

The Owl



Midnight Madness Issue

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For The PC Seniors, This Year Is... The Last Go 'Round

Justin Macione '95
Assistant Sports Writer

In the spring of 1990, numerous college basketball publications rated PC's incoming freshman class among the top five in the country. This illustrious recruiting class featured center Dickey Simpkins, power forwards Michael Smith and Troy Brown, and small forward Rob Phelps. Walk-ons Tom Hall and Duffy McNulty came on board in the fall.

In their inaugural 1990-91 season, the only player to make a major on-court contribution was Simpkins. Throughout his rookie season, the 6-9 bruiser from Fort Washington, Maryland in PC's NIT run. Brown played sparingly, while Smith and Phelps were forced to sit out due to Proposition 48 rules.

The following season was marred by inconsistency at the point guard position, resulting in the Friars missing out on postseason play for the first time since 1988. However, a major bright spot of the season was the leaguewide impact of Michael Smith, who led the Big East in rebounding his first season. This rebuilding period also saw the emergence of Phelps as a scoring threat and the gradual improvement of Simpkins and Brown.

After starting off 1-6 in the Big East, the Friars enacted an amazing midseason turnaround, rebounding to a

20-13 record and NIT semifinal appearance. Junior college transfer Abdul Abdullah brought stability to the point guard position. Smith finished 9th in the nation in rebounding, and Simpkins became one of the top centers in the conference. Brown established himself as Smith's solid backup while Phelps regained his shooting touch at the end of the season.

Following the pizzazz of Midnight Madness, the Friars will embark in a five month long basketball mission, the goal being PC's first ever Big East Championship. Along with winning at home, this will require the Friars to remain focused and consistent on the road, whether in the confines of the Carrier Dome, or the less imposing Miami Arena. Most importantly though, PC's quest for March Madness will require significant contributions from the seven seniors listed above.

When asked about the offseason prescription for meeting these goals, Troy Brown explained, "None of us are totally satisfied with our first three years, so this summer we all worked out very hard to get in our best shape ever." When asked of what the fans can expect starting on October 29th, the power forward added, "We're going to play much more of a run and gun game, but we'll still use our solid frontline to our advantage."

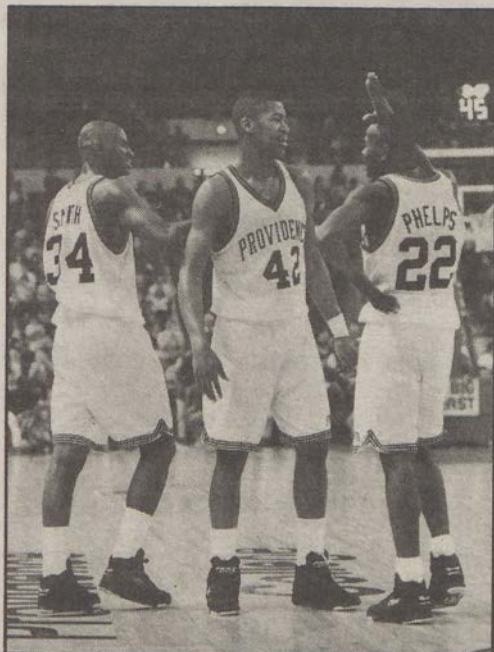
The heart and soul of this Friar frontline will be

Smith and Simpkins, two of the fiercest rebounders and defenders at the collegiate level. When asked of his role this season, Simpkins replies, "I have to become a leader from my previous experience. This includes stepping up both my scoring and rebounding." Smith, also working to improve his offensive array, adds "Both of us worked a lot harder than we needed to this summer, but we think it'll pay off."

Both potential NBA draft picks, this duo also worked on their game for another reason, preparation for possible professional careers. When asked about the subject, Simpkins further elaborated, "Both of us tried to develop our games to an NBA level this summer by playing a lot of NBA competition."

Of special interest to Simpkins is whenever the Friars face Boston College, where he draws the assignment of covering fellow senior Bill Curley. Thought of as a slightly lesser player by experts throughout their careers, Simpkins accepted the challenge and thoroughly outplayed his worthy opponent in the teams' three meetings last season. Most important, the Friars swept the series. Simpkins replies, "I think that the key to the game is which of us can help our team more, which means that you have to play a lot of defense."

see: Seniors
on page 2



Seniors (from left to right) Michael Smith, Dickie Simpkins, and Rob Phelps will give PC leadership...



...along with fellow senior Troy Brown. These four will help give the Friars their most experienced team in years.

Up Close: With Rick Barnes

Matt Mlodzinski '94
Sports Editor

Last year, the Providence College men's basketball team was struggling badly. The team was several games below .500. The offense wasn't effective and the team was on the verge of a disastrous 1992-93 campaign. The man who took almost all of the heat for the Friars' problems was head coach Rick Barnes. As is usually the case when a team struggles, the coach catches the heat. Yet it seemed that when the team turned it around, not everyone was willing to credit Barnes with the team's newfound success. Some said that he was just letting the guys play. Some say it was the emergence of Franklin Western as a legitimate scoring threat.

Whatever the reason, Barnes led the Friars to a red-hot finish. They finished higher in the Big East standings than any PC team before them. They knocked off a talented Connecticut squad in the Big East Tournament before falling to top seed Seton Hall. They went to the brink of making the NCAA Tournament and despite getting snubbed there, they went on a mean run in the NIT.

Now, one season later, Rick Barnes has a team that some



Coach Barnes, with the signature rolled up program in hand, shouts directions to his troops

feel has the ability to win the Big East Conference and make a push in the NCAA tournament. A mere ten months after being the object of PC fans' ire, he now has a chance to lead the Friars to a Big East crown and become a hero in the eyes of those same fans.

Barnes feels that getting snubbed by the NCAA selection committee last spring had a strong affect on his players. They all know that they need to get off to a better start this year and not dig themselves an early hole. He also feels that the team's work ethic is even better this year; he can see it in the way they have been conditioning this fall. The effect of being left out of the NCAA's last year was tough on him personally as he noted that being with his players right after they got rejected was "the hardest thing I've ever had to do as a head coach."

Barnes believes that in order to be successful this year, the team must continue to improve defensively and be much more effective at the offensive end of the court. He expects everyone to contribute on offense this year, where he sees PC having an extremely balanced scoring attack. "We're going to need points from a lot of different players this year to win ball games. I certainly can't take anything away from what Tony Turner and Trent Forbes (departed seniors) did for us last year. They each gave us a tremendous lift."

The next topic we discussed was the status of senior Troy Brown. Rumors have been swirling as to whether or not Brown will redshirt. The scoop is that the decision will not be made for another several weeks. In fact, Barnes noted that "the topic of Troy's 'redshirting' is not even an issue right now. That is a judgement that Troy and our coaches will make together in a few weeks."

see: Barnes
on page 2

Billy Packer Talks To The Cowl

Matt Mlodzinski '94
Sports Editor

Billy Packer is considered one of the best, if not the best, college basketball analysts in the nation. A staple of college hoops coverage for CBS Sports, Packer brings an excellent blend of personal insight and game analysis to every telecast. A television veteran of eighteen years, Packer will be covering his thirteenth straight NCAA tournament for CBS come March.

Recently, I had the chance to interview Billy Packer and get his views on the PC Friars, the NCAA, and the world of basketball as a whole.

Ski (yours truly, Matt Mlodzinski): How important is an event like Midnight Madness for a college basketball program?

Billy Packer: The first coach that I can remember doing it is Lefty Dreisell at the University of Maryland. It wasn't a big media event; it was just a regular practice at midnight. But Lefty did it to send a message to other teams that they were going to be good and they were going to start practicing as early as possible. Recently it has become more of a media event and pep rally, but as long as it builds support for the team, it will always be a plus.

Ski: What exactly is the Buckler Invitational in Paris and what was your role in getting PC into the tournament?

B.P.: I'm in partnership with a company called Parallel Media in London. Together, we built up the concept of a year round series of all-star games, 3 on 3 tournaments, and instructional camps being held in Europe. The year ending event would be a Christmas tournament involving the best European teams we could get.

There were certain key ingredients I looked for in selecting an American team for the tourney this year. I searched for a team that was capable of making a run in the NCAA's, and I feel Providence is capable of that. Secondly, I wanted a team that was mature because most European players in this tourney are between 24-32 years old and they are very experienced. Also, this is a long trip and the games will be played in a completely different environment: different language, different style of play, etc. A team that is experienced will be able to adjust quicker to all of the changes. Next, I needed a physical team. Providence definitely fits the bill with players like Smith, Simpkins, and Troy Brown.

Perhaps the biggest plus of all was that Coach Barnes was really adamant about

getting his team into this tournament. He went out of his way to get involved and that made me feel confident in choosing PC for the tourney.

Ski: How do you see the Big East race stacking up this year and how will PC fare?

B.P.: This year the conference doesn't have any dominant teams and doesn't have any bad teams. The Big East will be a wide open race with several teams having a chance to win the league. If I flew you to the moon right now and brought you back in March, there would be many teams that could win the league and not surprise you. Some questions exist about each team. Can Seton Hall do it without Dehere, Walker, and Wright? Is this BC's year to finally make a move?

PC definitely has a chance to make a move in the league and likewise in the NCAA tournament. They have many key assets including strong rebounding, senior leadership, and a physical front line. They will make some noise this year.

Ski: How does the Big East look compared to other conferences this year?

B.P.: The conference as a whole has added stability this year with the return of a majority of last year's lettermen coupled with some good recruiting. I think that poor recruiting hurt the league for a few years because they just missed getting some top recruits. That added to the struggles of the league. In the last few years, teams have recruited better and these guys have matured

into good players. That will be a major improvement for the league this year. Still, I feel that the best league this year is the Big 10 from top to bottom. They have some excellent teams who could be tough come tournament time in March.

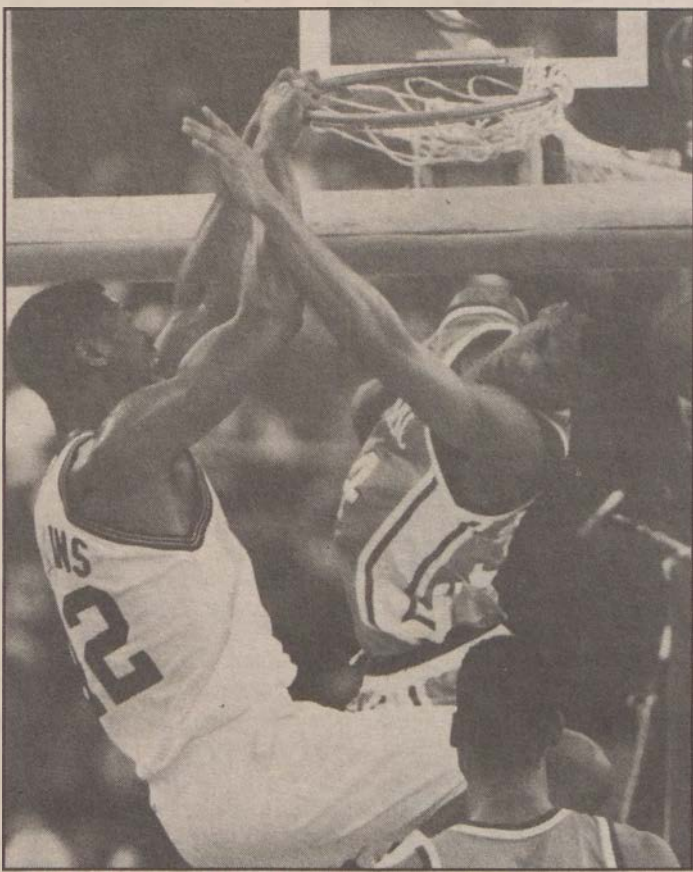
Ski: What was your reaction to PC getting snubbed by the NCAA Selection Committee last year, despite the Friars tremendous late-season surge?

B.P.: I felt that PC definitely earned an at-large bid with their play down the stretch last year. What probably hurt their chances the most was the early hole they dug themselves in Big East play. That poor start was a strike against them. But I guarantee that if you were a fly on the wall at the Committee's meetings, you would have heard Providence's name being tossed around right until the end. They were undoubtedly one of the final teams to be left out.

Ski: On a different topic, how do you feel about all of the recent salaries being signed by NBA players?

B.P.: Well, if owners are willing to do it, the players will get what they want. There are two things that are really bad about this situation. First of all, the amount of money owners are willing to pay unproven rookies is unbelievable. Success in college doesn't guarantee success in the NBA. Secondly, the long term arrangements of some of these contracts are ludi-

see: Packer
on page 4



Coach Barnes would love to see more of this. Dickey Simpkins throws down a mean one against Syracuse.

Seniors from page 1

At the small forward slot, coach Barnes is hoping that Rob Phelps can provide some offense, either as a starter or coming off the bench as the team's designated "defensive stopper". After losing his shooting touch for much of last season, Phelps worked hard to regain it when he toured with a group of Big East all-stars through Canada this summer. When asked of his experience, the Brooklyn bomber replied "The tour went great this summer and afterwards I worked really hard on my shooting and defense." Proof of his scoring potential lies in the fact that Phelps is the second leading all-time scorer in New York City behind Kenny Anderson of the New Jersey Nets.

At the point guard position, Abdul Abdullah will carry Friar fortunes up the court. The former Central High School star arrived amid much fanfare last season. Despite showing an unpolished shot, he excelled at distributing the ball to the frontcourt and emerging shooter Franklin Western.

"It's my job to run the team and take charge of the point," explained Abdullah, outlining his responsibilities.

Walk-ons Duffy McNulty and Tom Hall also play vital roles on the team, even if these contributions aren't visible to the public. Hall adequately sums this up, adding, "It's my job to give these guys a hard workout in order to prepare them for the Big East season."

Although some might view the accomplishments of this highly ranked class as a slight disappointment, Hall voices his objection to this; "This recruiting class has always been under a microscope, but all we can do is build on last year and continue to improve." Coach Barnes also has his own view to add to this debate; "You can only judge a recruiting class after it has graduated."

At this point, the class of 1994 is not thinking about past opinions, but realize that their future is now as they try to improve on last season's promise. The future will finally be opened for the public to judge for themselves at Midnight Madness on Friday, October 29.

Barnes from page 1

For the last several years, the Big East Conference has been taking it on the chin when compared to other conferences. Many critics said that last year, when the league put only three teams in the NCAA's, was another down step for a once powerful league. Barnes disagrees. "Last year three teams from the Big East made the tourney. If Syracuse were not on probation they would have been in. Plus the fact that we barely missed getting in gave the conference five NCAA caliber teams. In what was supposed to be a down year, five teams of that strength would be impressive. But now the league is much more balanced and there aren't any dominant teams. So critics say that the league is weak. Just because we don't have a single dominant team doesn't mean that the conference is weak. We are much stronger top to bottom."

When Barnes and I discussed last year's problems he noted that even when the team struggled, he felt they could win. But did he feel that the fans felt they could win? Barnes answered: "I think that in a year like last year, you always hear two thumps. The first one is the fans jumping off the band wagon, and the second is the same fans leaping back on. That doesn't really concern me as much as the support the team got consistently through the year. When we struggled, there were certain people who were always right there for us. I can't thank John Marinatto and Father Cunningham enough for the support they gave me last year." Barnes also felt that the Sixth Man Society did a great job keeping the moral up at the games. It is great for the players to play in a loud atmosphere, and he said that the team appreciated those fans who stuck with them.

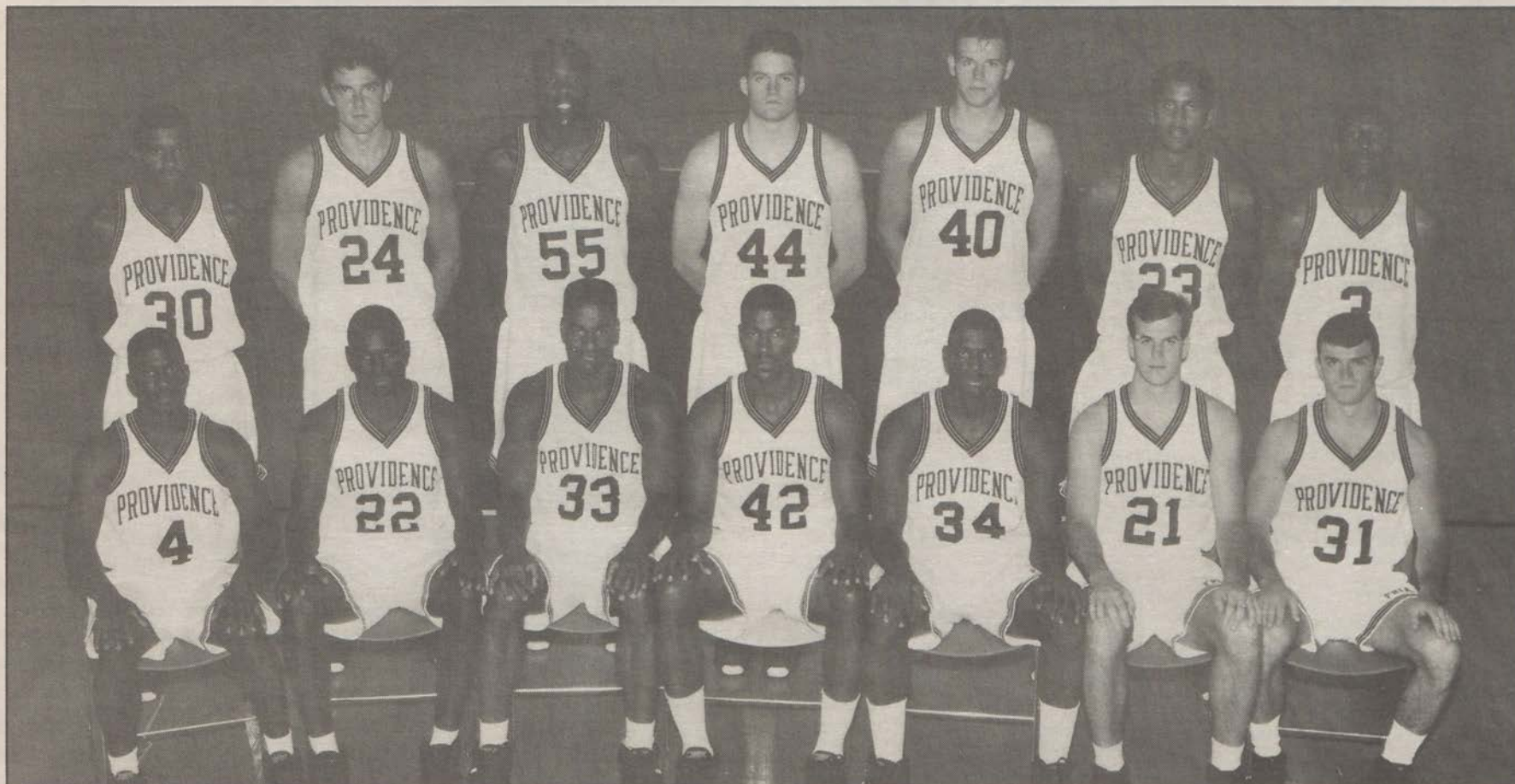
I asked Barnes if he felt that playing in a city without a professional team affected the fans' attitude towards the Friars. He said yes, but interestingly he added that he felt that the sale of alcohol at the games had even more of an effect. He prefers that alcohol not be sold at all, but he noted that that is not his decision to make. Beer can definitely make a hostile fan even worse, but I highly doubt that the Civic Center will stop beer sales as Barnes would like to see.

On the topic of Midnight Madness, Barnes feels that the annual event is terrific for both the fans and the players. "Everyone gets real worked up for this. I know the players are real psyched because they are anxious to get the season under way. From a coach's standpoint, I won't get a lot of coaching done, but I still love what happens because it builds up support for the team."

The final question I asked Coach Barnes was how far can this team go. He answered simply that "we will go as far as we take ourselves." Great answer. Hopefully, Barnes will lead them a long way.

Midnight Madness

The 1993-93 Providence College Friars

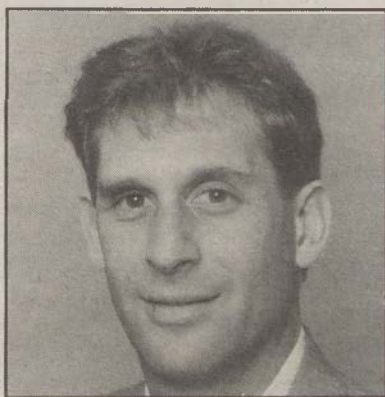


Standing (l to r): Mike Brown, Maciej Zielinski, Eric Williams, Austin Croshere, Piotr Szybalski, Franklin Western, Jason Murdock
Seated (l to r): Abdul Abdullah, Rob Phelps, Troy Brown, Dickey Simpkins, Michael Smith, Tom Hall, Duffy McNulty

The Coaching Staff



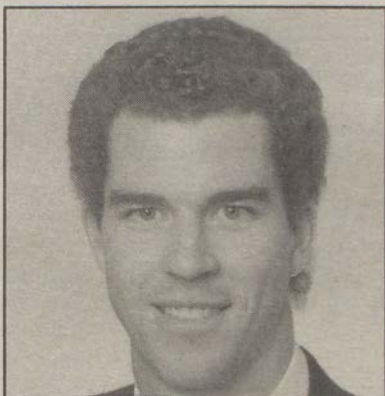
Rick Barnes (Head Coach)
Lenoir-Rhyne College '77



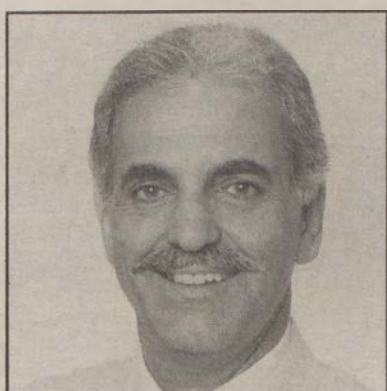
Larry Shyatt (Assistant Coach)
College of Wooster '73



Dennis Felton (Assistant Coach)
Howard University '85



Dan Gavitt (Assistant Coach)
Dartmouth College '88



Edward Jamiel (Trainer)

PC Goes To France

Christian Potts '94
Sports Writer

American college basketball is marked by a physical, slashing game that is fast-paced and exciting. European basketball is marked by a slower, less physical game involving more outside shooting; it runs at a slower pace than American basketball. In two months, the American game meets the European game head-to-head at the Buckler Invitational (Coubertin) in Paris, France as your very own Providence College Friars take on three European teams: Limoges from Italy, Barcelona from Spain, and Bologna from Germany.

Thanks to the effort of many on behalf of the PC Friars (notably Billy Packer, whose interview appears in this issue), the men's basketball team has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to Europe and experience a different brand of basketball than the rough and tough Big East brand that they are used to. Coach Rick Barnes says "It's not so much the different style of basketball we're looking for but the experience of playing games on the road against tough teams. We definitely need improvement in our road records; it will be the key to our season."

Originally, the opportunity to play in this tournament was offered to the University of North Carolina, last season's National Champions, but they declined, and so the organizers of the tournament sought the advice of Billy Packer to find a suitable replacement team. Packer recommended a Big East squad, and Providence became that school. "The Big East office allows us to travel abroad for one tournament a season and this was an excellent opportunity for us to face some high-level competition. These European teams are basically professionals. In the past, PC has traveled abroad to Europe, but not recently. This will give the players an opportunity to see a part of the world that they might otherwise never get to see in their lives." The last member of PC's basketball squad to travel to Europe was Tony Turner in 1989 as part of the Big East Rookie All-Star team, who traveled to Russia (where he now plays professionally).

Coach Rick Barnes believes this will be an excellent opportunity for PC not only to face good competition but also for exposure. PC could use the exposure in the cutthroat Big East recruiting battles, not to mention getting PC out there so the NCAA Tournament Selection Committee will stop stiffing us come tournament time. Coach Barnes believes this year's squad should be able to walk on every court they play and feel that, if they play the way they are capable, they should win every time; "Everytime we show up, we can win, and that confidence is what we are going to need in Paris."

So come on out to Midnight Madness and support your PC Friars. And hey, Coach Barnes, Dickey, Michael and Co., maybe you could find out why the French think Jerry Lewis is so funny?

Midnight Madness

1993-94 Providence College Basketball Schedule

Packer
from page 2

NOVEMBER			EASTERN
14	Sunday	MAL BROWN SCRIMMAGE (Alumni Hall)	5:30 pm
17	Wednesday	CANADIAN NATIONAL TEAM	7:30 pm
20	Saturday	MARATHON OIL	7:30 pm
26	Friday	Oklahoma State University (Maybe Center - ORU)	10:30 pm
29	Monday	BROWN UNIVERSITY	7:30 pm
DECEMBER			
1	Wednesday	UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE	7:30 pm
4	Saturday	University of Pittsburgh (Fitzgerald Fieldhouse)	WLNE/WKBL/NESN * Noon
7	Tuesday	Villanova University (DuPont Pavillion)	WLNE/WGBS/NESN * 8:00 pm
11	Saturday	ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE	2:00 pm
21	Tuesday	PRINCETON UNIVERSITY	7:30 pm
27	Monday	Buckler Invitational (Coubertin) - Paris, France	
28	Tuesday	Limoges, Barcelona, Bolgna	
31	Friday	UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA	7:00 pm
JANUARY			
6	Wednesday	SETON HALL UNIVERSITY	ESPN 9:00 pm
8	Saturday	UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI	WLNE/WFSB 8:00 pm
11	Tuesday	University of Rhode Island (Providence Civic Center)	WNAC 7:30 pm
15	Saturday	Georgetown University (USAir Arena)	HTS/NESN * 2:00 pm
19	Wednesday	UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT	ESPN/WLNE 7:00 pm
22	Saturday	Boston College (Conte Forum)	WLNE/WSBK 8:00 pm
25	Tuesday	SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY	WLNE/WSYT 8:00 pm
29	Saturday	University of Notre Dame (JACC)	SportsChannel 2:00 pm
31	Monday	Seton Hall University (Meadowlands)	SCNY/NESN * 9:00 pm
FEBRUARY			
5	Saturday	St. John's University (Alumni Hall)	WLNE/MSG/NESN * 8:00 pm
8	Tuesday	UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH	WLNE/WKBL 8:00 pm
12	Saturday	GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY	CBS 1:00 pm
15	Tuesday	Syracuse University (Carrier Dome)	WSYT 8:00 pm
19	Saturday	University of Connecticut (Gampel Arena)	NESN * 8:00 pm
21	Monday	ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY	ESPN 7:30 pm
26	Saturday	University of Miami (Miami Arena)	NESN 7:30 pm
MARCH			
2	Wednesday	VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY	ESPN 7:00 pm
5	Saturday	BOSTON COLLEGE	WLNE/NESN * 8:00 pm
11	Friday	BIG EAST Tournament (Madison Square Garden)	WLNE
12	Saturday	BIG EAST Tournament (Madison Square Garden)	CBS
13	Sunday	BIG EAST Tournament (Madison Square Garden)	CBS

All home games played in Providence Civic Center

*Broadcast on delay basis by New England Sports Network

Abdul Abdullah '94

1. Be the floor leader and take control when the team gets shaky
2. Oklahoma State

Michael Brown '96

1. Take on a leadership role on the floor and keep the team playing good "D"
2. Syracuse

Troy Brown '94

1. Be an intimidator, bang the boards, and score inside
2. Oklahoma State

Austin Croshere '97

1. Help in the middle, back up Dickey (Simpkins), and pitch in with scoring and rebounding
2. Connecticut

Tom Hall '94

1. Provide depth at the "4" and "5" spots and give the team competition in practice.
2. Oklahoma State

Duffy McNulty '94

1. Be a senior leader for the team and provide a spark whenever I can
2. Oklahoma State

Rob Phelps '94

1. Go out and contribute the best that I can especially as a defensive stopper
2. Oklahoma State

Dickey Simpkins '94

1. Provide leadership and step it up on the boards
2. Boston College and Georgetown

Michael Smith '94

1. Step up my game from last year
2. Oklahoma State, Boston College, and Georgetown

Franklin Western '95

1. Play hard and just help out my team
2. Oklahoma State

Eric Williams '95

1. Make an immediate impact by scoring
2. All of them

Maciej Zielinski '95

1. Do my best to help the team win.
2. Oklahoma State

What Do You Say Friars?

Question #1: What do you see as your role on the team this year?

Question #2: What team are you looking forward to playing the most?

Derek Stout '95
Sports Interviewer

Jason Murdock '97

1. Come in and fill in for the starters and provide defense for the team
2. Georgetown

Piotr Szybalski '97

1. Help out the team in any way possible
2. Oklahoma State

crous. How many of these guys will actually play out all of the years on their contracts? There is no incentive to play that long. If they accomplish their personal goals, they'll already have financial security, so why would they play for twelve to fifteen years? The owners are playing money games with these contracts and they just may be shooting themselves in the foot.

Ski: Who do you see as the best teams in the nation this year?

B.P.: I think that this year's situation is a lot like the situation a few years back. That year, everyone was chasing UNLV and this year the whole nation will be chasing North Carolina. They have the potential to be one of the best teams ever. The question is whether or not North Carolina will be caught; UNLV got caught, but will the Tar Heels get snagged? I think Arkansas has a great team and they did themselves a huge favor by adding some size along the front line. I still feel that Duke could cause some trouble, though I'm interested to see how they fare without Bobby Hurley. The Big 10 is loaded with possibilities, and Temple from the Atlantic 10 is a team that could make a serious run this year. This year will be a very entertaining and exciting one in college basketball, with Dean Smith's Tar Heels being the team everyone guns for.

The
1993-1994

**MIDNIGHT
MADNESS**

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Take Note

This year the Friars will play Georgetown on Parents Weekend. The game will be televised on CBS. It will be the first regular season network t.v. appearance by the Friars in four years.