

## Seminoles A Different Team With Forrest On The Floor

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Seminoles.com

March 22, 2018

**LOS ANGELES** – Trent Forrest is a game changer. Just ask his Sweet 16 opponents, the Gonzaga Bulldogs.

“I definitely think they are a different team when Forrest is out there,” Gonzaga lead guard Josh Perkins said Wednesday. “He’s taller. He’s more athletic. He can get to the cup a little bit better.”

Guard Zach Norvell Jr. said Florida State looks different when Forrest is on the court. But added that’s been the case for Forrest’s teams ever since Norvell watched him while growing up on the AAU circuit.

When Forrest checks in off the Florida State bench, the energy level generally ticks up a notch. That’s his first priority. Bring energy. Be disruptive. Try to create turnovers to get the offense out into transition. The Seminoles are at their best when they are running, using their athleticism to attack defenses in the open court.

“His defense really creates his offense,” freshman guard M.J. Walker said. “He’s real active on ‘D,’ so when he gets on offense, it’s kind of like transition, a great transition, where his defense gives him energy, gets him back on offense.”

Forrest knows when to push the pace and when to settle things down. His teammates describe him as a floor general. When he enters, Forrest seizes command of the game, controlling the tempo. His teammates younger and older expect that from him. Forrest said he’s able to do that, even though he’s only a sophomore, because of the positive relationships he’s built with each of his teammates.

“If you can just do that,” he said, “they trust you and you trust them. Then I feel like then things will work out.”

And the Seminoles trust Forrest to get them open looks because of his ability to drive into the lane and has an uncanny knack for knowing exactly where his teammates are on the floor.

“He does a great job getting us involved,” M.J. Walker said. “He sees the floor. His IQ for the game is so high, he just knows where everybody is at. We definitely love playing with Trent.”

Multiple Seminoles describing playing with Forrest as “exciting.” They all enjoy being on the floor with him knowing he is looking to find them open looks.

“[He creates] a lot of opportunities by the way he drives, the way he kicks out,” redshirt freshman forward Mfiondu Kabengele said. “He sees the floor on ball screens. My goal when I’m playing with him is to get good position to make his job easier to find me or to find other guys.”

Forrest rounding into top form over the final month of the season has propelled Florida State into tonight’s Sweet 16 matchup with Gonzaga at Staples Center in Los Angeles. Head coach Leonard Hamilton had called Forrest his best player in the preseason, but Forrest got tripped up and suffered a knee injury in training camp that forced him to get a slow start to the season.

Through the first 25 games, Forrest scored in double-digits just four times with a high of 12 points and he was averaging 3.6 assists. But starting with an overtime win over then-No. 11 Clemson, Forrest has ratcheted his game up a level. The Seminoles were coming off a stretch of losing three of four games when he scored 16 points on 7 of 11 shooting against Clemson. Forrest has carried that performance forward.

"It's been the reverse of our season," Savoy said. "We went on a two- or three-game losing streak and Trent's picked his energy up and we started winning."

In the last eight games, he is averaging 13.8 points and five assists per game. He has scored in double figures in all but one game and is shooting 59.7 percent from the floor. He is scoring more, distributing more and making more plays on defense.

In the NCAA tournament, Forrest has been Florida State's x-factor. He filled up the stat sheet against Missouri, scoring eight points with eight assists, six rebounds, three steals and two blocks. The more impressive stat was how the Seminoles fared when Forrest was in the game versus sitting on the bench. With Forrest on the court, they were plus-29, outscoring Missouri 65-36, but when he took a seat is when the Tigers made their runs, outscoring the Noles by 16.

Against Xavier, Forrest helped lead his team back from a double-digit deficit. He scored nine points and grabbed four steals in the second half, including the one that led to PJ Savoy's go-ahead three-pointer. Savoy knocked a ball free, Forrest corralled it and started a fast break, attacking the middle to draw the defense before kicking to Savoy for his Forrest's second assist of the second half.

"I feel like I'm hitting my stride at the right time and playing pretty good basketball," Forrest said. "I feel like we still have a lot of time to see ahead of time that my best basketball is yet to come, but at this time, I'm playing pretty good."