

# Tim's 2005-06 college basketball preview

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College basketball has risen to the point where many avid basketball fans like it more than the NBA. But who can blame them? What other sporting event can captivate the nation and dominate sports headlines for more than two weeks? College basketball's popularity is higher than it ever was and with the NBA's new age requirement, I predict it will rise even higher. Starting next year, the NBA will implement a rule that raises the minimum age requirement from 18 to 19 and requires at least one year out of high school. That means the LeBron James's, Kevin Garnett's, Tracy McGrady's, and Dwight Howard's of the world will be forced to play at least one year of college basketball. Agree with this new rule or not, you cannot deny that it will dramatically increase the talent in the college ranks.

Greg Oden, the top ranked high school player in the class of 2006 who has been compared to a young Shaquille O'Neal, would have most certainly been the top pick in the 2006 draft, but instead will now attend Ohio State along with four other highly

touted freshmen. Could it be the next "Fab Five?" Probably not, but without the NBA's age limit, college basketball would not have been able to experience such a talented recruiting class on one team, let alone a single player like Oden.

The college basketball season is upon us, and here are some teams/players to watch out for this season. My top ten teams are:

1.) Duke – they have a perfect mixture of seasoned veterans along side young talent. Seniors Sheldon Williams and J.J. Redick are All-American candidates along side super freshmen Josh McRoberts and Drew Paulus and sophomore DeMarcus Nelson. With North Carolina rebuilding and Wake Forest without their catalyst Chris Paul (now in the NBA), Boston College is Duke's primary obstacle in the ACC. Bank on Duke as a #1 seed in March.

2.) UConn – losing Charlie Vilanueva to the NBA would seem like a huge loss, but with Rudy Gay getting more touches on the offensive end, UConn is a better team. With 6'11 Hilton Armstrong and 6'10 Josh Boone along side 6'9 Gay in the starting lineup, UConn will have a huge height

advantage on their opponents. When PG Marcus Williams comes back from suspension, he will team up with Denham Brown to give UConn a good backcourt to complement their height advantage.

3.) Texas - Junior P.J. Tucker is academically eligible, LaMarcus Aldridge is healthy, senior PF Brad Buckman will be a four year starter, and sophomore Daniel Gibson is one of the best in the nation. What does this equal? A formidable Texas lineup that can play with anybody.

4.) Gonzaga – Anything but a sleeper team this year. SF Adam Morrison is one of the best players in the nation. He is complemented by a solid big man in J.P. Batista and a very capable point guard in Derek Raivio.

5.) Oklahoma – Seniors Taj Grey and Kevin Bookout are two of the better forwards in the country. Losing their star PG Drew Lavender to a transfer to Xavier would seem important, but with last year's Big 12 powers Oklahoma State and Kansas rebuilding, look for Oklahoma to pile up conference wins.

6.) Villanova – They would have been higher on this if star Curtis

Sumpter was healthy. With him most likely out for the season, Nova plans to start four guards for the entire year. Normally this would seem ridiculous, but as good as shooters as they are, watch out for Villanova come tournament time.

7.) Memphis – Senior SF Rodney Carney is one of the more explosive players in the country. He will have to lead a very young but very talented Memphis team if they want to compete with the best. With Louisville moving to the Big East, Memphis will have no problem winning Conference USA.

8.) Kentucky – This is the surprise of the list due to the fact that Kentucky lost two of their stars from last year, Kelenna Azubuike and Chuck Hayes. However, I feel that sophomore PG Rajon Rondo is good enough to lead a team that is still very talented.

9.) Boston College – BC was one of the surprises in college basketball last year starting the year 20-0. With two outstanding forwards in senior Craig Smith and junior Ricky Dudley, they will make some more noise this year in their new conference, the ACC.

10.) Louisville – Will have to adjust to being in a power conference after switching from Conference USA to the Big East. A great frontcourt with sophomores Juan Palacios and Davis Padgett is anchored by sharp shooting SG Taquan Dean.

With the NBA establishing the new age requirement, this year's freshman class lacks the upper echelon talent it is accustomed to. Last year's top high school players like Gerald Green, Andrew Bynum and Martell Webster did what typical high school phenoms do these days by declaring for the NBA draft and becoming first round picks. But before this new rule was announced and with the rumor that the NBA would implement a higher age limit, several borderline high school players declared for the draft. It resulted in a record nine high school players getting drafted. But players like Monta Ellis, Louis Williams, and Andray Blatche fell to the second round denying the guaranteed money they would have received if they were first rounders. While these players are struggling to keep their roster spots and fighting for minutes, they could have been stars at the college level. So while the freshman class is weaker than in

past years, there are still several super stars that will have an instant impact with their teams. My top 5 freshmen for the 2005-06 season are:

1.) Josh McRoberts (PF Duke) – At 6'10 and extremely versatile, he could be the second coming of Christian Laettner at Duke.

2.) Tyler Hansbrough (PF UNC) – He will put up huge numbers as the go-to guy on a team that lost 4 players in the first 14 picks in the 2005 draft.

3.) Tasmin Mitchell (SF LSU) – After losing Brandon Bass to the NBA, Mitchell will instantly be one of the best players in a weak conference.

4.) Shawne Williams (PF Memphis) – Memphis coach John Calipari compared his skills to Magic Johnson's at the same age. Although that had to be a stretch, when a guy played guard in high school at 6'9 and switches to PF in college, you know he has serious talent.

5.) Julian Wright (SF Kansas) – One of three McDonald's High School All-American's on a rebuilding team.

# Seminoles win ACC championship

By MARK LONG  
AP Sports Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - The constant questions. The stinging criticism. The growing cries for change. They're all history.

At least for now.

The Florida State Seminoles are conference champions, again.

Willie Reid returned a punt 83 yards for a touchdown, the defense continually harassed Marcus Vick and Florida State upset No. 5 Virginia Tech 27-22 Saturday night in the inaugural Atlantic Coast Conference title game.

The Seminoles (8-4) snapped a three-game losing streak, the program's first since 1983, and won the league title for the 12th time in 14 years. They turned around a disappointing season and earned a Bowl Championship Series berth in the Orange Bowl, where they likely will face No. 4 Penn State.

Bobby Bowden vs. Joe Paterno, the two winningest coaches in major college football history.

"Does it look like that? I might not show up," Bowden joked.

Few could have envisioned that matchup. Not after Florida State was outscored 89-36 in losses to North Carolina State, Clemson and Florida.

Boosters and fans were

calling for Bowden to fire his son and offensive coordinator, Jeff Bowden. Some were even talking about the elder Bowden stepping down after 19 losses in the last five seasons. Others were already looking ahead and guessing how many in a row the team would lose; Florida State hasn't lost four in a row since 1975, the year before Bowden arrived.

The Seminoles may have silenced those groans Saturday, starting with Reid's return, which sparked a 24-point third quarter that broke a 3-3 tie.

Of course, they might have returned in the fourth quarter as the Seminoles conservatively worked the clock while Virginia Tech made a comeback.

Vick led the Hokies (10-2) to consecutive touchdowns in the fourth quarter, a 29-yard pass to Josh Morgan and then a 4-yard run, that cut the lead to 27-15. He capped a 93-yard drive with a 1-yard TD run with 1:45 to play that made it 27-22.

But Tech, without any timeouts, failed to recover the onside kick. The Seminoles ran out the clock from there, and celebrated another ACC title.

Vick was much better than he was against Miami last month, when he threw two interceptions and fumbled four times. He



Photo courtesy of AP Sports

De'Cody Fagg avoids a tackle after a first down catch in the 1st.

finished 26-of-52 passing for 335 yards, with a touchdown and an interception. He also ran 17 times

for 11 yards and two scores. He certainly gave Florida State a scare, but it was too little, too

late.

The Seminoles did too much damage in the decisive third quarter. Virginia Tech went three-and-out to open the second half, and Reid fielded the punt near the sideline, sprinted ahead, cut inside and then juke two players and went nearly untouched into the end zone. Punter Nic Schmitt had a shot at Reid, but his diving, one-armed attempt at a leg tackle was futile.

Vick, who was sacked four times in the first half and six times in the game, threw an interception on the ensuing possession. Florida State's Drew Weatherford completed consecutive passes to Fred Rouse and De'Cody Fagg, then Leon Washington sprinted to the middle for a 14-yard score.

The Seminoles had a 17-3 lead and all the momentum. Players were jumping up and down on the sideline. Florida State's famed War Chant resonated through Alltel Stadium. This looked much more like the confident, borderline cocky, Seminoles who used to run roughshod through the conference.

That changed last year when Virginia Tech and Miami joined the league. The Hokies beat Miami for the ACC title in 2004 and were a double-digit favorite to repeat – mostly because of the

Seminoles' recent struggles.

But Florida State's defense returned to form, making Virginia Tech look a step slow and as helpless as Miami did in a 27-7 victory in Blacksburg last month.

The Hokies backed into the championship game when Georgia Tech upset Miami three weeks ago.

Now, Virginia Tech will either return to Jacksonville and face Louisville in the Gator Bowl or play in the Peach Bowl in Atlanta.

The Hokies might want to avoid return to Alltel Stadium – especially with all the bad memories.

Florida State piled on two more scores in the third quarter, both of which were set up by good field position. After a 28-yard punt, Weatherford hooked up with Reid for a 41-yard gain that set up a 41-yard field goal by Gary Cismesia.

Receiver David Clowney fumbled following a screen pass on the ensuing drive, and Florida State was in Virginia Tech territory again. Weatherford completed a 22-yard pass to Greg Carr and later hit Chris Davis on a slant pass for a 6-yard score.

Weatherford finished 21-of-35 for 225 yards.

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Penn State Harrisburg sports teams.

All interested should contact the Student Activities Office, E 131 Olmsted or call 943-6273 or

email Nancy Leister at NLL@psu.edu