

Atlantic Coast Conference

Operation Basketball

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Michael Gbinije

Syracuse Orange



Q. Obviously your transition from one ACC school to another has worked out fairly well for you. You seem to be playing with a great deal of confidence these days; is that right?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: Absolutely, just kept grinding, kept playing, and working on my game, and it's starting to pay off.

Q. With 12.7 points per game last year for you, do you have an expectation that that's a good number based on the offensive style, or do you feel like you need to improve that number?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: I would like to see that number improve, honestly. But most importantly it's a team game, and I just want to make sure that we can make the tournament this year and hopefully improve from last year.

Q. This year you don't really have to worry about off-the-court issues. How much does that revitalize this program and give you some energy as you enter the season?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: I like how you use the word energy. It's just nice to know that we don't have any distractions, especially now. Our own destiny is basically on us, and that's a good feeling, especially coming from last year.

Q. Can you talk about you individually? You played some international ball. How much did that help your game and how do you feel entering the season individually?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: I'm confident. I'm confident coming into the game. It's definitely helped me out. It's improved me from a basketball IQ standpoint and just small things as far as footwork and things like that.

Q. The team shot 66 percent from the free-throw line last year. Free-throw line helps you close out ballgames. What is it about the mental aspect of not making free throws that makes it so hard?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: We definitely did not shoot well from the free-throw line last year. We're looking to improve that this year. We've just got the mental approach of taking our time and just making sure that our mechanics is right and just going out and shooting it with confidence.

Q. So you practiced that obviously on non-game day?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: Yeah, every practice day, we end with 10 minutes of free throws.

Q. How do you translate it to game situations, though?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: We've got to start early in these exhibition games and the early weeks of our first games coming up. We've just got to attack the basket, get to the line and get in a rhythm early.

Q. Michael, the freshmen on the team this year, how have they integrated? Are they figuring it out?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: They are getting it. We had three talented freshmen, Frank Howard, Tyler Lydon and Malachi Richardson, and all them of three of them are basically perimeter players and they're going to help us out big time this year.

Q. Are you a leader? Are you a teacher? Do you feel like you have to help shepherd them along given your age?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: Yeah, especially with the guards, I tell them how to move in the zone, what's going to work and what's not going to work, and just try to give some of my experience to them and hopefully they can learn from my previous mistakes.

Q. You're going to do a little bit of everything, it seems, this year, a little forward, a little point guard, as well. How comfortable are you transitioning between the two since you did it last year, as well?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: I'm comfortable in almost every position that they're going to put me in this year. I got reps at all of them last year. And starting out practicing this year, I've been moved around, so I'm pretty comfortable in every position.

Q. Is there a sense of urgency for you right now given that you're part of the group that's getting ready to head out?

MICHAEL GBINIJIE: Personally, yeah, I'm ready to get the season going, and I've got high expectations for myself and the team, and hopefully we can achieve them.