



17

Louisville Cardinals

SCHEDULE

Nov. 17	Arkansas
Nov. 21	East Tennessee State
Nov. 22	Morgan State
Nov. 23	Appalachian State
Nov. 28	at UNLV
Dec. 2	Stetson
Dec. 5	Charlotte
Dec. 12	Western Carolina
Dec. 16	Oral Roberts
Dec. 19	Western Kentucky
Dec. 23	La.-Lafayette
Dec. 27	Radford
Dec. 30	South Florida
Jan. 2	at Kentucky
Jan. 6	at Providence
Jan. 9	St. John's
Jan. 11	Villanova
Jan. 16	at Pittsburgh
Jan. 21	at Seton Hall
Jan. 24	Cincinnati
Jan. 30	at West Virginia
Feb. 1	Connecticut
Feb. 6	Rutgers
Feb. 11	at St. John's
Feb. 14	at Syracuse
Feb. 17	Notre Dame
Feb. 20	at DePaul
Feb. 23	Georgetown
Feb. 28	at Connecticut
March 2	at Marquette
March 6	Syracuse

KEY GAME

The showdown at archrival Kentucky nine days earlier will get more attention, but few think the Cardinals will win the game. That won't be the case in Louisville's first important home Big East test, in which a W against Villanova will be crucial to the Cards' conference-title hopes.

Last season, after he had benched Edgar Sosa for what seemed like the 88th time in three years, Cardinals coach Rick Pitino sat solemn-faced across from the point guard in a private meeting in his office. "Edgar, look, why don't you just transfer?" Pitino said. NBA teams don't care how many points per game a player scores, Pitino told him; they want to know if he can play his position well at both ends of the floor. "You're just not getting it," Pitino concluded. "Why don't you go to a school where there's not a heavy emphasis on defense and it's just about offense? Come back to me tomorrow, and I'll let you know which school I think is best for you."

Sosa looked at Pitino with sad eyes. "Coach, I don't want to transfer," he said.

"Well, then," replied Pitino, using his finest acting chops, "I think you'd better find out a way to play defense."

Pitino wasn't serious about the transfer, but this season the coach will need an even greater commitment from Sosa to aspects of the game that don't involve scoring. Now a senior, Sosa says he's ready to help the Cardinals overcome the departures of guard Andre McGee

PROJECTED STARTING FIVE

Coach Rick Pitino (9th season)
2008-09 record 31-6 Big East 16-2 (1st)
NCAA tournament Elite Eight

POS.	PLAYER	HT.	CLASS	KEY STATS
PG	Edgar Sosa	6' 2"	Sr.	7.3 ppg 2.4 apg
SG	Jerry Smith	6' 2"	Sr.	7.8 ppg 1.3 apg
SG	Preston Knowles	6' 1"	Jr.	6.1 ppg 2.1 rpg
PF	Jared Swopshire	6' 8"	Soph.	1.4 ppg 1.1 rpg
C	Samardo Samuels	6' 9"	Soph.	11.8 ppg 4.9 rpg
KEY RESERVE				
PF	Terrence Jennings	6' 10"	Soph.	4.2 ppg 1.6 bpg

Returning starter



EDGAR SOSA

The point man will have to get defensive for the Cards to overcome the loss of two NBA first-round picks.

(who was a defensive specialist on the perimeter) and point forward Terrence Williams (who was one of the finest passers in the nation). "I think I've matured a lot on the court," Sosa says. "I'm not getting down on myself over every play, and I feel that I've become more of a true point guard."

Louisville is one of the few teams that can lose two NBA first-round draft picks (Williams and forward Earl Clark) and still have enough firepower to

be ranked the following season. But scoring won't be the challenge, Sosa argues. "Coach P says that with our talent and depth, we have a chance to be even better than we were last year," Sosa says, "but that's all going to come down to how well we defend." And, not least, to how much Sosa wants to avoid benching number 89. —G.W.