

# 2005-06 Preview

## Marching to a New Beat

### The Duggar Baucom Era Begins at VMI

A new coach, new staff, new uniforms, and with it, a new attitude.

For the first time in 12 years, VMI basketball will be marching to the beat of a new drummer. New head coach Duggar Baucom brings his highly successful up-tempo style to Lexington and intends to recharge VMI's basketball fortunes.

Baucom was hired to spark the Keydets' basketball program that has posted just two winning seasons over the past two decades. Since taking the reins on April 12, 2005, Baucom hit the ground running in preparation for his first season as head coach of his new team.

"It's been quite a challenge hiring a new staff, signing three players, completing the schedule, and preparing for the upcoming season," said Baucom. "We have been pleased with the returnee's attitude since we have arrived. Everyone has bought in our how we are going to play, now the hard work begins implementing our system."

Eight lettermen and four players with substantial starting experience return from last year's team that posted a 9-18 record. Included in the fold is the top returning freshman scorer in the Big South from a year ago, the league's top assist man, and the entire backcourt.

Baucom intends to push the ball up the floor 40 minutes, and he has the point guard suited for the high-paced style in 5-10 junior Matt Coward (Richmond, Va.). Coward ranked first in the Big South in assists last year (4.9) and also finished third in steals averaging 2.0 per game. Coward also proved himself as a legitimate scoring threat last year doubling his scoring average from the previous year to 11.3 points per game and he also led VMI in scoring in eight games. Baucom sees Coward as a key part of the system's success. "Matt will be the engine

that makes us go, he really fits well in to how we are going to play."

The Runnin' Roos also return Big South All-Freshman pick Reggie Williams, a 6-5 forward who ranked fourth in the league in scoring with a 15.5 average and was the league's second leading free throw shooter with a .796 average.

Williams produced seven 20-point games last year and scored in double figures in 22 of 27 games and also led

in assists in eight games last year. Williams, who averaged 16 points in conference games, will be looked upon for both his scoring and rebounding consistency. "Reggie had an awesome freshman year and we are expecting bigger things from him this year," said Baucom.

Finding a backup to spell Coward will be a top priority, and the likely candidate could be sophomore Sean Christensen (Greenville, Pa.), who played both point and shooting guard last season. Christiansen played in 27 games as a freshman and averaged eight points a game over the last five games of the year while shooting 38% from the three-point arc.

Several returning players and new signees will vie for playing time in the backcourt. Returnees at shooting guard include 6-2 junior Fred Robinson (Alexandria, Va.) who improved his 3-point shooting substantially from his freshman season and finished a 34% for the year. Senior Levar Joseph (Vacherie, La.), who has been hampered by an ACL injury that sidelined him half of last year, will have to work hard to get back into shape to contribute, but his outside shooting touch could be a welcomed factor if he can get back on the court. Joseph has shot nearly 40% from the three-point stripe for his career, including 42% two years ago.

Two new arrivals, 6-4 freshmen signees Chavis and Travis Holmes (Charlotte, N.C.) are expected to see significant playing time and will



**Matt Coward**



**Preston Beverly**



**Matt Murrer**

help the depth picture in the backcourt and at wing. The brothers, the third set of twins to play for VMI in the programs history, put up impressive numbers at Christ School in Asheville, N.C. the past two years while leading the school to a 32-1 record and state championship in 2004-05. Travis averaged 19.7 points and 6.0 rebounds as a senior while Chavis averaged 17.5 points and 4.3 rebounds as a senior. Both players bring excellent shooting range and

poise to the position.

Backcourt depth will be rounded out by 6-3 junior Jack Castleberry (Va. Beach, Va.) and 5-9 freshman signee Craig McCargo (South Boston, Va.), and 6-2 freshman Dusty Pflugner (Sarasota, Fla.).

The frontline players, which lost 6-9 center Tim Allmond and 6-5 forward Sam Mielnik to graduation, will be asked to step up their production considerably in 2005-06. Two seniors will be the foundation of low post play, 6-6 power forward Preston Beverly (Monroe Township, N.J.) and 6-9 Tadas Mankevicius (Kaunas, Lithuania). Beverly appears fully recovered from knee surgery and a medical red-shirt season two years ago and will look to add to his 5.1 rebounds average of a year ago and provide scoring support inside. "Preston must become more consistent, and become a better rebounder," says Baucom. A solid season from Beverly would bolster VMI's inside game, especially if Mankevicius can step up his numbers from his first three years and has his most productive season as a Keydet.

Junior 6-7 forward Matt Murrer (Richmond, Va.) could see his playing time jump considerably from last season if he continues to work on strength and skill development. Murrer played considerably as a freshman and led the Big South in field goal percentage two years ago shooting 58.2%, but inconsistency limited his minutes and numbers last season. A productive Murrer would give the Keydets a dependable option on the inside. Sophomore Justin Jarman (Monongah, W.Va.) saw action in 23 games as a freshman but will be expected to provide solid minutes on the frontline to help the Keydets inside game.

Willie Bell, a 6-5 athletic forward from Newport News, Va. will join the team after the completion of the VMI football season. Bell played as a wideout on the Keydet football team and his role and contribution to the hoops squad will depend on how quickly he transitions from the gridiron to the hardwood.

The intangibles – attitude and the awareness of team roles, will play a big part in the overall success of Baucom's first edition VMI squad.

## Keydet Returnees- Career Statistics

#	Pos.	Name	Cl.	GP	PPG	RPG	APG
1	G	Matt Coward	Jr.	55	8.5	2.3	4.0
4	C	Tadas Mankevicius	Sr.	78	3.1	2.9	0.5*
5	G	Fred Robinson	Jr.	55	4.5	1.6	0.5
12	G	Sean Christiansen	So.	27	3.5	1.0	0.7
15	F	Preston Beverly	Sr.	88	4.0	3.6	0.3
21	G	Levar Joseph	Sr.	51	6.2	1.2	0.9
22	F	Matt Murrer	Jr.	54	6.4	3.4	0.6
24	G	Jack Castleberry	Jr.	34	1.2	0.9	0.5
42	F/C	Justin Jarman	So.	23	1.1	1.0	0.2*
55	F	Reggie Williams	So.	27	15.5	4.7	2.5

\* - Blocks Per Game

"The way we play and the style of play is based on mental toughness, he says. "So we tried to put the guys in position where they were uncomfortable, get them out of their comfort zone and tell them that's the way we are going to play. We are going to be in better shape hopefully than our opponents because our style of play is such that if we're in shape, it's going help us in the second half of games. The guys have bought into this- I'm sure they didn't want to pay the price early on, but they are now seeing some dividends."

VMI will dive head first into a tough non-conference schedule that has the Keydets facing Army (Nov. 21), N.C. State (Nov. 23), James Madison (Nov. 26), and Old Dominion (Nov. 30) the first 10 days of the season. Another key test will be a December 31st game at ACC power Maryland. Other non-conference games include Towson (Dec. 21) and Loyola (Md.) (Dec. 29).

VMI opens its 16-game Big South schedule Jan. 5 against Charleston Southern. The Keydets will play their first four league games at home and will wrap-up the regular season Feb. 23 against state rival Radford at Cameron Hall.



**Reggie Williams**

