

## **Phil Cofer – One of Florida State’s Senior Leaders**

Phil Cofer is a popular man inside the Florida State basketball locker room.

His penchant for jokes, dancing and keeping a light mood rubs off on his teammates daily.

“Phil brings laughter and positivity to the team,” sophomore guard CJ Walker said. “He brings everyone together and is a great teammate.”

“He is one of the best human beings on planet Earth,” Florida State assistant coach Charlton C.Y. Young added.

“He treats everyone he meets like they are the king of the world. He’s got a gift where I could see him being the athletic director of a university 10 or 15 years from now.”

While all smiles on the surface, the road has been anything but smooth for Cofer during his career. He injured his foot midway through the 2015-16 season, causing him to miss the rest of the year.

Sidelined after surgery, the Atlanta-native made a concerted effort to sit next to FSU associate head coach, Stan Jones during games. Jones and Cofer would discuss plays happening on the court in front of them, giving Cofer mental repetitions and an enlightening view of the game.

“Being out helped me a lot,” Cofer said. “Coach Jones would spend time pointing things out to me on the bench. It was helpful to have mental reps and to see what I would do differently in certain situations.”

Last season, Cofer was anxious and determined to get back onto the hardwood to prove he was capable of contributing to the team like he did prior to the injury. While Cofer averaged just shy of three points and two rebounds per game, it was a far cry from the nearly seven points and five rebounds he averaged a few years prior when fully healthy.

“There were times I was thinking about what was hurting and what wasn’t,” Cofer said. “Last season things were definitely still hurting and I had to just try not to think about it when playing.”

Even while competing through pain, Cofer still contributed to Florida State’s outstanding run during the 2016-17 season. Limited to just under 13 minutes a game, Cofer’s patented hustle and grit helped his team win a near school-record 26 games as earn a No. 3 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

“Whether he plays 13 minutes or 26 minutes, he makes an impact due to his ability to crash the boards, dive for loose balls and defend, things that don’t always show up in the box score,” Young said on Cofer’s impact.

“I take a lot of pride in doing the dirty work,” Cofer said. “The coaching staff really emphasizes grabbing rebounds, hustling, and doing those little things.”

The upcoming 2017-18 season provides a new opportunity for Cofer, with perhaps a different role than he’s been accustomed to his first few seasons at Florida State.

Head coach Leonard Hamilton and the rest of his staff are challenging Cofer to become a “stretch-four”, a hybrid forward that can play the game facing the defense and create for his teammates off the dribble.

Cofer has spent a lot of time on his game this off-season as well as in the weight room getting his body ready for grueling tasks ahead.

“I’ve been working on my dribbling a lot and shooting touch a lot,” Cofer said. “Finding more ways to get to the basket and finding ways to get easy points.”

“We’re challenging him to be a better perimeter player. His whole life, he’s had success being an undersized post,” Young added.

“The last few years we’ve changed our system to position-less basketball. We have more guards now than before. In an old system, Phil might’ve had more success scoring points. Now we need him to be more of a face-up player that can handle the ball and make decisions.”

Cofer and the Noles will get a head start on the upcoming campaign thanks to an August trip to Jamaica. The Seminoles are headed there for 12 days to play three games. The opportunity to build chemistry and have 10 extra practices is something neither Cofer nor the coaching staff are taking lightly.

“Starting early is always good and getting the chemistry right is huge,” Cofer said. “Getting to see what five (players) works with what five will help us a lot.”

“When we come back (for practice) in September, we’ll be a little further advanced than some of those teams that didn’t (get a trip),” Young continued. “We hope it makes the difference in our non-conference portion of the schedule.”

While admittedly not a fan of planes or flying, Cofer is also looking forward to enjoying the tropical Caribbean climate.

“I love jerk chicken and yellow rice,” Cofer said laughing. But I’m also a looking forward to a little deep-sea fishing as well.”

As the season nears, Cofer is excited about this current squad’s potential.

“Our chemistry is very strong, we’re all on the same page,” Cofer said.

“This team is full of guys willing to do the little things, nobody is caught up in how many points they score (per game). That has me excited for the season.”

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