Basketball’s fate hangs on veterans

By Paul Paternoster

It is exactly 11 days before the men’s basketball season begins, and practice sessions are in full swing. With the nucleus of last year’s young team returning and the addition of incoming freshmen, the Engineers will face tough schedules with a new point guard.

Coach Fran O’Brien is pleased with the early practice sessions. The players have had a chance to work on individual skills, in addition to getting into condition. O’Brien has been able to experiment with his offensive and defensive lineups.

“The kids have been working hard,” O’Brien said, “so the practices have been positive.”

Many of the team members played summer ball, he added, and as a result, have improved their games.

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Most of MIT’s opponents recruit their players, so the quality of these teams is high, often surpassed for the Engineers. MIT’s nucleus, however, has been together for over a year now, having played 31 games last year, including a national tour of India.

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Tomorrow the Engineers host the University of Massachusetts at Boston during Thanksgiving break. This competition will pit the Engineers against Worcester State, Connecticut, Amherst, Wodenan, and UMass-Boston.

The last time the team took such a vote was in 1980 after a 6-1 season, and the players decided not to participate in the post-season competition. "They were saying 'Well we'll be here again,'" Smith recalled. "'We'll go next year.'"

"That was five years ago," he added. "I think they'll decide to go this time."

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Saturday’s contest key for football

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Calling the signals, bringing back to the MIT offense the added dimension of a scrambling quarterback.

"Broecker’s shoulder still hurts," said Smith of his veteran quarterback, "but his legs are fine." Broecker leads the team with 588 yards per game, and is second in overall rushing yardage with 363.

Offensive tackle John Edithorn ’84 may play in spite of a fractured collar bone. Linbacker Edes Warner ’85, who sat out the last two games with a fractured finger, will play with a cast on his hand, according to Smith.

If MIT secures a playoff spot, the coach will have the team vote on whether or not to participate. "I’m always afraid to do it," he confessed.