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# Inside College Basketball

by Julia Morrill



## Gene Therapy

Georgetown has made a quick return to national prominence thanks to a new coach with a very familiar name

**I**T FEELS like old times at Georgetown: Coach John Thompson has the Hoyas sitting among the Big East's elite teams and competing for a spot in the NCAA tournament. But look more closely, and you'll see that much has changed. Coming off its worst season in 31 years, when it lost its last nine games to finish 13-15, Georgetown was picked to finish 11th out of 12 teams in the Big East this season. Instead the Hoyas, who start three freshmen, were in third place in the conference at week's end with an 8-3 record (16-6 overall). They had won seven of their last

nine games and are on track to return to the Big Dance for the first time in four years.

The turnaround began last spring when coach Craig Esherick was shown the door and John Thompson III was hired after four years as the coach at Princeton. Thompson, 38, was an obvious choice given his tutelage under two of the college game's legendary figures: his father, John Thompson Jr., who led the Hoyas to three national championship games and one title during the 1980s; and Pete Carril, the long-time Princeton coach for whom the younger Thompson played

**TOP DOG** Bowman, one of two veteran Hoyas starters, leads the team in scoring and steals.

and coached. "I am who I am," he says. "But Pops and Coach helped shape how I think, in life as well as basketball."

It comes as no surprise that Thompson has brought facets of Carril's famed Princeton offense—spacing, motion and lots of passing—to Georgetown. With the ball always on the move, versatility has become paramount. "Our center can do things a lot of guards are doing," Thompson says. "Everyone is interchangeable, and all of our sets can be adjusted according to our strengths and weaknesses." Junior forward Brandon Bowman leads the team in scoring (15.3 points per game) and steals (1.6) and is second in rebounding (6.7). Freshman forward Jeff Green, one of the country's top rookies, leads the Hoyas in rebounding (7.2) and assists (2.8) and is the No. 2 scorer (13.2).

Last Saturday, Bowman and Green combined for 36 points and 15 rebounds in a 67-60 win over West Virginia. Though the 6' 8" bookends have carried the Hoyas, the other five members of the rotation have had their

moments. On Jan. 15 at Villanova, senior swingman Darrel Owens hit two free throws with 0.1 on the clock to give Georgetown a 66-64 win. Eight days later against Notre Dame, junior guard Ashanti Cook pushed the ball the length of the court and found freshman center Roy Hibbert for a game-winning dunk just before the final horn.

A year ago the Hoyas would not have been in a position to win those games. "Their system comes along at a good time," says Irish coach Mike Brey, "because it's so drastically different from any other style in our league."



Thompson III

It's certainly a change from the intimidating, defense-oriented style made famous by the elder Thompson, who attends every home game and offers advice to the players and his son when he makes practice. Still, he recently told *The Washington Post*, "John's a far better coach than I was at this point in my career."

Whether that's true or not, Georgetown fans couldn't be happier. For last Saturday's game against West Virginia at the MCI Center, hundreds of students wore gray-and-blue T-shirts that said **SOME HAVE FORGOTTEN. WE WILL REMIND THEM.** Under the slogan, in bold type, was a subtle tribute to the person responsible for Georgetown's comeback: a giant Roman numeral III.

## Pro Prospects

An NBA scout evaluates Arizona guard Sallim Stoudamire, a 6' 1", 176-pound senior who was averaging 17.9 points and leading the nation in three-point shooting (54.7%) at week's end.



*"He's athletic, he's tough, and he's a competitive son of a bitch. He will take any big shot, and if he misses five shots in a row, he'll still take the sixth one. . . . He's not a point guard, which is a negative because he's a really small two guard. Whoever says they can convert him to a point guard is wrong because if you do that, you take away from his strength, which is shooting. . . . I think you can make him a good defender; you just have to convince him it's important. . . . He'll play in the NBA. Anyone who shoots the ball like he does has incredible value. . . . I wouldn't make him a first-round pick, but I would certainly take him in the 30s."*

## IOWA'S PIERRE PIERCE

## Guard's NBA Hopes Not Dead

Former Iowa guard Pierre Pierce's NBA fortunes rest not on the opinions of Hawkeyes coach Steve Alford, who dismissed him from the team on Feb. 2, but on the recommendation of Alford's top assistant. Pierce fell out of favor with Alford after authorities launched a second sexual assault investigation in three years involving the deposed Hawkeye, but he is still held in high regard by associate head coach Craig Neal, who has an eye for talent and the ear of the league, having spent the previous eight seasons as a scout and assistant for the Toronto Raptors.

"There's no one litmus test for evaluating a player who has bag-



**STRIKE TWO** Despite getting kicked off the Iowa team, Pierce may still have an NBA future.

gage," says Boston Celtics G.M. Chris Wallace. "A positive report from someone you know and trust can help the prospect."

Which is why Pierce may still get his chance. "He's a great kid with a good heart," Neal said last week. "As far as talent and ability, he was by far the best player in the Big Ten. I've probably gotten 10 to 12 phone calls on him already."

The latest trouble for Pierce started in the overnight hours of Jan. 27-28 when he was two hours west of the Iowa campus in the West Des Moines town house of a woman he says he has

been dating since 2002. While Pierce describes their encounter as nothing more than "an argument," police say Pierce forcibly disrobed her, threatened her at knifepoint, then trashed her home. On Feb. 9, Pierce, 21, turned himself into West Des Moines police, who charged him with first-degree burglary, two counts of domestic abuse/assault, assault with intent to commit sexual abuse, false imprisonment and fourth-degree criminal mischief.

This is not the first time Pierce has had legal trouble: He was charged with third-degree sexual abuse in October 2002 but pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault, and the conviction was expunged from his record after he performed 200 hours of community service, attended counseling and served a year of probation. (Pierce redshirted that season.) That incident, Alford said in a statement, factored heavily in his decision to dismiss Pierce: "Pierre has betrayed the trust we placed in him when he was given a second chance two years ago."

Pierce, who is free on \$32,000 bond and still on scholarship, was to meet with Alford this week in the first step of his appeal for reinstatement to the team. If his motion is rejected, the 6'4" Pierce, Iowa's top scorer (17.8 points per game) and the Big Ten leader in steals (2.45) when he was booted, likely would forgo his final year of eligibility and turn pro rather than transfer to another school. "A lot of NBA people missed on Josh Howard and Marquis Daniels—mid-sized wing players who can guard three different spots," Neal says, "and they don't want to miss on guys like that again."

Another thing in Pierce's favor is time. He has four months before the June 28 draft to resolve his legal woes, and rehabbing his reputation may be as easy as just showing up and playing well at the predraft camps in Portsmouth, Va., and Chicago. "If he goes to both," says one NBA executive, "he'll be labeled a 'good kid.'" —Andrew Lawrence

## Seth Davis's Hoop Thoughts



## FLAGRANT FOUL?

Although Iowa dismissed junior guard Pierre Pierce from its basketball team on Feb. 2 after an allegation that he had assaulted a female acquaintance, Memphis had a different response in the case of junior guard Jeremy Hunt. On Jan. 19 the Tigers reinstated Hunt (left) to the team only six days after he was suspended following his arrest on a misdemeanor assault charge involving an ex-girlfriend. According to the arrest warrant issued for

Hunt, the woman claimed she was "pushed, shoved, punched and

grabbed" and that Hunt appeared to be under the influence of alcohol. Two days after the alleged incident, a writer for *The Commercial Appeal* who saw the woman reported that one of her eyes was black and blue, the other was swollen and that she had bruises on her neck and an arm and cuts on her nose and face.

Memphis officials defended their action by saying that "Hunt's innocence or guilt has not been proven," and that they made the call based on "additional information" they had collected. Coach John Callipari says he played no role in the decision.

Hunt is entitled to a presumption of innocence, but a basketball team is not a court of law. Playing basketball in college is a privilege, not a right. There is no textbook way to handle these situations, but the "additional information" Memphis officials cited would have to be irrefutable to justify reinstating Hunt so quickly. If he is exonerated, the school's decision will be validated. But if Hunt is found guilty, the basketball program will have an ugly black eye of its own.

## THREE-POINTER

**1** Dan Grunfeld's injury is a devastating blow to Stanford's NCAA tournament hopes. The 6'6" junior guard (right), the Cardinal's leading scorer (17.9 ppg), tore his right ACL last Saturday in a win over Cal. Stanford had played its way onto the bubble after starting the season 2-4 but now is almost certain to miss out on the Big Dance.

**2** North Carolina will have a tough road to the Final Four if Rashad McCants continues to struggle. The Tar Heels' 6'4" junior guard, a career 41.8% three-point shooter, has made just 25% from behind the arc in UNC's last eight games, including a 1-for-8 effort (3 for 13 overall) in its Feb. 9 loss at Duke.

**3** The wheels have come off the Sooner Schooner. Since beating Texas and Oklahoma State at home in late January, Oklahoma, which was ranked 13th three weeks ago, has dropped four of its last five games, including an overtime loss last Saturday at Missouri, which came in with a 2-7 record in the Big 12.



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## Gene Therapy

1. Who is the new coach of Georgetown?  
A.) Craig Esherick    B.) John Thompson III    C.) Pete Carril    D.) Brandon Bowman
2. What college did John Thompson III play for?  
A.) Syracuse    B.) Georgetown    C.) Texas    D.) Pricetown
3. What college does Salim Stoudamire attend?  
A.) Georgetown    B.) Princeton    C.) Arizona    D.) Syracuse
4. What is Salim 3 point shooting %?  
A.) 50%    B.) 49.3%    C.) 51.2%    D.) 54.7%
5. Who is the coach for Iowa?  
A.) Chris Wallace    B.) Steve Alford    C.) John Thompson    D.) Pierre Pierce
6. Who is the Standford player that tore his ACL?  
A.) Dan Grunfeld    B.) Rashad McCants    C.) Chris Wallace    D.) Dan Ainge
7. Pierre Pierce was recently booted off the Iowa Basketball Team.  
A.) True    B.) False
8. What is Rashad McCant's 3 point shooting % this year?  
A.) 25%    B.) 41.8%    C.) 34%    D.) 39%
9. Who is the head coach of Memphis?  
A.) John Thompson    B.) Pete Carril    C.) John Calipari    D.) Steve Alford
10. Who is the GM for the Boston Celtics?  
A.) Steve Alford    B.) Chris Wallace    C.) John Calipari    D.) John Thompson