Drafts for more of 'scoring role'

Dunleavy plans playing style change

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Junior guard Mike Dunleavy appears confident that the Gamecocks' goals this year will be reached, and with the departure of Brian Winters much of the team's leadership will fall on him.

Dunleavy broke into the starting line-up five games into his freshman season and has never been challenged since. He thinks his role on the team will be different this year.

"My first two years I was a set-up man," said the 6-2 Brooklyn native. "I hope to be more used in a scoring role this year."

Even though the Gamecocks landed two of the nation's better backcourt men through recruiting this year, it is no secret that Dunleavy will claim most of the backcourt points. If teams over-cover the Gamecocks interior personnel, Dunleavy is capable of hitting a good percentage of his shots from the outside.

"He is probably one of the best backcourt men in the country this year," said Frank McGuire. "He takes some hard licks but still gets up and plays."

After averaging 10.4 points and connecting on .377 per cent of his shots as a freshman, Dunleavy improved his average to 16 points a game last year. He also led the team in assists with 95.

Dunleavy has wanted to lead the NCAA in foul shooting percentage since he entered college. "Foul shooting is mostly concentration," he said. Last season Dunleavy hit 91 of 116 attempts for an .780 percentage.

There is a good reason for many to believe that Dunleavy is one of the best defensive guards ever at USC. When he entered USC he said he worked on defense a lot. But Dunleavy has special feelings on the game of basketball.

"When I was in high school I practiced two or three hours a day and then I went home and played for two or three more. I never thought basketball was work. I played the game because I get a lot of enjoyment from it and it is just fun to play. It's that simple.

"We have so much depth this year," said Dunleavy. "Look at how good Alex (English) is, and Tom Boswell. We have three players contesting a position that all three practically started at last season." Dunleavy was referring to the forward position being contested by Bob Mathias, Nate Davis and Mark Greiner.

"There is no complicated thing about our goals this season," said Dunleavy. "We just need to show what we can do out of, and if we have any pride in ourselves it will be hard for us to get beat. Everyone is playing so well together.

"Dunleavy has always impressed McGuire as a 'very coachable athlete.' "He listens so well," said McGuire. "That Dunleavy is very smart on the court."

Through the midway point in his college career Dunleavy is already smiling when asked about his possibilities of playing professional ball. He thinks that it would be a great opportunity for him but he has more things to think about now. "Anyone who plays wants to be the best," he says.

He seems little worried about publicity. He is a real team player.

He maybe overshadowed in national circles by the play of junior big men Alexander and Tom Boswell, but he is not one to worry. "Everyone has a role to do on the team," said Dunleavy. "If everyone does what he is supposed to, then I think we could be national champions."

Like most of the other starting USC guards of the past Dunleavy was an All-America, All-State, and All-New York City. At Nazareth High he averaged 28 points a game as a senior.

At a recent practice McGuire said one of the players wanted a time out because he thought Dunleavy had "pulled his hamstring."

"I looked at him and said, 'What? Dunleavy doesn't have a hamstring."

Dunleavy says that "your best five don't always win." He thinks that at least eight or nine players are potential starters. "You have to find the winning combination," he said.

No matter what combination the Gamecocks come up with, one thing is certain. Mike Dunleavy will be the floor general and he is as confident as ever.

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