

Fitness & Sports

AF basketball candidates endure camp for elite slots

By 2nd Lt. Celeste Rodriguez
437 CS

With top basketball talent arriving from Air Force installations worldwide, Charleston AFB will take center stage as the host for the Air Force Men's Basketball Training Camp culminating with the Armed Forces Basketball Tournament to be held Nov. 15-17.

Before the Air Force team competes in the annual showdown, which on the military's court is comparable to the NCAA's Final Four, Air Force coaching staff must fine tune a group of 27 prospective candidates to an elite roster of 12.

The coaching staff, led by head coach Donald Fellers, a 20-year veteran of both the men's and women's Air Force Basketball programs, will evaluate the candidates throughout the camp's 18 days of intense training. A typical day on the court will comprise both morning and afternoon practices, each averaging three hours, an intra-squad scrimmage game, in addition to fulfilling a sizable game schedule slated against seven collegiate and semi-professional teams.

"Our biggest strategy is to put a lot of pressure on our kids early to see who can and can't perform," said Fellers. "It's just as grueling mentally as it is physically."

According to Eddie Goad, program director for the camp's third year at CAFB, training camp invitations are selective. Candidates

apply to participate in the Armed Force's Specialized Sports Program, which requires base sports director endorsement. The backgrounds of this year's candidates span a wide realm of skill including many impressive resumes shining at the collegiate level such as candidates Otis Jones, Jarmica Reese, Miguel Garcia and Tyron Wright, all U.S. Air Force Academy graduates and former teammates. Nevertheless, the coaching staff's limited roster will necessitate tough elimination cuts.

"There's a lot of talented basketball players, but unfortunately someone has to go home," said Goad. "The military has a big recruiting pool to choose from, and you have to earn your spot."

The training camp game schedule includes a list of intense line-ups against several local and Division I schools including the College of Charleston and the Citadel, along with the semi-pro Charleston Flyers. As all of the collegiate exhibition games coincide as season openers, the team anticipates playing in a sizable spotlight of 6,000-7,000 spectators. The coaching staff will also use the games to afford the candidates the opportunity to develop teamwork.

"These players already have the skills, they just have to learn to

play together," said Goad. "The collegiate schools don't expect the talent we bring. We give these guys a good game and it's big-time ball."

In addition to the candidates' grueling practice and game schedule, the training camp will also involve the players in several promotional events including visits to the local VA hospital, Fort Dorchester High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Detachment, as well as the base Youth Center which drew nearly 200 children last year. The promotional events have historically been one of the camp's highlights. With the Air Force's Year of Retention and Recruiting theme, the coaching staff is excited about this year's events.

"A lot of people think they're just good basketball players," said Fellers. "That is the furthest from the truth; we have a group of great Air Force professionals. I want to win the tournament, but when I think back to all the people we've met and lives we've touched, to me, that's what it's all about--making a difference."

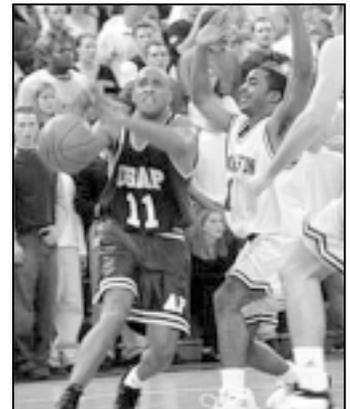
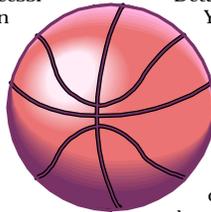
As the candidates and coaching staff prepare for the next 18 days of training, tremendous CAFB support will ensure the team can concentrate on preparing for the Armed Forces Tournament.

According to Fellers, the base's involvement, ranging from provid-

ing personal athletic trainers from the HAWC to numerous support functions from the 437th Services Squadron, makes the camp a world-class athletic program.

"The support we get from Charleston is phenomenal. I don't know if we could find a better base in the United States Air Force to support us than Charleston," said Fellers. "They do a lot for us so that we can just focus on coaching and winning. A lot of bases want to host, but can't do it."

The training camp's first Blue and White scrimmage will take place today, 7 p.m., in the Starlifter Court at the base gym. For more information, visit www.services.com/trainingcamp.



Air Force photo

Darrell Harmon drives the lane during last year's tournament.

Week 8 goes to Palangi

By The Swami
Pigskin Prognosticator

Anthony Palangi is the smartest (other than The Swami) pigskin picker for week 8. Palangi had a nice record of 11-3 beating out 10 others. He was the smartest one, because he picked the Jets to win Monday night. Who else did you think would win? The Jets spotted the Dolphins 27 points and then decided to play football. The Swami called it last week by saying the Jets would eat some "Fish" and the Redskins would scalp the Jaguars. Don't you people listen! Those were easy picks.

The Swami heard through the grapevine the "Jags" and the "Girls" were taking resumes for quarterbacks.

The Swami has heard it again about the "Girls." So what? Big deal! The "Girls" beat some high school team from Arizona. Who are the Cardinals anyway? The Swami heard they fired the Cardinal's coach after losing to the "Girls."

Rightfully so! He deserved it. The "Girls" game this week should be real exciting. Two losers squaring off is always painful for the Swami to watch. The Swami suggests watching the Giants this week instead.

The Swami has concerns about the Rams. Warner is out for five or six weeks. Is Green the quarterback the Rams hoped he would be before they found Warner? The Swami already knows the answer, but he has to make a living, so he'll let his readers try to figure it out by losing a couple games.

The Swami would also like to point out he picked the Steelers to win this weekend. The Swami thought it could have been a fluke, but the "Steel Curtain" is back! With a little bit of offense, the Steelers could climb up the standings. They won't do as well as the New York teams, but they are definitely a team to watch.

The Swami has a "sure thing" tip for the World Series--New York will win.

Week Ten

Name/Phone #: _____
Comments: _____



Sunday, Nov. 5, 2000
Baltimore @ Cincinnati
Buffalo @ New England
 Dallas @ **Philadelphia**
Indianapolis @ Chicago
Miami @ Detroit
New York Giants @ Cleveland
 Pittsburgh @ **Tennessee**
 San Francisco @ **New Orleans**
Tampa Bay @ Atlanta
Washington @ Arizona
 Denver @ **New York Jets**
 Kansas City @ **Oakland**
 San Diego @ **Seattle**
 Carolina @ **St. Louis**

Monday, Nov. 6
Minnesota @ Green Bay
 Monday night total points: _____
 Swami's Monday night points: 49



Swami's picks are in bold and underlined.
 The Swami's e-mail address is Swami@charleston.af.mil
 Picks can also be dropped at the Public Affairs office in Bldg. 1600.
 Picks must be submitted by Friday, Nov. 3, 4 p.m.