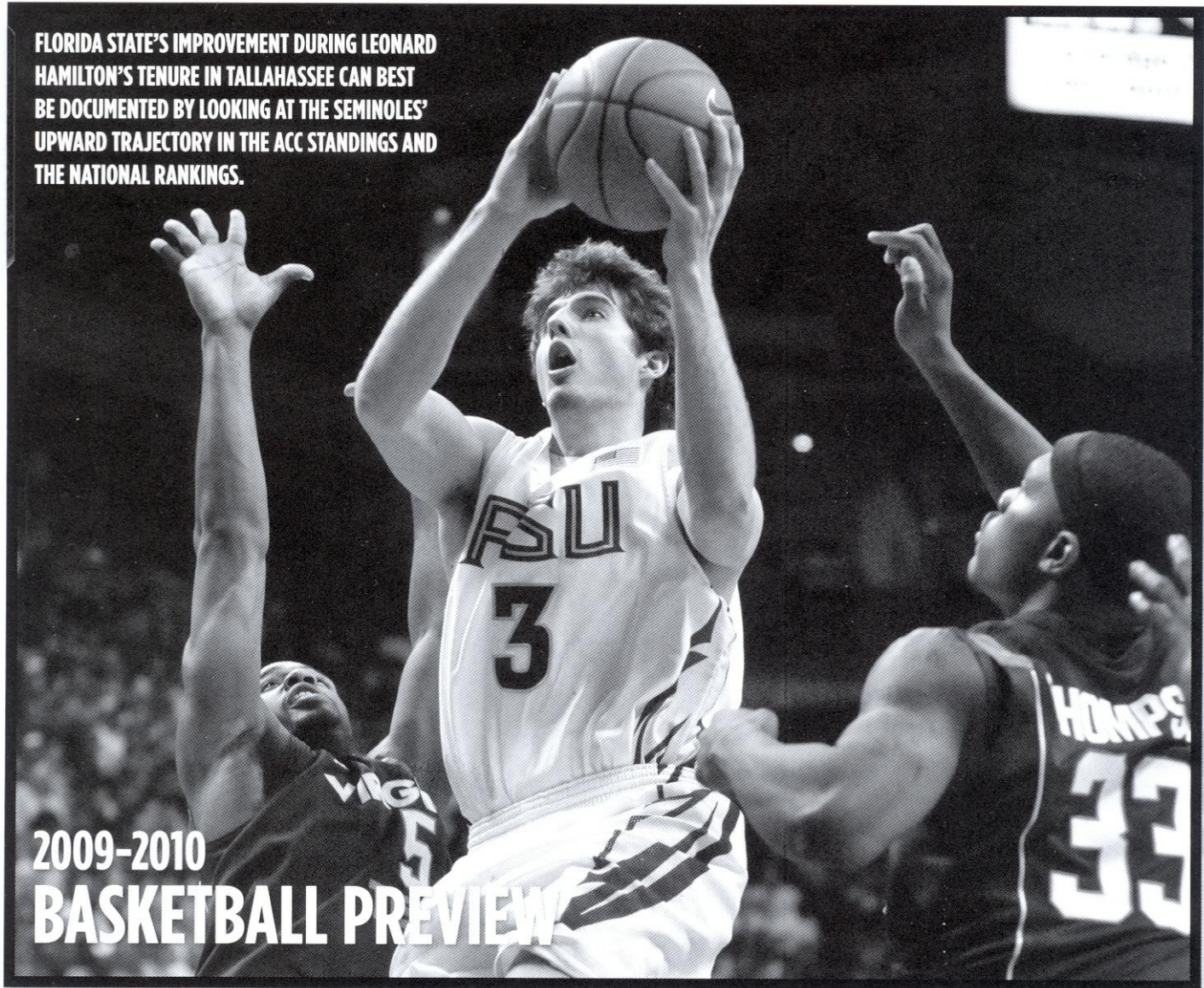




**2009-2010
PREVIEW**

2009-2010 FLORIDA STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

FLORIDA STATE'S IMPROVEMENT DURING LEONARD HAMILTON'S TENURE IN TALLAHASSEE CAN BEST BE DOCUMENTED BY LOOKING AT THE SEMINOLES' UPWARD TRAJECTORY IN THE ACC STANDINGS AND THE NATIONAL RANKINGS.



2009-2010 BASKETBALL PREVIEW

The Seminoles are the fourth winningest program in the league in the last three seasons, have won 20 or more games in four of the last five years and have played in the postseason in a school record four consecutive seasons.

The Seminoles finished the 2009 season with a 25-10 record. Their 25 wins tied them for the second most in school history with their 10 conference wins ranking as the third highest in school history. Florida State's 10-6 league record marked the first time since the 1992-93 season that the Seminoles had won at least 10 ACC games in a single season. Hamilton has coached Florida State to 86 overall wins and 33 ACC wins in the last four seasons making Florida State one of only five programs in the ACC to have a winning record since the 2005-06 season. Following the Seminoles' appearance in the 2009 NCAA Tournament, coach Hamilton will look to guide his team to a second consecutive ap-

pearance this season as the Seminoles continue to build themselves into a national contender.

Hamilton, who was named the 2009 National Coach of the Year by Basketball Times and the ACC Coach of the Year by the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association, guided the Seminoles to one of the most successful seasons in school history with a 25-10 record, a No. 5 seed in the NCAA Tournament and the first ACC Championship game appearance in school history last season. The Seminoles were ranked No. 16 in the final Associated Press poll of the 2009 season – their highest final ranking since the conclusion of the 1992-93 season.

The Seminoles are poised to continue their ascension into the world of the college basketball elite with three returning starters, including All-American and Wooden Award candidate Solomon Alabi and Chris Singleton, who is one of the most athletic play-

ers in all of college basketball. Add Derwin Kitchen who is a tall, talented and tested point guard to the line-up and the Seminoles have the making of Hamilton's best team since his arrival at Florida State.

"We really like this team," said Hamilton. "We feel that our strength is going to be in our depth and we are deeper this season than any team we have had at Florida State. We like our potential; we like our length and we have quality depth. That is the one thing that really excites us as coaches – our quality depth."

With eight returning letterwinners and nearly 60 percent of his team's scoring returning from last season, Hamilton is looking forward to getting the Seminoles back on the court for the season. He got a good indication of his team for the upcoming season as he took the Seminoles' on a 10-day tour of Spain where the team played four games and enjoyed the trip of a lifetime. Florida State outscored its opponents by



2009-2010 FLORIDA STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW



nearly 60 points a game on the tour. Coupled with 10 days of practice before going overseas Hamilton and his staff learned a great deal about his team and got a head start on practice for the regular season.

"What we found out during our preparation and on our trip to Spain was that our players have great attitudes toward each other and the upcoming season," said Hamilton. "There was a tremendous amount of carryover from the understanding of what the players absorbed from last year. Their attitudes have produced very positive results that give us the ability to begin practice from a different vantage point than we have in the past."

With senior forward Ryan Reid as the only senior on the roster, Florida State will begin the season with what looks to be a very young team. But looks can be deceiving as the corps of the Seminoles' roster is its most experienced. Alabi (who started all 35 games in 2009), Singleton (34 starts as a freshman) and Kitchen (26 games played and 17 starts) played in a combined 105 games, while Reid (95 career games played) and junior Jordan DeMercy (66 games played and 16 starting assignments) have played very important minutes during their careers.

Collectively, the Seminoles' eight returning letter win-

ners have played in 365 games (and earned 127 starting assignments) including one NCAA Tournament game and one ACC Tournament championship game.

Reid, the Seminoles' most experienced player, begins play in his final season as a Seminole working to reclaim his spot in Florida State's starting line-up. He started 21 games as a sophomore and 16 more as a junior. His experience in big games will help the Seminoles' relatively young front court in 2009. Reid will be counted on to have his best season in order for the Seminoles to return to the NCAA Tournament for the second consecutive season.

"Ryan has proven to be one of our hardest workers both on and off the court during his career," said Hamilton. "I think he has finally realized that he can be a good player for us and he has to continue to prove that to the coaching staff and his teammates."

More important to Hamilton is Reid's improvement and progress in the classroom as he will earn his bachelor's degree in social science at the conclusion of the 2010 season.

Reid will be in the mix to earn extensive playing time in what is considered by many to be one of the tallest and most loaded frontcourts in all of college basketball.

Joining Reid in the Seminoles' frontcourt will be a duo of All-American candidates in Alabi and Singleton (both of whom are All-American candidates) along with another up and coming sophomore in Xavier Gibson and freshman Terrance Shannon. Alabi was the only freshman named to the 2009 ACC All-Defensive Team and was an All-ACC Freshman team selection (along with Singleton) and Gibson may be the most talented player of the front line which measure 7-1 (Alabi), 6-11 (Gibson), 6-9 (Singleton) and 6-8 (Shannon).

"They all bring something different to the table," said Hamilton. "Their incredible length will give us some defensive strengths to build on. Solomon can block and alter shots, Xavier is quickly learning how to become an outstanding post player, Chris uses his athleticism to block shots and fill passing lanes really well and Terrance is a wide body who is a great rebounder."

Alabi could become one of the top big men in school history by the time his career in a Seminole uniform is finished. In 2009, he became only the seventh freshman in ACC history to lead the league in blocked shots and showed signs of becoming an outstanding player on the offensive end of the court. Alabi averaged 8.4 points, 5.6 rebounds and 2.1 blocked shots per game in his first full and injury free season as a Seminole.

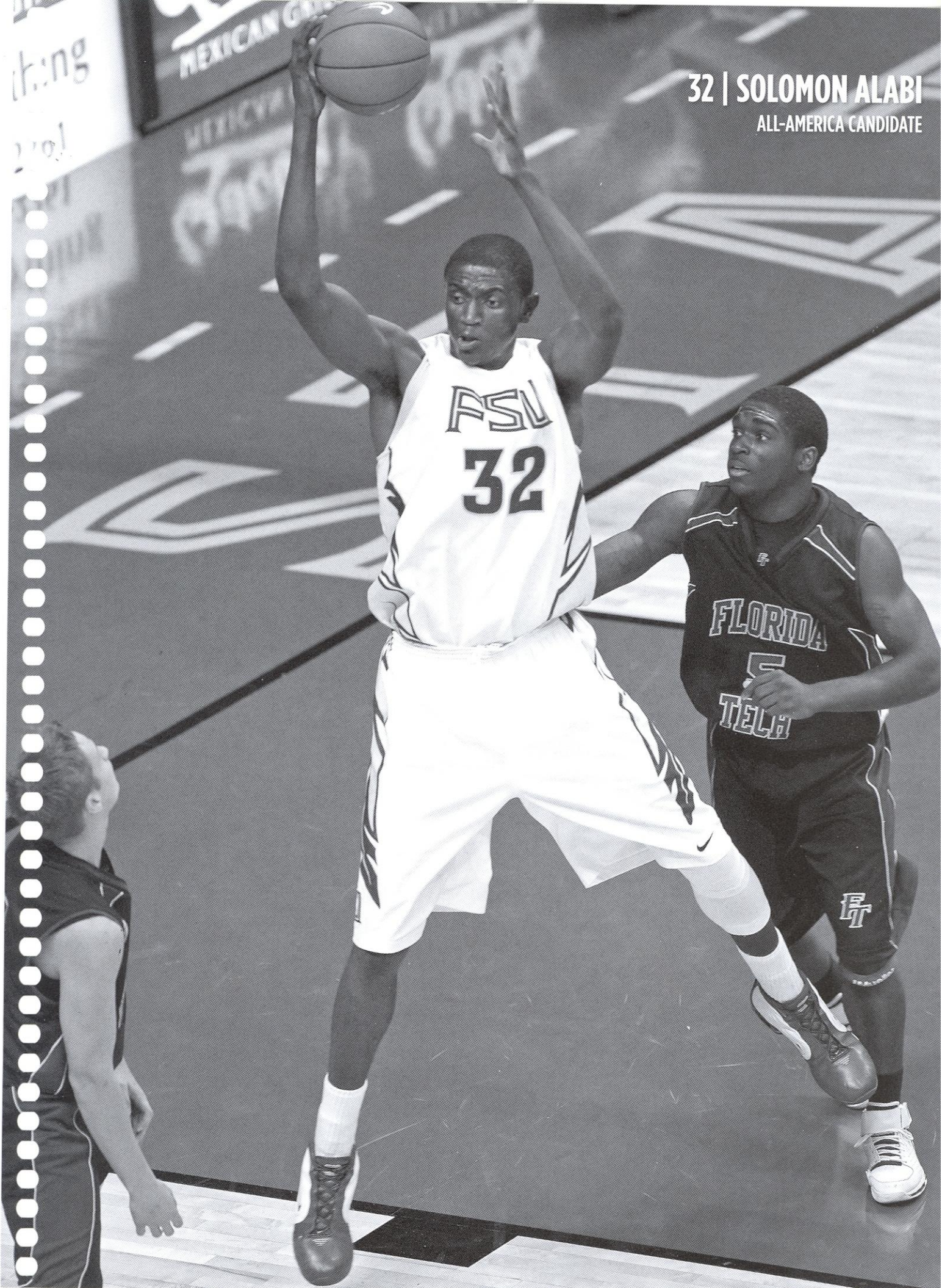
Alabi was the only freshman on the All-ACC Defensive Team in 2009 and was named to the All-ACC Freshman team by the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association and Rivals.com. In helping the Seminoles to the championship game of the ACC Tournament, he became one of only three players in school history to earn All-ACC Tournament honors.

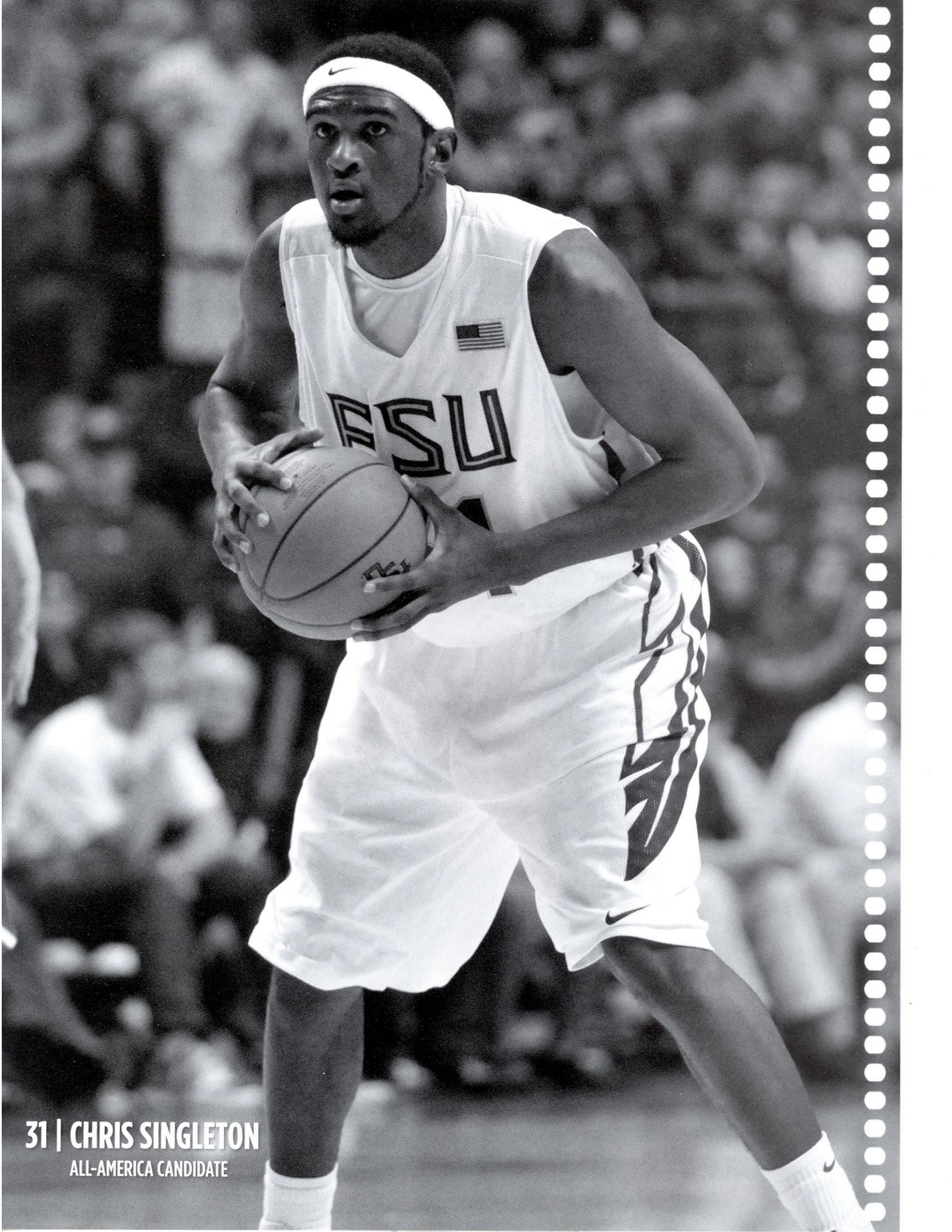
"Solomon continues to get bigger and stronger and he's going to be extremely strong," said Hamilton. "He's a factor back there. You always have to concern yourself with Solomon back there both offensively and defensively,"

Singleton also enjoyed a fantastic freshman season as he averaged 8.1 points and 5.2 rebounds as a full-time starter for the Seminoles. Maybe more incredible than his scoring and rebounding totals were his blocked shots and rebound totals. Singleton earned 54 steals and blocked 47 shots - phenomenal statistics for any player much less a player in his first collegiate season.

Singleton is destined to become one of the great players in Florida State basketball history as he continues to mature physically and learn the nuances of college basketball. "I thought he held his own for a freshman defensively because he had to guard some of the tougher players in the ACC," said Hamilton. "His defense was one of the biggest surprises of the season last

32 | SOLOMON ALABI
ALL-AMERICA CANDIDATE





31 | CHRIS SINGLETON
ALL-AMERICA CANDIDATE

2009-2010 FLORIDA STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW



year. Offensively, he's really improved his dribbling and his passing. Also, more than most players that I have ever coached he relies on his athleticism to utilize his quickness and speed. I really believe Chris is going to have an outstanding year."

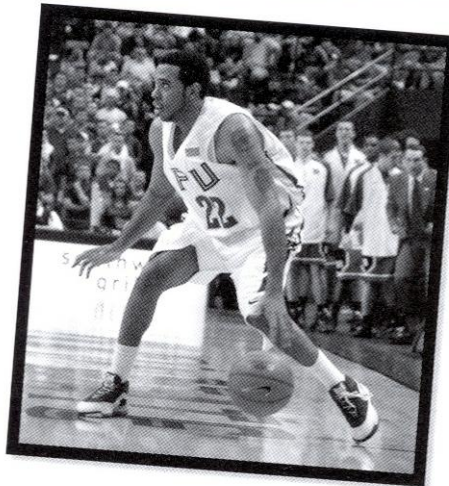
Gibson was another player who enjoyed a superb season as a freshman, despite the fact that he may have been overshadowed by Alabi and Singleton in the front court. He played in 32 of the Seminoles' 35 games and continuously displayed the brilliance that the coaching staff expects from him during the remainder of his collegiate career.

Gibson is blessed with the ability to score points in bunches and is one of the most per minute productive players on the Seminoles' roster. Quite often during his freshman season it was a Gibson basket, steal or blocked shot that provided a winning difference for the Seminoles in a given game.

"I think Xavier has the most potential of any player on our team," said Hamilton. "We love the direction Xavier is headed and we expect him to be a great player for us this season and for the rest of his career."

Hamilton is also excited about Shannon, one of two scholarship freshmen on the Seminoles' roster this season. Despite not playing during his senior season in high school, Shannon will be expected to contribute immediately and contend for major minutes as a freshman.

"Terrance is a strong player; a horse as they used to call the type of player we think he can be for us," said Hamilton. "Once he fully recovers from his knee injury he will work his way into the rotation



and earn playing time. We like his game on both the offensive and defensive ends of the court."

The Seminoles' backcourt will be anchored by Kitchen and sophomore Luke Loucks at the point guard position and ultra-talented newcomer Michael Snaer at the shooting guard position. Two players who developed into purpose players – De-Mercy and sophomore Deividas Dulkys – and Pierre Jordan (a redshirt freshman) will make the Seminoles' backcourt on one of the deepest and most multi-talented in the ACC.

Kitchen will inherit the point guard position from the departed All-American Toney Douglas. He has big shoes to fill in taking over the position that was run with such perfection by Douglas who led the ACC in scoring (21.5 ppg) and was named the ACC Defensive Player of the Year.

Kitchen displayed his leadership talents throughout his sophomore season and was one of the Seminoles' most improved players at the end of the 2009 season. He finished third on the team in assists and fourth on the team in steals, while averaging 7.9 points per game in his first season on the Division I level.

Kitchen, who started 17 of the Seminoles' final 19 games of the 2009 season, is one of the rising stars in the ACC who must embrace the expectations that will be placed on him during the upcoming season for the Seminoles to continue their rise in the national rankings.

"Derwin has shown the ability to be willing to do whatever he needs to do to help this team be successful," said Hamilton. "I thought there was a great chemistry amongst our players when he was on the court last year and I expect him to pick up where he left off last season."

Loucks enjoyed a strong freshman season as he led the team in assist-to-turnover ratio and finished second on the team in steals in 2009. He also started two games and averaged nearly 17 minutes of playing time in his first season – numbers which are sure to rise as his confidence and knowledge of the Seminoles' systems continue to grow.

Along with Kitchen, Loucks is in line to become the next great point guard at Florida State with his incredible court vision and ability to get all of his teammates involved in every possession.

2009-2010 FLORIDA STATE MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

"We really like Luke's demeanor as a point guard," said Hamilton. "He's a student of the game who has shown us the desire to become a passer from the point guard position – something we really want to see more of from our point guards. We are very pleased with our talent and depth with Luke and Derwin running the team for us from the point guard position."

Snaer, a McDonald's All-American and one of the highest rated recruits ever at Florida State, will likely be the Seminoles starter at the shooting guard position. His high school credentials were impressive: he averaged a double-double of 28.1 points and 10.8 rebounds to go along with 5.2 assists, 3.6 steals and 2.2 blocked shots per game as a senior. He was a five star recruit according to Rivals.com and was named the Gatorade California boys' basketball Player of the Year as a senior. Snaer earned the 2008 John Wooden Award as the CIF Southern Division II Player of the Year. He was rated the seventh best player in the nation and the second ranked shooting guard in the prep ranks according to many recruiting services.

In Florida State's system though, a player must prove himself at the collegiate level before earning the seal of approval from Hamilton.

"I never like to build expectations so high that incoming freshmen can't live up to them," said Hamilton. "As I look at Michael, I think it's fair to say that he has the physical tools to contribute as a freshman. But like most freshmen, there's a transition period to get through."

DeMercy, who has been one of the Seminoles' most valuable players during his first two seasons at Florida State, must continue to contribute on the offensive and defensive ends of the court in order for the Seminoles to reach their goals in his junior season. He has developed into a lockdown defender who is often assigned to stop an opponents' top scoring threat then handle the ball on offense and look to score on the same sequence of plays.

Hamilton hopes DeMercy is up to the challenge of playing as hard as he can on both ends of the court in not only every game but on every possession.

"Jordan has elevated his game consistently since his freshman season," said Hamilton. "That consistency; that toughness and desire must come through on every play for Jordan to help us win games. I think he can do that as he develops into one of the leaders of our team."

Dulkys is another Seminole whose role is clearly defined as that of a prolific outside shooter on offense and as a player who has to play tough man-to-man defense to earn increased minutes in 2010. He enters his sophomore season with his sights set on



becoming the top 3-point shooter in the ACC and in the process helping the Seminoles become a much better outside shooting team.

He is Florida State's fifth leading returning scorer as he averaged 3.6 points per game and ranked fourth in the ACC among freshmen with 23 3-point field goals made.

"Deividas has to be a consistent threat for us from the outside," said Hamilton. "We know he has the ability to shoot well from the outside. If he can shoot the ball well, he can add not only the outside shooting dimension to our team but it would also make us a better and more effective team in the paint."

Pierre Jordan, a smart player with good basketball knowledge, will push Kitchen and Loucks for playing time at the point guard position. He began to display his ability at running the team before he was slowed by a knee injury that ended his season after he played in only six games. Freshman Joey Moreau, who joined the team in the fall, will add depth at the shooting guard position.

With so many different weapons at each position, Hamilton expects this year's team to rely on more than one player to do the bulk of the scoring.

"I expect our team to have a more evenly distributed scoring pattern in the backcourt this season as compared to last season," said Hamilton. "We have different guys giving us different ways to score

depending on who is playing at any given time. I also believe that we have multiple guys who can be double figure scorers."

Hamilton also feels that the Seminoles will surprise people with their ability to shoot from the outside.

"We are a better shooting team this year than we were last year," said Hamilton. "We have also improved our ball-handling."

Because the Seminoles will handle and shoot the ball better than in past seasons, Hamilton will coach his players to play at a much faster tempo with tougher defense leading to increased offensive production.

"We want to be a bit more multiple on defense," said Hamilton. "We were sometimes exploited on defense last season because of our youth. We're going to try and speed up our tempo on offense a little bit and be a little more aggressive in transition. We need to attack the basket a little bit better off the dribble and off the pass. One of our goals this season is to go to the basket and get to the foul line more often."

Hamilton enters the 2009-10 season with a cautious optimism but quickly adds: "I really like our team and I think we can be special."

Special enough, he hopes, for the Seminoles to continue their upward climb in the ACC standings and national rankings.