Translating Potential:
Men’s Basketball Prepares for Season
By Eb Samuel
Contributing Writer

Potential. The most dreaded word in sports, a blessing and a curse in a four-letter package. Yao Ming has potential. Karlone Young had potential. Heck, the Cincinnati Bengals have potential. And that’s all the 2002-03 Royals coach Tom Baker has at this point: potential. Only two upperclassmen starters return, Junior point guard Jeremy Newman and Junior center Michael Swartley. Leading scorer David Bell graduated, leaving a gaping hole at the shooting guard, as did defensive stopper Ben Bowman. This leaves Baker with a roster short on experience.

But it is definitely long on talent. Sophomore forward E. J. Arrington, the other returning starter, is solid and potentially spectacular. Playing out of position last year as a power forward, Arrington made the Division III All-Freshman team and earned ODAC Freshman of the Year honors. Arrington returns to his natural small forward position this year and is expected to combine speed and power into another stellar year.

Sophomore forward Rob Smith expects a big year from a big man. Smith is one of the players that Coach Newman believes Swartley will be an ODAC force this year. He’s going to have a great year. Without an effective backup, he will undoubtedly find his way onto the court. Harris leads by example, hustling to every loose ball. He could be seen in pressen- son being more vocal, pulling aside Smith during the first scrimmage. And freshmen phe-nomenon Bryan Williams may even be more vocal. “You can’t just play like a project at EMU,” Baker said. “You can’t just score and do nothing for the team.”

Despite all this talent, the Royals enter the season picked to finish ninth in the 10-team ODAC. Baker is quick to point out that EMU does better than the preseason projection nearly every year. Said Newman, “We have so much bigger and now we have stability at the point guard slot. Now a co-captain, the heady point guard will once again be a stabilizing force for the Royals. Baker is also looking for a greater scoring contribution from his veteran point man. “You can’t replace [David] Bell with just one player,” he said. “We need scoring from all around. Jeremy Newman’s production should go up.”

Baker is also counting on three other players in the mix to replace Bell, juniors Mike Culen, Nat Franklin, and Jeremy Miller. The sweet-shooting Culen transferred to EMU after an All-Conference year at Potomac State and looks to be the front-runner for Bell’s former spot. Franklin, a 5’9” departure-levelrim Even those basketballs that are not intended for the court are perfect for pickup games and alley-oop practice.

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