

Mom And Coach: FSU's Mann Receives Extra On-Court Guidance

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — When Florida State junior Terance Mann calls home after games, the conversation with his mother is slightly different than for most college athletes.

Sure, Daynia La-Force asks her son about his grades, whether he is eating right and the other normal parental inquiries. But Mann also gets a breakdown of his performance with his mother pointing out his strengths and weaknesses.

That's because La-Force is the women's basketball coach at Rhode Island.

"She's good at balancing it," Mann said. "She knows when I need the coach and knows when I need the mom."

Despite being over 1,200 miles apart and having her own demands leading a Division I program, La-Force rarely misses Mann's games and stays ready to give him an assessment. La-Force said she always starts off the conversation asking her son how he's doing before diving into the coaching conversations.

"He listens to me and understands my perspective. I see the sets and what is supposed to happen," she said. "When it is your son not making those plays it is kind of tough."

The talks have paid off for Mann.

He has become one of the team leaders after three starters off last year's squad left for the NBA.

The 6-foot-6 guard was honorable mention All-Atlantic Coast Conference after leading the Seminoles in scoring and rebounding. He also helped Florida State to consecutive NCAA Tournament bids for the first time in six years.

The ninth-seeded Seminoles (20-11) open tournament play on Friday against eighth-seeded Missouri (20-12) in the West region in Nashville.

Mann has been one of Florida State's best defensive players throughout his career, but has shown the most improvement on offense this season. He is averaging 13.2 points per game, which is nearly five points better than last season, and has made 55.8 percent of his shots.

He has six games of 20 or more points, including a career-high 30 in a Jan. 24 win over Georgia Tech. But he struggled in consecutive losses to Virginia and Notre Dame last month, prompting La-Force to tell him he needed to show more versatility in his shooting. She noticed Mann was relying too much on cutting right and driving to the basket.

"He still values being the glue guy and making the extra play," she said. "I want him to fall in love with being more aggressive. He's always been a skilled player who can shoot from inside or outside."

Mann said the change in being relied on more on as a scorer has been a challenge, especially later in the season when teams know every tendency.

"I have to have a bigger role on both sides — that has meant more scoring but also guarding and going after best player," Mann said.

Florida State assistant Charlton Young has known La-Force since 2000. He first met Mann eight years ago and later offered him a scholarship when he was the head coach at Georgia Southern. When Young became a part of Leonard Hamilton's staff in 2013, Mann became the first recruit in a 2015 class that included Malik Beasley and Dwayne Bacon.

"I think he sat in a lot of car rides and in the living room listening to his mom complain about players and he said to himself I don't want to be that player," Young said.

La-Force has been a college coach since graduating from Georgetown in 1995. She started as an assistant at Long Island University and St. John's before becoming a head coach at New Haven, Northeastern and Rhode Island.

Mann, and his younger brother Martin, have been there most of the way. While Martin would run around the gym during practices or games, La-Force noticed Terance was intently watching and picking up on every call.

"At an early age I knew he was serious about the game because he wouldn't move," she said.

As Mann got older, the teaching developed more on the court. When Mann was in high school and La-Force was the coach at Northeastern, there would be some practices where Mann would help out by being on the scout team.

The postgame debriefs will not have to be over the phone this week. La-Force was in the stands during the ACC Tournament and will travel to the NCAA Tournament. Mann's father, Eustace Mann, lives in Maryland and also will be in Nashville this week after attending some games this season.

Hamilton said he expects Mann to again lead on and off the court.

"There's a lot of positives growing up in a house with a coach. He always seems to have a clear understanding of how the game needs to be played," Hamilton said. "With that skill and knowledge he's going to be a guy our players are going to look to."