting spot will be Brown, a highly regarded transfer from Kennedy King Community College in Chicago. The 6-foot-1 junior averaged 22 points, five assists and five boards per game as a sophomore and was a finalist for the Region IV Player of the Year honors at King. Brown could play both positions as a Terrapin, giving Williams even more options in what will be a talented, deep backcourt.

NEW ASSISTANT COACHES

Adding to the excitement of a new season will be the addition of a pair of talented assistant coaches to the Maryland basketball staff. Rob Moxley and Michael Adams will replace Dave Dickerson and Mike Lonergan, each of whom earned head coaching positions in the off-season. CBS Sportsline.com praised both hires in a story during the spring, listing Adams atop a list of "best off-season hires."

"I'm happy that Dave and Mike were able to get head coaching positions, and I take a lot of pride in that," said Williams. "You miss those guys, but it also gives you a chance to re-evaluate what you feel is important in your staff."

Moxley was highly regarded as one of the top assistants in the nation after spending seven years at Charlotte. He is able to handle all phases of the game, but is possibly known best for his ability to work on shooting technique as well as recruit top players.

"With the two openings, I tried to get a guy with a great deal of recruiting experience," said Williams. "Rob has been considered one of the top 10 assistants in the country over



D.J. Strawberry



Mike Jones

the last few years. Given his Maryland background, he knows the people you have to know in this area, plus he is known nationally."

Adams, who most recently was the head coach of the WNBA Washington Mystics, played for Williams while both of them were at Boston College. Adams brings 14 years of professional experience as both a player and a coach.

"It was a great opportunity to get Michael Adams," said Williams. "I had stayed in touch with Michael since he played for me at Boston College. I have always respected Michael's work ethic - how hard he worked to make it into the NBA... and his attitude can really help our team."

Former NBA player and Terrapin standout Keith Booth will return to the staff, giving recruits an opportunity to learn first-hand what it's like to be a player at the University of Maryland.

"Keith did a remarkable job in his first year in college coaching," said Williams. "He does a great job in every aspect on the floor, including recruiting and camp, and the other things you do as an assistant coach."

SCHEDULE

Once again, being a member of the Atlantic Coast Conference ensures that the schedule faced by the University of Maryland will be among the most difficult in the nation. The addition of the 12th member of the league, Boston College, brings another strong opponent onto the Terps' slate for 2005-06, as the Eagles were a participant in the NCAA Tournament a year ago.

"The schedule, beginning with the Maui Invitational through the always-tough ACC regular season, will be difficult," said Williams. "However, at Maryland, we enjoy the challenge of competing with the top teams in the country. It should be an exciting year for our fans."

Maryland opens its 2005-06 schedule on November 18 against Northeast Conference champion Fairleigh Dickinson, one of at least 15 matchups with opponents that made the postseason a year ago, including 11 that reached the NCAA Tournament.

Also highlighted on the schedule is Maryland's appearance in one of the best regular-season tournament fields in history, as six former national champions are among the eight teams in the Maui Invitational. The Terps' first-round opponent in that event is Gonzaga, which is a perennial national power.

The Terrapins have a six-game homestand through most of December into the first week of January, during which Maryland will open its ACC schedule by hosting Boston College on national TV on Dec. 11.

In its 16-game ACC schedule, Maryland will have home-and-home matchups with its travel partners Virginia and Duke, as well as defending NCAA national champion North Carolina, Georgia Tech and Miami. In conference games at home, the Terps face Boston College, Wake Forest and Virginia Tech once each during the regular season. Maryland will play its only regular-season meetings against ACC foes Florida State, NC State and Clemson on the road.

ROSTER INFORMATION

ALPHABETICAL

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.-Exp.	Hometown (High School/Previous School)
31	Will Bowers	C	7-1	262	Jr.-2V	Hanover, Md. (Archbishop Spalding)
24	Parrish Brown	G	6-1	175	Jr.-JC	Chicago, Ill. (Thorndridge/Kennedy King C.C.)
22	Nik Caner-Medley	F	6-8	240	Sr.-3V	Portland, Maine (Deering)
33	Gini Chukura	F	6-5	210	Jr.-1V	Silver Spring, Md. (Good Counsel)
4	Travis Garrison	F	6-8	241	Sr.-3V	Suitland, Md. (DeMatha)
15	James Gist	F	6-8	223	So.-1V	Silver Spring, Md. (Good Counsel)
25	Ekene Ibekwe	F	6-9	220	Jr.-2V	Carson, Calif. (Carson)
23	Mike Jones	G	6-5	204	Jr.-2V	Dorchester, Mass. (Thayer Academy)
12	Sterling Ledbetter	G	6-4	198	Sr.-1V	Laurel, Md. (Laurel/Allegany C.C.)
13	Chris McCray	G	6-5	192	Sr.-3V	Capitol Heights, Md. (Fairmont Heights)
35	Dave Neal	F	6-7	245	Fr.-HS	McLean, Va. (Bishop O'Connell)
5	D.J. Strawberry	G	6-5	201	Jr.-2V	Corona, Calif. (Mater Dei)

NUMERICAL

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.-Exp.	Hometown (High School/Previous School)
4	Travis Garrison	F	6-8	241	Sr.-3V	Suitland, Md. (DeMatha)
5	D.J. Strawberry	G	6-5	201	Jr.-2V	Corona, Calif. (Mater Dei)
12	Sterling Ledbetter	G	6-4	198	Sr.-1V	Laurel, Md. (Laurel/Allegany C.C.)
13	Chris McCray	G	6-5	192	Sr.-3V	Capitol Heights, Md. (Fairmont Heights)
15	James Gist	F	6-8	223	So.-1V	Silver Spring, Md. (Good Counsel)
22	Nik Caner-Medley	F	6-8	240	Sr.-3V	Portland, Maine (Deering)
23	Mike Jones	G	6-5	204	Jr.-2V	Dorchester, Mass. (Thayer Academy)
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35	Dave Neal	F	6-7	245	Fr.-HS	McLean, Va. (Bishop O'Connell)

Head Coach: Gary Williams, 17th Year at Maryland (Maryland '68)

Assistant Coaches: Michael Adams, 1st Year at Maryland (Boston College '85); Rob Moxley, 1st Year at Maryland (Pfeiffer '94); Keith Booth, 2nd Year at Maryland (Maryland '03)

Director of Basketball Operations: Troy Wainwright, 10th Year at Maryland (UMUC '04)

Athletic Trainer: J.J. Bush, 34th Year at Maryland (Florida State '69)

SQUAD BREAKDOWN TERPS BY CLASS

Seniors (4): Caner-Medley, Garrison, Ledbetter, McCray

Juniors (6): Bowers, Brown, Chukura, Ibekwe, Jones, Strawberry

Sophomores (1): Gist

Freshmen (1): Neal

TERPS BY STATE

California (2): Ibekwe, Strawberry

Illinois (1): Brown

Maine (1): Caner-Medley

Maryland (6): Bowers, Chukura, Garrison, Gist, Ledbetter, McCray

Massachusetts (1): Jones

Virginia (1): Neal

TERPS BY HEIGHT

7-1 (1): Bowers

6-9 (1): Ibekwe

6-8 (3): Caner-Medley, Garrison, Gist

6-7 (1): Neal

6-5 (4): Chukura, Jones, McCray, Strawberry

6-4 (1): Ledbetter

6-1 (1): Brown

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Gini Chukura: GIN-ee cha-KOOR-uh

James Gist: hard "G", rhymes with fist

Ekene Ibekwe: uh-KEN-ay ih-BECK-way

Nik Caner-Medley: NIK KAY-nur MED-lee





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MARYLAND

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SPORTS

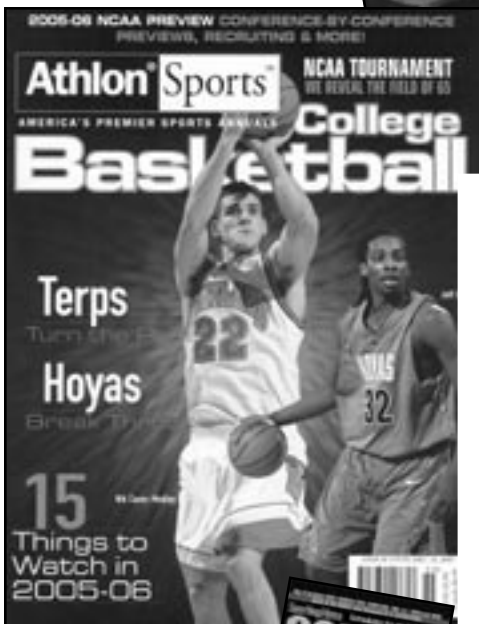
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TEAM



PRESEASON HONORS

Returning 10 letterwinners and four starters from a team that rallied at the end of the season, Maryland has garnered some national attention from those in the know about college basketball. With a senior-laden squad and a veteran coach known for bringing the best out of his individual talent, the Terrapins are picked among the nation's best teams going into the 2005-06 season.

The Atlantic Coast Conference again is gathering national recognition from the pre-season magazines. The Blue Ribbon Yearbook has five ACC teams ranked in its preseason top 25, including league newcomer Boston College, which was 10th.



TERPS IN NATIONAL PRESEASON RANKINGS

Andy Katz, ESPN Summer Session	13th
Slam Magazine	16th
Dick Vitale, ESPN	23rd
Blue Ribbon Yearbook	25th

ACC PRESEASON RANKINGS

Lindy's	5th
Athlon Sports	5th
Street & Smith's	7th

INDIV. PRESEASON HONORS

PARRISH BROWN

"Best Transfer" in ACC, Street & Smith's

NIK CANER-MEDLEY

No. 7 small forward in the nation, Lindy's

No. 10 "Inside-Out" players in the nation, Athlon

Preseason Second Team All-ACC, Athlon

CHRIS MCCRAY

No. 14 shooting guard in the nation, Lindy's

Preseason Third Team All-ACC, Athlon

"Best Instincts" in ACC, Street & Smith's

D.J. STRAWBERRY

ACC "Most Versatile", Lindy's

"THE TERPS STILL HAVE THE CORE OF THEIR TEAM RETURNING WITH SENIORS NIK CANER-MEDLEY, CHRIS MCCRAY, TRAVIS GARRISON, EKENE IBEKWE AND STERLING LEDBETTER. GARY WILLIAMS IS DRIVEN TO GET THIS TEAM BACK TO THE TOURNAMENT AND THEN SUCCEED IN THE FIELD... ONE OF THE TOUGHER HOME COURTS IN THE ACC, LET ALONE THE COUNTRY.

"THIS GROUP OF MARYLAND PLAYERS COULD BE GOING THROUGH SOMETHING SIMILAR TO WHAT MICHIGAN STATE EXPERIENCED, WHEN THE CLASS WAS HYPED BUT HADN'T PRODUCED JUST YET. THIS COULD BE THE SEASON."

ANDY KATZ, ESPN.COM

"TALENT SHOULD NOT BE AN ISSUE AT MARYLAND THIS SEASON. IF WILLIAMS AND NEW ASSISTANTS MICHAEL ADAMS AND ROB MOXLEY CAN CONVINCE THE TERRAPINS TO PLAY WITH MORE PASSION AND ENERGY, PARTICULARLY ON THE DEFENSIVE END OF THE COURT, THEY COULD EMERGE AS ONE OF THE THREE BEST TEAMS IN THE CONFERENCE."

ATHLON SPORTS.

"IN GARY WILLIAMS WE TRUST. TERPS WILL GO DANCING AGAIN,"

LINDY'S.